

Nasim: Court order

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was taken by one of the intelligence agencies. After six days of 'torture', Nasim became so sick that it was not possible to produce him before the court. At the same time, police could not keep him any more because of the court order, they noted.

When asked, under which law police kept Nasim for two days beyond the remand period, top police officials declined to make any comment.

The government committed another violation of law by not allowing Nasim to meet his lawyer after his arrest. Following a High Court order, the jail authorities were compelled to allow his lawyer to meet him after 12 days of his arrest.

It may be pointed out here that Article 33 (1) of the Constitution says: No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice. Article 33 (2) states : Every person who is

arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of twenty-four hours of such arrest, excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate, and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate.

Besides, no law in the country allows torture on an arrested person placed on remand.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1996, which have been ratified by Bangladesh, are against any form of torture or degrading and inhuman behaviour and punishment.

Meanwhile, after visiting Nasim in jail, his wife at a press conference on Thursday alleged 'inhuman torture' on her husband.

Nasim's lawyer Amir-ul-Islam also gave a similar statement saying, "This reminds us of torture by the then Pakistani intelligence agencies."

Kibria blasts Saifur

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Depicting a horrifying law-and-order situation, Kibria said rape of women and even minor girls of families known to be AL Awami League supporters seems to have become a "favourite method of taking revenge by BNP-Jamaat activists".

He also referred to what he said calculated attacks on the minority communities, ruthless pressure for extortion by ruling party men on business community and massive violence, which created a sense of insecurity and fear, slowing down investment and economic activities.

Kibria's statement apparently came in defence of the immediate past AL government as Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in his statement at the BDF meeting said reforms were stalled by AL government.

In the second half of 90s, governance standard deteriorated, corruption multiplied, government mechanism was politicised, and law and order posed serious threats to

human rights and economic development, Saifur told the development partners at the Paris meet.

Angered by the statement, Kibria accused Saifur of blaming Awami League for all the ills of the country, instead of owning the failure of BNP-Jamaat government to tackle the economic and political problems.

"It was indeed a pathetic sight to see him pleading like a truant student with lame excuses to cover up the dismal state of governance," said Kibria. He advised Saifur to look at the record of Awami League government's success in accelerating economic growth and poverty reduction.

The average economic growth during Awami League's five-year rule was close to 6 per cent and the rate of inflation only 1.53 when AL left office in July last, the former finance minister reminded his successor, urging him not to resort to "distortion and falsehood".

8 footbridges

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crete pieces," said a police officer at the police box at the southern end of Elephant Road.

Earlier, the DCC chief engineer said the construction firm would send a crane to the Science Laboratory intersection at 9.00 last night to remove the concrete beams or girders. All girders will be removed from other unsafe constructions as well by the next seven days, he added.

Engineers cautioned that the girders of similar under-construction bridges, which weigh more than 35 tons, might crash down.

"I live at Elephant Road and pass under this bridge everyday. Any time, I may also be a victim like them who were killed in the collapse on Thursday," said a passerby.

The traffic movement, although thinner than the usual because of the weekend, was comparatively normal.

The under-construction footbridges are at Uttara, Bashabo, Badda, Moghbazar, Mirpur section Nos. 1 and 10, Paribagh and Science Laboratory.

At Moghbazar intersection was being constructed a footbridge with its prongs precariously positioned.

Meanwhile, four persons were arrested Thursday night in connection with the footbridge collapse.

Earlier, Dhanmondi police lodged a murder case against nine people in connection with the accident.

The arrested persons -- supervisors Moidul Islam and Zafar Sadek and employees Jakir Hossain and Mojibur Rahman -- worked at Surma International, the construction firm.

Other accused, now absconding, are Khorsheed Alam, executive director, Engineer Harun-ur-Rashid, sub-contractor, engineers Maksud Anwar Kamal and Abdullah-al-Baki and Sanaullah, an employee.

Police produced the accused before court yesterday morning seeking a three-day remand.

BSS adds: The LGRD state minister said mismanagement in the DCC and lack of proper coordination with the LGRD ministry were the main causes leading to the accident.

He asked how a blacklisted firm could continue its work, having only a stay order from the High Court. The DCC did not inform the ministry about the controversial construction, he said.

Canadian oil co

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A suggestion was deleted from the procedure. It was suggested that when the deal would be finalised, the government would go for 'switch challenge' seeking similar or matching offers from other oil and gas companies for this scheme. This option would have put the Niko proposals to competition.

