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Rail & road links with Ctg restored

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 30: Port city's communication with rest of the country was restored at 10 pm tonight after the agitating jute mills workers withdrew the rail road barricade programme at Barakkunda under Sitakunda thana, police and railway sources said.

The union leaders of three privately owned industries — Kashem Jute Mill, Anwara Jute Mill and Mokbulur Rahman Jute Mill — agreed to withdraw the barricade programme after an agreement signed with the authorities concerned at a marathon meeting from 1 pm to 9:30 pm.

The authorities gave an assurance of payment of workers dues within seven days.

Thousands of agitating workers put up barricades on rail, road and Dhaka-Chittagong highway at 6 pm yesterday for an indefinite period to realise their outstanding dues.

The barricade programme forced suspension of train service to and from Chittagong. City's transport service with rest of the country was also disrupted.

Delivery of goods from Chittagong Port to other parts of the country was hampered due to suspension of transport service.

Opposition to protest 'anti-people' budget today

BNP-led opposition alliance will stage demonstration today to protest the passage of the 'anti-people' budget for fiscal 1999-2000, reports UNB.

The liaison committee of the alliance comprising BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami of Bangladesh and Islamic Oikya Jote in a press release said the budget was passed disregarding the opposition demand for withdrawal of taxes.

Sources said the four parties may call for a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on July 8 to protest the budget. The parties will hold meetings today.

BNP will stage its demonstration at Muktagong, Jamaat at Purana Paltan and IOJ at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the afternoon. JP will also demonstrate in the city.

The four parties will also bring out protest processions.

Our Staff Correspondent adds, the BNP will organise the programme to protest personal attack on its Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia and members of her family, and 'false, fabricated, baseless and naked' statement against Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof AGM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Landslide kills 3 in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, June 30: Three people including a woman were killed in a landslide at Galenga union of Ruma thana here last night, police said today, reports BSS.

The landslide was caused by incessant rains at Galenga, 50 km off the thana headquarters.

The victims were identified as Umi Mong, 40, an employee of Social Services Department, Hla Maung, 25 and Ukhyia Maung, 20.

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Alternatives

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Prayer Timings

July 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:20	4:25
Johr	12:50	1:25
Asr	4:55	5:05
Maghrib	7:00	7:05
Esha	7:55	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

JS session adjourned amid uproar

PM forces Chair to disallow personal explanation

By Staff Correspondent

Clamour gripped the Jatiya Sangsad for about seven minutes yesterday as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina apparently forced the Chair to disallow Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof AGM Badruddoza Chowdhury to give a personal explanation.

The House leader jumped on her feet thrice to challenge Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury when he gave the floor to the deputy opposition leader to speak on a personal explanation. She opposed the Chair's decision saying there was no precedence of allowing a member to give personal explanation.

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nation on the day of passage of the national budget.

The Speaker made several attempts in vain to justify his decision and then acted in accordance with the House leader's advice -- adjourned the session. He promised B Choudhury that he would be allowed to speak on the issue today (Thursday).

The premier's role sparked off sharp reaction from the BNP lawmakers, who jumped up, shouted at her and threw papers in the air before leaving the House. Treasury Bench members retorted, shouting at their opposition colleagues.

Enraged by abrupt adjourn-

ment of the session, the opposition legislators also shouted -- burn down the PM's chair -- while marching through the parliament corridor.

It all started when the Speaker allowed B Choudhury to give a personal explanation soon after the House approved the national budget for 1999-2000 at 4:23 pm.

Choudhury could hardly say a few words, blaming the Treasury Bench for making 'untrue statements' about him. The ruling party MPs raised a noisy protest. Hasina then took the floor, spurning uproar in the Opposition Bench.

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Parliament passes budget

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad passed the national budget for fiscal 1999-2000, yesterday afternoon, by voice vote.

Earlier in the morning, the House witnessed a brief BNP walkout during the consideration of demand for a grant to the prime minister's office. The BNP lawmakers protested the Chair's allocation of 'unlimited time' to ministers replying to opposition contentions.

However, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria placed the Appropriation Bill, 1999 seeking parliament's endorsement of Tk 44,556 crore 85 lakh 75 thousand from the state's Consolidated Fund to meet the demands of and expenditures for various ministries and public offices during the financial year beginning today.

The amount included a non-

votable expenditure of Tk 9095 crore, 70 lakh and 63 thousand.

According to the appropriation bill passed by parliament, Tk 28,735 crore 85 lakh and 75 thousand has been estimated as non-development expenditure and Tk 15,821 crore as development expenditure.

Earlier, on Tuesday the finance minister got the Finance Bill, 1999 passed by the House that authorised the government to collect more than Tk 24,000 crore as revenue.

