

# WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S  
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA  
H 29.2 L 26.0

MYMENSINGH  
H 30.5 L 26.6

CHITTAGONG  
H 27.5 L 25.4

SYLHET  
H 32.0 L 26.4

RAJSHAHI  
H 33.4 L 26.5

RANGPUR  
H 31.8 L 27.6

KHULNA  
H 29.6 L 26.4

BARISAL  
H 28.2 L 26.0

COX'S BAZAR  
H 27.6 L 25.3

Light to moderate rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at most places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to very heavy rain at places over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today, the rest of the day. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:47pm and rises tomorrow at 05:23am. Highest and lowest temperatures recorded at some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Once Dhaka was adorned with several hundred ponds. Like canals, only a handful exist now. But they are also in death throes due to negligence of the authorities concerned. Although, according to the Field, Open Space, Park and Natural Water Body Protection Act 2000, filling up of any water body including pond is illegal, it's going on unabated. The Daily Star found 63 ponds in the maps of undivided Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) in its 28 wards out of 90. A survey for the map was carried out between 2003 and 2011. But many of the water bodies were filled up before the period and also even after the survey. We are publishing the thirteenth report of the series today covering the then DCC wards 70 and 69.



The around 19-katha Shikkatuli Pond in Nazirbazar of Old Dhaka still attracts people of all ages.



The reservoir in Alubazar, a popular recreational place for locals, needs proper maintenance.

## Legacy worth preserving

### PONDS of Dhaka

HELEMIUL ALAM

It was a sunny noon. A group of youths were playing cricket at Shikkatuli Park in Nazirbazar of Old Dhaka.

The day was hot and humid. By the time the match was over, all of them were drenched in sweat.

But the boys had the perfect plan. There was a pond just a couple of hundred yards away and they decided to swim in it to get a much-needed respite from the heat.

Once they reached their destination, they took off their shirts and jumped into the reservoir.

Among them, Savem, a fifth grader, cheerfully said, "I learnt swimming here..." His friends did not let him finish and chimed in, "We all did!"

Though people, especially children, of the area are fortunate to have a playground and reservoir, many areas of the city are bereft of such amenities.

A local club, Shikkatuli Muslim Juba Sangha, played a key role to protect those. And they are still fighting to save the around 19-katha pond from the eyes of encroachers, who are claiming its ownership.

According to locals, Rocho Bibi, wife of Munshi Emdadul Haque, an influential local, took the initiative to dig up the reservoir and a mosque for the people of the area in 1853.

It has been said that she paid for the work with her "denmohor" (dower) so that the residents could have a place for themselves to use its water and relax by its banks.

There was a time when Shikkatuli Pond used to be frequented by people from other areas also. The atmosphere surrounding the reservoir was vibrant and remained abuzz with activities, said locals.

While talking to this correspondent, all of them shared their fond memories of the water body - how they spent time swimming in its cool water with their parents and afterwards children.

Now it is surrounded by buildings on three sides. At times, residents throw waste in it, making the water dirty.

There is a sign on its eastern side



The Mulbatala Pond used to be here.

that says the renovation work for the pond has been done twice by the government. ADC Sirajuddin, chairman of Dhaka metropolitan development committee, did its bank development work by spending Tk 95,000. And, former mayor Abul Hasan in 1981-82 renovated the bank on the south side.

At present, Shikkatuli Muslim Juba Sangha is looking after the pond located at Majed Sarker Road.

Mohammad Nasir, its general secretary, said, "Though different mayors assured us of taking steps for its maintenance, it's not getting any attention anymore."

Not only the reservoir, they also look after the park, said Nasir. "We have appointed a person to keep those clean by paying him Tk 6,000 per month."

A boat is used for the cleaning work in the pond.

"But it's not possible to keep the reservoir clean all the time. We need support in this regard."

The water of the pond was used at least in five fire incidents within the last 10 years. "Even last year, there was a fire at a shoe factory that was doused using its water," he said.

There is also a ghat on the south side used by locals for bathing or swimming. Nasir said Awal Hossain, councillor of Ward 33, also assured that the reservoir will be restored. "The pond is under threat now. Claiming its ownership, one Aslam Adam, an influential local, is trying to grab it," he alleged.

When asked, Aslam Adam claimed that his father Ali Molla is the owner of the pond who purchased it in 1952. He said if they get the pond they will decide what to do with it.

Contacted, Councillor Awal Hossain said as the locals are demanding the pond's renovation, he has written to the Dhaka South City Corporation mayor in this regard and also got a positive response. "We will start the renovation work soon," he said.

**ALUBAZAR POND**

Though the around five-katha pond, located opposite to 165 Hajji Osman

Gani Road (Alubazar), is still there, it needs proper care.

During a recent visit, it was seen that its water was not clean. Still, around 20 youths were swimming in it.

Mohammad Mahi, a seventh grader, said, "I swim here almost every day. But the water is not clean. That's why I have to take a bath once home."

Moyna Mia, former owner of the pond, said it was purchased by his grandfather Rajjib Ali. "My father Bahadur Mia inherited the pond from him."

He said the pond belonged to them till the tenure of former mayor Mohammad Hanif.

The pond then went under the possession of Dhaka City Corporation. Mayor Hanif renovated the reservoir and made it like a swimming pool with concrete beddies, he said.

Also, there is a ghat (landing spot) on one side used by children for swimming. A portion in the pond is also fenced so that children do not go to the deep end and swim in the designated area.

Another local Solimulla Babul alleged that a water pump was supposed to

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**It's an unjust society**  
Says Prof Serajul Islam Chy

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Terming the present society unjust, professor emeritus of Dhaka University Serajul Islam Choudhury has said the powerful people of this society suppress knowledge, intellect, and kindness.

He expressed the views at the Nehru Khan Memorial Speech programme last week at East West University (EWU).

The veteran professor said the independence of the country transferred power from foreigners to the local rulers, but the power structure remained the same.

On the question of language, he said at present Bengali was more dominant than Bangla compared to the British era.

The lecture was organised in the memory of ex-student of the university Nehru Khan, late daughter of former caretaker government minister Dr Akbar Ali Khan.

On the occasion, Prof Serajul Islam was honoured.

Prof Dr MM Shahidul Hassan, vice-chancellor of EWU, presided over the programme, while Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former DU professor Dr Fakrul Alam, and EWU treasurer AZM Shaquill Alam were present.

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