The procedure also gave green signal to a Niko proposal to exempt the company from all taxes payable by other international oil companies.

Petrobangla had objected to it saying that no company is fully exempted from taxes. Rather, as an incentive to oil companies working under various Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), Petrobangla itself pays taxes. Moreover, the proposal was a joint venture with BAPEX, not a PSC operation by Niko. If Niko is exempted from tax, BAPEX would have to pay all the taxes of the joint venture and thus lose any scope to make profit from the deal.

The present government revived the scheme in November after the lobby that had pursued the 'uneven' proposal in the past convinced the officials concerned that it should be done immediately to attract foreign investment.

As per the proposal, Niko would enter into a joint venture with BAPEX under which the Canadian company would have a minimum of 60 per cent share and BAPEX a maximum of 40 per cent, depending on discovery and investment.

The sources said, though

BAPEX has 40 per cent share, the proposed joint venture agreement has been designed in such a way that the Bangladeshi company would not see any sign of earning profit in 10 years if any of these gas fields starts producing gas commercially. Niko would get the first priority in cost recovery.

Niko has been pursuing this proposal, remaining outside block negotiations since 1999. To make a speedy deal with the government, the Canadian company wanted to avoid signing of PSC, but to get tax relief, an incentive given exclusively to PSC operators only.

Niko had proposed a price of 1.6 dollars per unit for the gas, a price equivalent to that sought by PSC operators in the country.

PSC operators charge gas price under a formula, the lowest ceiling being 1.2 to 1.4 dollars and the highest being 2.4 to 2.7 dollars per unit.

BAPEX originally had entered an agreement with Niko in 2000 to conduct a joint study in Kamta, Feni and Chhatak gas fields.

Niko argues that the eastern part of Chhatak filed was the main attraction of the whole proposal and if Petrobangla excludes it from the joint venture, the project economy would suffer heavily.

Earlier, Malaysian oil company Petronas had given a similar proposal involving BAPEX and some 'ring fenced' (reserved) gas fields but it could never draw government's attention.

Mayoral election Mintoo confident of getting BNP ticket

UNB, Dhaka

Business tycoon Abdul Awal Mintoo is optimistic that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would finally choose him as BNP nominee for Dhaka City Mayor for the upcoming City Corporation election.

"I had a long discussion with the BNP chairperson about Dhaka City Corporation and my intention for Mayoral candidate before I joined BNP Knowing full well that I have been working for long in Dhaka City and as a candidate for the post of Mayor she welcomed me to BNP," he told UNB yesterday amid speculations centring possible choices for the coveted office.

Mintoo's joining BNP on August 22 just before last parliamentary polls sent a significant signal about the election and cast a dampening impact on Awami League's election-eering.

He quoted Khaleda Zia's open remarks at the joining function at Sheraton Winter Garden on August 22: "I know you are working for Dhaka City, you have acquired enough experience; certainly we will use your experience at an appropriate time."

Mintoo said his feeling and interpretation is that the appropriate time is Mayoral election and Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia would pick him for the post and use his experience for real development of Dhaka Metropolitan City.

In reply to a question, he said a good Mayor for Dhaka City requires education, experience and administrative capability and he felt that he acquired all these qualities to present Dhaka City as a capital city with all modern facilities and outlook.

"I have already formulated my full vision and plan for development of Dhaka City I don't know other aspirants that have got any," he said.

Asked for comment in case the Prime Minister nominates someone else, Mintoo said as a BNP man he would abide by whatever decision the party chairperson and Prime Minister would take.

Asked if there is any dissension among other BNP aspirants over his nomination, he said he hoped all aspirants of BNP would accept "Madam's" decision and that he too is capable of convincing everybody in BNP to work for him at the election.

In reply to a question about wall writings in favour of other mayoral candidates of BNP, Mintoo said he does not like wall writings that only dirties the city. It is a prime responsibility of a Mayor to keep the city clean.

Meanwhile, sources close to Mintoo said leading businessmen would hold a meeting today and meet the Prime Minister with a request to put up Mintoo, a former chief of apex trade body FBCCI, as Mayoral candidate.

JCD activists

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The owner of the filling station alleged that the group belonged to the local JCD and had long been pressing him for regular toll and getting petrol without paying.

In the wake of the incident, the Sylhet Bibhag Petroleum Byabosayee Samity has threatened to go on a 48-hour strike from Monday if the culprits are not immediately arrested and punitive actions taken against them. The decision was taken at an urgent meeting chaired by Mohsinur Rashid yesterday afternoon.