After discussions on four demands of grant -- out of 94 -- at 1:45 pm, Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid applied guillotine on the cut motions of the opposition members seeking reduction in the amount of the demand for grants by various ministries.

The opposition members were allowed to discuss certain

demands for grant made by the prime minister's office, home ministry, defence ministry and the law, justice and parliamentary affairs' ministry. The remaining demands for grant were put to vote without any discussion in the House.

The ministries which came up for violent opposition were education, industries, home, CHT affairs, information and agriculture.

The opposition refrained from opposing the passage of certain demands for grant for the ministries of youth and sports, fisheries and livestock and communications.

Prime Minister's Office

However, the opposition members objected to the demand for a grant of Tk 44 crore.

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Home minister vows to root out 'political criminals'

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday vowed to eliminate political criminals who 'are at the root of terrorism in the country,' reports UNB.

'Elimination of political criminals is a must if we want to stamp out terrorism from the society,' he said while defending in the House his ministry's demand for allocation of Tk 1457.99.31.000 in fiscal 1999-2000.

The Home Minister said political criminals nurture and give shelter to terrorists in their political interests.

Urging the Opposition not to issue statements in favour of criminals, he said it's a shame for everybody when Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia gives a statement demanding release of someone who has been arrested for criminal offences.

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PM leaves for UK July 5

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will lead a 24-member official team during her ten-day visit to the United Kingdom from July 5.

Her core delegation will comprise of the foreign minister, senior government officials, some leading businessmen, four eminent persons and six journalists. Around 60 artists are also due to join the trip to participate in the Bangladesh Festival there.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and British Prime Minister Tony Blair will jointly inaugurate a 21-day long Bangladesh Festival, organised by Arts World Wide in London on July 7. The festival, first of its kind, will be held also in Bradford and Manchester.

Sources said the first four days of the UK tour will be part

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Top WB official observes 0.5pc loss in GDP due to power crisis

By Staff Correspondent

The country's power crisis leads to an annual 0.5 per cent loss in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to a rough estimate of the World Bank (WB).

Mentioning this, WB's Energy Sector Unit Director, South Asia Region, Alastair J McKechnie yesterday said that the power sector system loss showed a slight increase in 1998 which is a matter for fresh concern.

He was briefing the press on the meeting between WB vice president Miesko Nishimizu and the power secretary, yesterday.

In the meeting, the government expressed its concern about the lack of finance in the sector and sought help of the development banks.

'But we did not get into discussing finance. Rather we dis-

cussed the issue of shared vision among various components of the sector,' McKechnie said focusing on the content of the meeting. Adding that the government was now forming a regulatory body for power and gas sector that would give a clear-cut vision in this regard.

He emphasised that it was important for all concerned government agencies to have a shared vision about the power sector. 'Unless they share the same vision, changes in this sector would not take place,' he said.

'The fundamental problems in the energy sector of Bangladesh is institutional, structural and managerial. That is why World Bank has been pursuing reforms. Running

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Financial restructuring \$100m needed to make Kafco viable

By Toufique Imrose Khaliqi

The cash-strapped Kafco will need as much as US\$ 100 million as it tries to draw up a financial restructuring plan to make the joint venture fertiliser company viable, sources said.

The figure was indicated by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which has been appointed financial adviser to the crisis-ridden company, during talks with government officials, the sources said.

Kafco's legal counsel confirmed the figure. 'I suspect the figure somewhere in that region,' said Anatul Fateh, the company's internal lawyer. But he added: 'There is no (formal

or official) figure from IFC as yet ... You'll have to wait for the IFC report.'

Fateh, speaking on behalf of the Kafco management yesterday, also confirmed that a Foster Wheeler team had just started a technical audit of the plant in Chittagong.

The plant, rated by the company management sub-standard and faulty resulting in numerous shutdowns since commissioning in November 1994, has been the bone of contention between the company and the general contractor.

But nothing will be clear until the IFC files its report, due

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BSF kills another

MYMENSINGH, June 30: Indian Border Security Force (BSF) killed another Bangladeshi in a span of three days in the frontier area of greater Mymensingh, reports UNB.

Official sources said the killing of Atul Chandra Shah, 26, took place at Lengura frontier in Kalmakanda thana of Netrakona district Tuesday.

The BSF killed a Bangladeshi youth at Haluaghat frontier on Sunday.

Villagers said the BSF of Rangra camp detained Atul, son of Anil Chandra Shah of village Lengura, near border pillar number 1173 while he was go-

ing to his neighbour to take money.

Residents of neighbouring Indian village informed the villagers of Lengura at about 10 pm that BSF men killed Atul and held up his body.

The Lengura BDR company commander today urged the BSF to hand over the body and proposed a flag meeting.

BSF reportedly agreed to hand over the body and hold the meeting tomorrow.

Tension was prevailing in the area.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in

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Dhaka-Calcutta bus service deferred again

The maiden commercial bus trip from Dhaka to Calcutta has again been deferred. The first two buses from Dhaka are expected to depart on July 4 or 5, reports UNB.

As the buses will take three days to come back after a day's stay in the West Bengal capital, the full-fledged commercial operations will start on July 9.

Communication Ministry said the inauguration of the commercial service from here had been held back due to incessant rain in Calcutta for last two days.

The commercial service from Dhaka to Calcutta via Benapole was scheduled to start from June 29. But it was deferred at the request of West Bengal transport minister.

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48-hr transport strike in northern region from today

From Our Correspondent
PABNA, June 30: The transport owners and employees associations have jointly called a 48-hour transport strike in the northern region of the country from tomorrow to realise their 15-point demand.

The decision was taken at a joint meeting of the two associations at Natore yesterday with Baby Islam, President of Pabna Motor Owners Association in the chair.

The demands included release of vehicles seized by customs department, restoration of peace at Rajshahi bus terminal by arresting criminals, effective measures for resisting highway robberies in North Bengal, withdrawal of false cases filed against transport workers, cancellation of licences issued to the fake motor owners and effective measures to stop illegal toll collection.

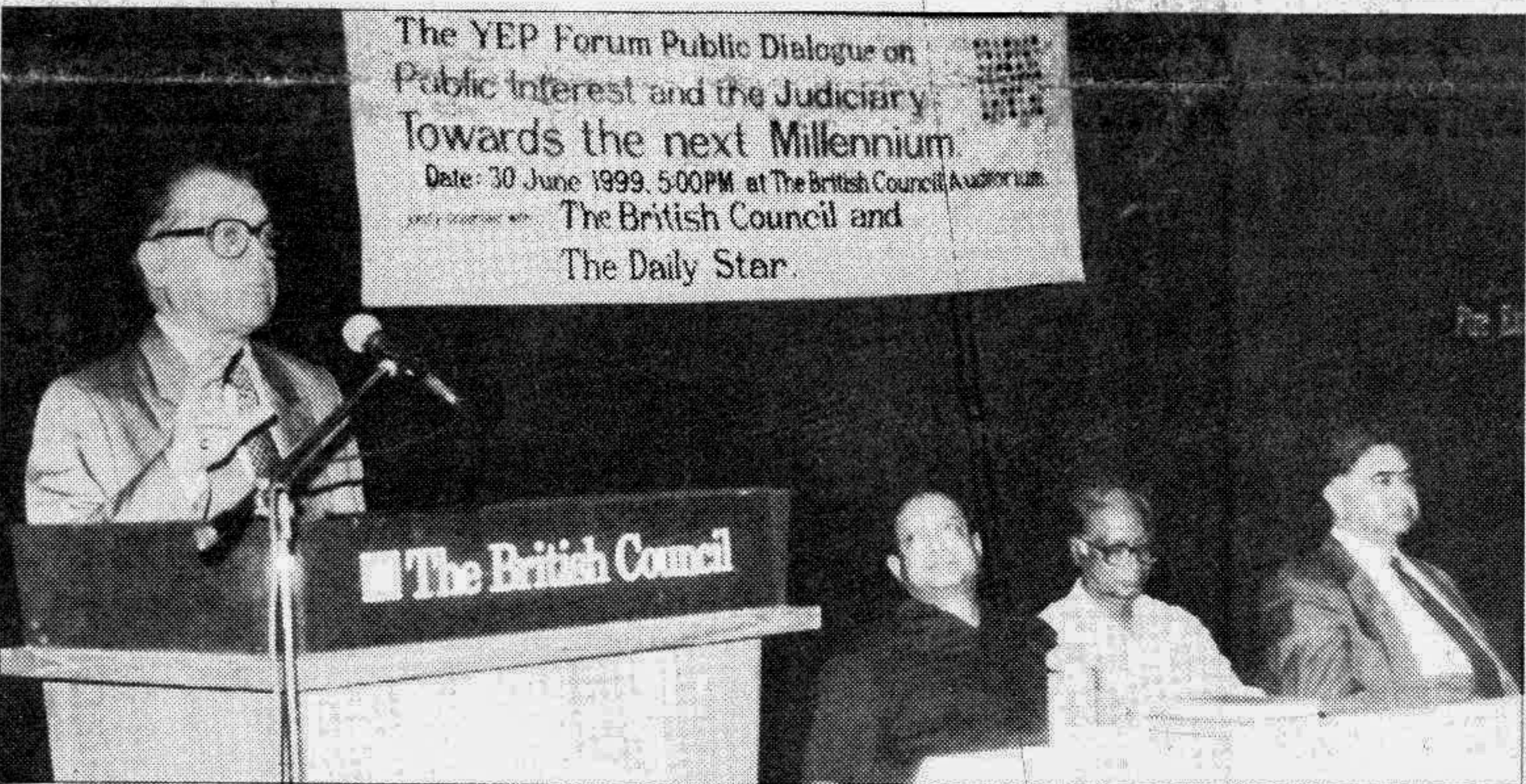
Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industries has demanded of the authorities concern to take stringent measures against frequent transport strike that hampers business in the northern districts, including Pabna.