A case has been started with the Kowail PS accusing Jami, Shahana and Rahel among other unnamed activists of the Sylhet unit of JCD.

BNP factions

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A contract for supply of labourers to CEMEX cement factory. Both groups are involved in supplying labourers to the factory.

Sources said Dulal group forcibly took away the contract from Humayun group. Following a complaint filed by Humayun group, local administration later returned the contract to Humayun group.

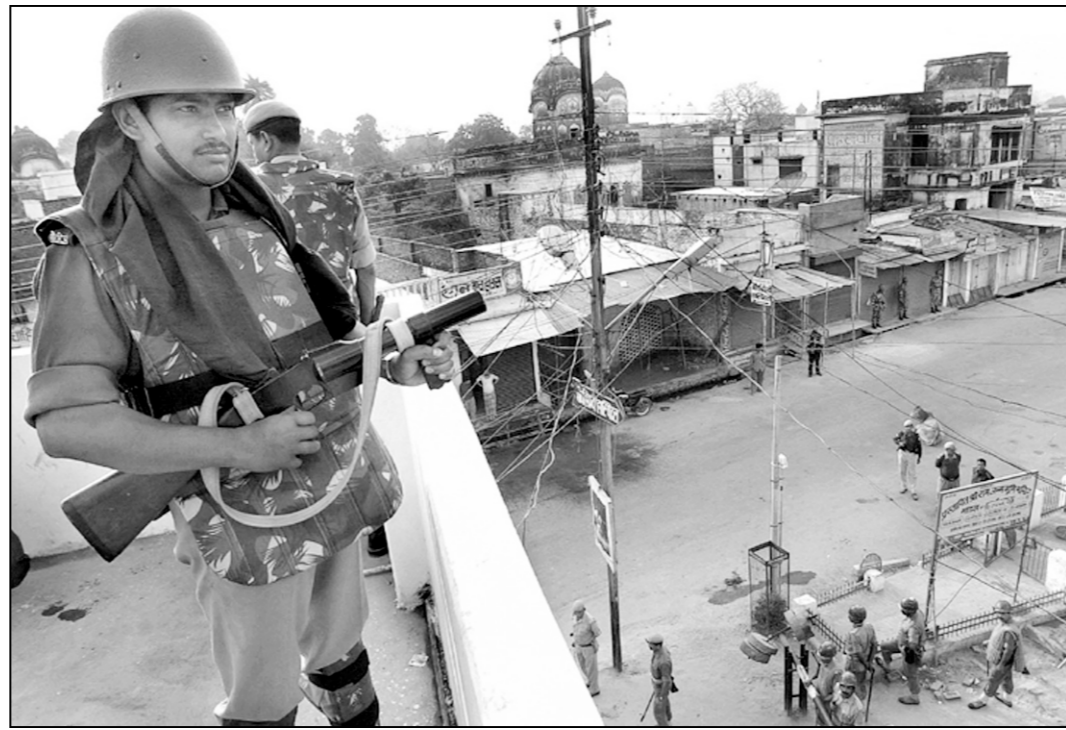
This made Dulal group angered and the factory area in the afternoon and locked in a gunfight with Humayun group, leaving Khorsheed, a supporter of Humayun group dead.

Sigh For the Open

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of us have very noble ideas to implement, on the vacant areas 5 star hotels, resorts, housing, roads, shopping arcades and so on and so forth.

"Do we need these facilities, at the cost of the very limited amount of the natural bounty that could so far survive our civilized onslaught! Spoiling nature means ruining the oxygen source the unpolluted treasure of our lifeline. Our growth and development is not only anti-oxygen, it is also anti-nature and anti-life. Yes, we are building a life, which is threat to life itself.

I think, it is time, we unite and rethink about all our development priorities. We must learn to grow in nature, live with nature. Perhaps we need to be a little more humane, and slightly humble to live in close touch of nature. Perhaps, we should take some initiatives to take care for oxygen and to keep air unpolluted. That is urgent no doubt.



A paramilitary soldier armed with a teargas gun holds a position on a roof in Ayodhya yesterday where Hindu activists were preparing to force a showdown with security forces and stage a banned religious ceremony near the site of razed mosque.

'Al-Qaida may look for new base in SE Asia or ME'

AP, Singapore

Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network has lost its "sanctuary" in Afghanistan and may look to Southeast Asia or the Middle East to relocate its terror headquarters, the head of the FBI said yesterday.

Too much is unknown about terrorist networks in Southeast Asia and more intelligence gathering is needed in the region, FBI Director Robert Mueller said in Singapore.

"What we do not know is the extent of the support in Southeast Asia," he said. "We don't know all we would like to know about their means of communications. We do not know all we would like to know about the financial transfers, the money sources."

Dozens of suspected militants have been arrested in Southeast Asia for allegedly planning a series of attacks. Officials say the men belong to a radical Muslim group called Jemmah Islamiyah, which Singapore says planned to blow up

the US Embassy.

Mueller, who was speaking to the American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore during a tour of the region, lauded Singapore for foiling an alleged attack against Americans and for detaining 13 suspects.

When asked if the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had been interrogating suspected militants in the region, Mueller said: "I can't tell you."

Mueller also praised the efforts of law enforcement officials in Malaysia and the southern Philippines in the war on terror. He said Indonesia was cooperating in the war and that it would be counter-productive to criticise the country for lagging behind.

He said Indonesian law enforcement officials had recently toured the region to gather intelligence which shows the world's largest Muslim country is gearing up for "possible action against terrorist suspects within its borders."

Mueller was due to visit

Indonesia later Friday and said his main objective was to establish a rapport and understanding with authorities there. While in Singapore, Mueller met Singapore Minister of Home Affairs Wong Kan Seng and the head of Singapore's Internal Security Department, Benny Lim, the government said in a statement.

After Indonesia, Mueller will head to the Philippines Sunday. He visited Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia earlier in the week.

Warning that Southeast Asia and the Middle East are fertile ground for al-Qaida to relocate after Afghanistan, Mueller said it was crucial to stop terrorists from "establishing sanctuaries" and that the FBI was placing a heavy emphasis on training law enforcement officials in other countries to help fight terror. Mueller did not specify which countries the FBI was most concerned about. Al-Qaida is believed to be operating in at least 60 countries.

AL decision to quit JS Political leaders voice mixed reaction

UNB, Dhaka

Political leaders yesterday expressed mixed reaction to Awami League's preliminary decision to resign from parliament.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal General Secretary Hasanul Huq Inu said repealing the "Father of the Nation Portrait Preservation and Display" Bill would lead to a confrontational situation in the country.

Blaming the BNP-Jamaat alliance government for making parliament ineffective he said, "No history of the Liberation War can be written ignoring the role of Bangabandhu."

He said people would not accept distortion of the history of the country's Liberation War of 1971. "The parliament that failed to protect the heritage, culture and history of the Liberation War is meaningless."

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Mujahiddin Islam Selim termed the opted resignation an outcome of political bankruptcy of the ruling class.

"It is the reflection of our political system and anarchy," said the leftist relegating it to "internal crisis of the ruling class."

However, Selim said it is a 'dead parliament and there is no use of such parliament.'

The communist leaders said that last time it was Awami League that failed to bring BNP to parliament and this time BNP failed to bring in Awami League.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, however, did not support the resignation of Awami League from parliament at this stage.

Menon said, "It is exclusively the decision of Awami League, but resignation cannot solve any problem."

Protest of misdeed and misuse of the government should be voiced inside the parliament, he said, adding that many similar issues would crop up in future.

"Parliament and parliamentary system is gradually becoming irrelevant," Menon said about the crisis at the infantile stage of the new parliament.

Main opposition Awami League Thursday decided on principle to resign from parliament in protest against government move to remove the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from offices and the government's five months of "misrule."

BTTB: defaulting MPs

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The previous records show that the BTTB could not realise outstanding bills of the members of the previous parliaments.

Present State Minister for Health Amanullah Aman, MP was the biggest defaulter of telephone bills in the seventh parliament, with an outstanding of Tk 14 lakh and 47 thousand against his two telephones -- Tk 6 lakh and 82 thousand against one and Tk 7.65 lakh against the other.

Former minister for home affairs and telecommunications (MOPT) Mohammad Nasim owed over Tk 2.60 lakh (still unpaid) when he was an opposition MP of the fifth parliament, and former commerce minister Tofail Ahmed owed over Tk 2.59 lakh (also unpaid) when he was an opposition lawmaker of the same parliament.

The ruling party legislator, Manzurul Hossain Munshi, from Comilla-4 constituency is the second-biggest defaulter with an outstanding of Tk 13,30,955.

Advocate Abdul Latif of Brahmanbaria has an outstanding of Tk 9,50,000.