Akhtaruzzaman blasts BNP

Suspended BNP lawmaker Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman yesterday denounced the anti-liberation and undemocratic forces in his party claiming that these 'mischievous elements' are leading the present BNP headed by Begum Khaleda Zia to ultimate ruin, reports BSS.

A freedom fighter and a vocal opposition MP, Akhtaruzzaman also called for activating intra-party activities to uphold what he termed democratic norms, values and pragmatism. Sounding a note of warning that unless the party

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Justice Naimuddin, member of the Law Reform Commission, speaking at the dialogue on 'Public Interest and the Judiciary' organised by YEP forum in collaboration with The Daily Star at British Council auditorium in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Separation of judiciary now

By Staff Correspondent

Eminent judges, lawyers, academics, and concerned citizens joined voice with representatives of young law practitioners to demand independence of judiciary in the country without further delay.

Taking part in a dialogue on 'Public Interest and the Judiciary' in the city yesterday, both designated speakers and the audience expressed urgency in separating the judiciary from the executive.

The dialogue organised by Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals (YEP) Forum in co-operation with The Daily Star and The British Council auditorium.

Member of the Law Reform

Commission Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain, Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury of Dhaka University (DU), Dean of Law Faculty of DU Prof Ershadul Bari, Barrister Tania Amir, Ehsanul Habib of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA), and Adilur Rahman Khan of Odhakar took part in the dialogue as designated speakers. Besides, editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and YEP Forum coordinator Osama Tasir also spoke briefly at the dialogue which was conducted by AH Manjurul Kabir.

The discussants spoke of people's expectation from the judiciary and the hindrances they (judiciary) face in address-

ing changing public concerns. They noted with great relief that avenues for public interest litigation have opened up and now was the time for Bangladesh to have an independent judiciary.

Advocating strongly in favour of an independent judiciary, Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said time has come to ponder why 20 years back nobody asked questions about honesty in the sub-ordinate judiciary and why people are raising questions now. He appealed to all stakeholders of the judicial system to reclaim their lost glory.

Appreciating the new wave of public interest litigation and judicial activism, Justice Naim,

however, warned of the dangers of judicial over-activism.

'We don't want to step on the threshold of the new millennium without our judiciary being separated from the executive,' asserted Dr Kamal Hossain and invited the new generation of lawyers and people in general to mobilize greater public opinion in favour of an independent judiciary and strong judicial activism.

'We don't want to live in this sick society where police resort to excess like torture in custody. This should be strictly prohibited. We don't want to live in a society cursed by terrorist activities. But to bring about a change all should rally around

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Terrorists kill a terrorist

Azad was a victim of rivalry

By Staff Correspondent

Terrorists led by Azad who was gunned down by rivals near the District and Sessions Judges' Court in the city on Tuesday had unleashed a reign of terror in Mirpur and Kafrul areas, police and local people said.

According to police, 'terrorists of Azad group and its rival Jahangir group' have enmity for long and clashed frequently over domination in the areas since 1990 when the groups were formed. The conflict took a serious turn in 1994 when a

member of Jahangir group was killed by Azad group.

After the killing of Azad, numerous terrorist activities of both the groups in the past are coming to light. Local people are now describing their experience in this regard. Earlier, they used to keep mum, fearing 'dire consequence'.

The 'man' of a mosque who resides at Ibrahimpur told The Daily Star that a few months back, he was compelled to send back his SSC candidate daughter to his village home as Azad

and members of his gang had threatened to kidnap her and kept on 'harassing' her on way to school.

A widow at Bhasantek said that terrorists led by Azad forcibly occupied her land in the area four months back. She had complained to Kafrul police but no action was taken.

A number of small shopkeepers at Ibrahimpur said that they had to pay toll regularly to Azad bahini which 'controlled' the area. A hotel

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