Segupta Yasmin, member of the seventh parliamentary and former member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has an outstanding of Tk 3,02,614.

Mustafizur Rahman, former MP from Chittagong-3 constituency, has an outstanding of Tk 3.16 lakh.

The ruling party MP, Golam

Mohammad Siraj, re-elected from Bogra-5 constituency, has an outstanding of Tk 6.65 lakh, Zainal Abedin Faruk of Noakhali-1 Tk 5.58 lakh, Joyнал Hajari of Feni-3 Tk 2.02 lakh.

Syed Ashrafur Islam of Kishoreganj-3 constituency has an outstanding of Tk 5.36 lakh, Mohammad Shahjahan Tk 3.17 lakh and Ali Reza Raju Tk 3.78 lakh.

Nadim Mostofa has an outstanding of Tk 3 lakh 43 thousand, Kabir Hossain of Rajshahi-2 constituency Tk 3 lakh 90 thousand, AKM Mustafizur Rahman Tk 4 lakh 31 thousand, Sultan Mohammad Monsoor Ahmed of Moulavibazar Tk 4 lakh 89 thousand, Karimuddin Bharsah of Rangpur Tk 3 lakh 90 thousand, Kader Siddiqui, MP Tk 1 lakh 67 thousand against two telephones.

Nazimuddin Alam of Bhol-4 constituency has an outstanding of Tk 5 lakh 17 thousand, Latif Siddique of Tangail Tk 3 lakh 86 thousand, Barkatullah Bhulu Tk 2 lakh 79 thousand, Dr. HBM Iqbal Tk 1 lakh 80 thousand, Dr. Mizanul Huq of Kishoreganj-4 Tk 1 lakh 12 thousand, Sadek Hossain Khoka Tk 74 thousand and Rawshan Ershad Tk 58 thousand.

However, no action has so far been taken against the defaulters other than issuance of letters to them.

Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST), a civic-rights organisation, issued legal notices against

the secretary of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, the BTTB chairman, the chief accounts officer (CAO) and director (revenues) of the BTTB for necessary steps to realise the outstanding telephone bills amounting to about Tk 6 crore.

The BLAST said the government has been deprived of huge revenues as the MOPT and the BTTB did not take appropriate measures to realise the outstanding telephone bills of lawmakers, although the BTTB disconnects general subscribers' lines if there is any outstanding bills of over three months.

Asked about the latest case, the BLAST officials said it is pending with the court.

"It might take up to July to August to begin hearing on the case," an official said.

Housing complex

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Under the circumstances, residents of the estate now numbering about 10,000 feel very uneasy. On the one hand, a choking congestion is created within the residential area due to too many buildings within the complex and thus depriving the children of the estate of any open space or playgrounds. On the other hand, the proliferation of small shops of various kinds inside the complex adds greatly to the congestion.

Hasina: Treason

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Hasina went on, "We tried to gather at central Shaheed Minar but, police obstructed us. Then we gathered at the Bailey Road residence of Dr Kamal. But we were taken to Martial Law Summary Court Number 1 at the cantonment. Forty leaders were taken there blindfolded. During that mid-February winter, we were given only two blankets.

"It's a deep-rooted conspiracy that I'm being implicated in the murders of Joinal and Zafar," Hasina said suspecting "a new phase of political hobnobbing" between Khaleda Zia and fallen autocrat Ershad.

"The prime minister wants to bring treason charge against me. We shed blood in liberating this country. We can't do anything against the interest of Bangladesh."

She alleged that her assistant private secretary Bahauddin Nasim was tortured at DGI headquarters to force him to make statements so that "they (government) can frame against me whatever charges they wish."

The former prime minister said, "Are we living in a democracy? If it is a civilian rule and not martial law, then how can my assistant be kept five days without food and how he can be kept hanging upside down at DGI?"

Hasina alleged that 'third-degree' (highest level) torture was inflicted on Nasim. Any person can hardly withstand such torture she said and recalled that during Ershad's rule, customs officer Rofiq died due to 'third-degree' torture.

The medical board for Nasim was formed with members from pro-government Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB). The board in its report said Nasim was suffering from "mild pain", Hasina claimed.

She bitterly criticised the prime minister for her recent statement that the opposition was trying to create a law and order situation in the country. Blaming the opposition and protecting the cadres of ruling alliance will not help improve the situation, she said.

Quoting from press reports, Hasina said, 18 murders took place on Thursday alone while other criminal offences continued unabated across the country.

Hasina urged members of the Awami Aijnibi Parishad (pro-AL lawyers) to make a list of victims of repression by ruling alliance cadres and give them legal aid. The victims could not file cases because of refusal by police to take cases and threats by alliance cadres, she claimed.

AL leaders advocate Rahmat Ali, Shahara Khatun and newly-elected president of Dhaka Bar Association SM Altaf Hossain also spoke at the function. It was attended by AL Presidium member MA Jalil, former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru and city AL President Mohammad Hanif. Immediate past general secretary of the Association Montajuddin Mehedi conducted the programme.

Dreamland of prospect

FROM PAGE 10

be had from the vast forest of the nature at hand and transportation facility through the river Karnaphuli, the first ever paper mills of the country was set up at Chandraghona. Considering easy import of crude oil, the lone oil refinery -- Eastern Refinery Ltd -- is also located in Chittagong.

Scores of firms and industries and installations can be named that grew up here centring the port and the physical infrastructures of Chittagong and depending on the vast natural resources.

The country had around a 50 million workforce. But with a dearth of capital and technical know-how, it was desperately looking forward to her own market niche to survive in the intense competition of the world market. Hence the idea of exclusive Export Processing Zone (EPZ) came up.

Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) was set up in Chittagong in 1983 to promote, attract and facilitate foreign investment in Bangladesh for rapid economic growth through industrialisation.

Built on a meagre land of 453 acres (183.40 hectares), CEPZ offered the potential investors facilities and a congenial investment climate free from cumbersome procedures.

Owing to easy access to Chittagong port and relatively better infrastructure facilities the prospective investors preferred to set up production bases in this south-eastern region of the country.

As such the capacity of CEPZ in term of setting up of new enterprises had reached its optimum level and gained recognition from different world bodies related with trade and financial sector within a very short time.

Success story of CEPZ inspired the investors when Young One Corporation of Korea, the major foreign investor firm in Bangladesh, started setting up in the first ever private EPZ in the country on the other bank of the river Karnaphuli here.

The infrastructural development of this private EPZ named as KEPZ on 2492 acres of land at Anowara along the coast of the Bay of Bengal (to the south-east of Chittagong Port) is nearing completion.

When the development of infrastructure and setting up of the EPZ is completed involving US\$ 200 million and US\$ 1 billion respectively, KEPZ would create employment opportunity for one lakh people and indirect job for another fifty thousand.

All these developments are taking place centring the Chittagong Port that gained far more development with immense scope for further expansion and prospect. According to Chittagong Port Authority sources, at present the port has an annual turn up of around 1500 vessels.

As many as 70 per cent of the imports and 80 per cent exports of the country are done through the port making an annual income of Tk 450 crore. The port handled a total of 19.69 crore metric tons of cargoes in 4.86 lakh TEUS (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit Standard) of containers and 3.42 lakh boxes last year with the turn around of 1660 vessels.

Efforts are on to increase capacity of the port to a targeted annual handling of 5.09 lakh TEUS of containers by the year 2005 and 7.22 lakh TEUS by 2010.

In line with the development of Chittagong, government also took necessary steps to declare it the Commercial Capital of the country.

To make Chittagong the commercial capital in true sense the foundation stone of the country's first World

Trade Centre that would play a pivotal role in accelerating the economic growth of the country was laid on December 20, 1995.

An international airport, M A Hannan International Airport, has been constructed at a cost of Tk 612 crore that went into operation on March 24, 2001. To facilitate the investors as well as other passengers and ensure easier journey to and from Chittagong, flights are being introduced and operated in newer routes gradually and increasingly.

There are immense hopes and scope as well. And if everything goes right with the necessary initiative, cooperation and required policy of the government, Chittagong is sure to turn into the most ideal place for investment and regional trade pivot in South and South East Asia.

In view of this setting up of a deep sea-port at Kutubdia after feasibility tests has been under consideration. If constructed, apart from saving the said huge amount, the deep sea-port can easily earn the country an annual revenue of Tk 25 to 30 thousand crore, given that transit facilities are provided to Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and the eastern provinces of India through it.

There were scopes for setting up industrial parks in the CHT surrounding areas of the district such as Rangunia and Kaptai. These untapped areas with huge forest and natural resources could be excellent source of raw materials for agro-based industries.

They could be turned into lucrative areas for agro-based industries such as processing, packaging and canning plants for vegetables, fruits, fishes, poultry and dairy products. Apart from this,