

Commission declares

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affiliation with the BNP-led ruling coalition, the Commission members said they would prove their neutrality through their work.

Justice Sultan denied that the ACC members were appointed on political considerations while Maniruddin Ahmed, one of the two ACC members, said, "I can make a public declaration that I'm not involved with any political party."

Maniruddin, a member of the Pay Commission, resigned from the Pay Commission before taking charge as a member of the ACC.

The Commission held several rounds of meetings with anticorruption officials yesterday at the renovated building of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac), which was dissolved with the formation of the Commission on Sunday.

M Maniruzzaman Mia, another member of the ACC, did not attend the meetings.

Welcomed by the former Bac officials and staff a portion of whom are supposed to get absorbed into the ACC, the Commission members went round different sections of the office and enquired about the manpower and facilities.

"We will have to work in a jihadi spirit," Maniruddin told the officials.

During the meeting, the ACC chairman told the former Bac Director General Maj Gen (Retd) MA Matin to work as secretary of the Commission. A notification in this regard might be issued today, said sources.

Another notification, meanwhile, was circulated yesterday that all the officials and employees of the now defunct Bac will work with the Commission.

During the interview, Justice Sultan and Maniruddin firmly said the Commission would work with honesty and sincerity and without any influence from outside to fulfil people's expectations and achieve its objective to combat corruption.

Asked how the Commission will deal with influential quarters and politicians in and outside the government, who are involved in corruption, Justice Sultan said: "Everyone irrespective of their identities will be subject to trial by the Commission...there will be no government control and the Commission will work freely."

Talking on the practice of withdrawal of corruption cases against political leaders after they come to power, he said, "We will not file any case with political motive and cases will be filed only on the basis of evidence. Our investigations will be neutral."

Maniruddin, however, declined to make a comment on the issue. He said: "Observe what qualitative changes the Commission makes."

Asked whether they would deal with the withdrawn corruption charges against political leaders, the ACC chairman said, "Withdrawal amounts to acquittal. And those who had filed the charges didn't protest after the acquittal."

Mentioning that cases against Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had been quashed by the High Court and those against Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina awaited disposal, he said, "This Commission will not file any case to harass politicians."

Asked what they would do if the government cuts their budget and other facilities once the Commission takes steps against the government top brass, he said, "The government would have no control

GRAFT CASE Charge-framing hearing against Tarique Zia Jan 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

on the budget."

Pointing out that corruption has been rooted in all sectors including the police, customs and lower courts, the ACC chairman said reforms are necessary to combat the menace and they would take steps in this regard.

Asked which sector would be given priority, he said, "We are not beginning with any preconceived idea. Let us start our work first."

Talking on a huge number of pending corruption cases, he said that the Commission would have separate tribunal, judges and experts to dispose of the cases.

On whether it would be possible by existing experts to deal with the changing patterns of corruption, he just said: "Let us see."

Replying to a question on whether existing laws are enough to combat corruption, he said, "Is anything enough always? If necessary, we would recommend amendments of the laws."

Asked whether the police officials, who themselves face allegations of corruption, would help the Commission in investigating graft charges, Maniruddin said: "We are bestowed with extra power and will have our men to verify their information."

Talking on the allegations of corruption by Bac officials now being absorbed into the ACC, the members said the Commission would scrutinise their activities for selection of the honest ones to work for the Commission.

Saying that it would not be possible to combat corruption if the commoners, media people and all quarters do not co-operate with the Commission, Justice Sultan said: "You journalists best know the sources of corruption. Help us by providing information and advice."

"People have to have courage to give statement during the investigations of corruption charges and thus help us cut corruption."

During several meetings with different levels of anticorruption officials at the office, Justice Sultan and Maniruddin were briefed about the lack of logistics and the absence of an organisational structure of the Bac.

Briefing them on the overall situation, the former Bac DG Matin said many of the officers and employees of Bac had been apprehending that they would lose their jobs due to the formation of a notary public.

When contacted, Salma Khatun said she intends to use the money from the sale of her daughter to buy clothes for her two other daughters. Abdul Mazed said that he decided to buy the baby because he has no children of his own. He added that he will pay Salma Khatun an additional Tk 2,000.

Baby sells

FROM PAGE 1
Kashem Haider said the VAT waiver would provide Bangladeshi products with a competitive edge in world market in the quota-free regime.

"We welcome the government for the decision. The government may lose some revenue but the incentive would benefit the country's economy in the long run," the executive of the country's apex trade body noted.

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The pathetic incident overwhelmed all present there.

Cabinet secretary

FROM PAGE 1
can replace him now.

Reliable sources said there were separate moves to get Secretary of the Planning Division Fazlur Rahman or Secretary of the Ministry of Communications Shafiqul Islam appointed to the highest post of the civil administration. Both are currently serving on contract.

They pointed out there is no instance of appointment of cabinet secretary from among contractual appointees. And this is why the prime minister declined to appoint someone else on contract service to the post of cabinet secretary, which is superior to the posts of other secretaries by four steps.

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Indecision on the issue persisted for over a month and the government finally promoted Saadat to the post of cabinet secretary on May 6, 2002. Since then he has been facing obstacles and disturbances at times, especially at the time of extension of service, officials said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, an influential cabinet minister on condition of anonymity said currently there is a vacuum of "efficient, uncontroversial and neutral" officials at top level of the administration.

He said there are a good number of efficient joint secretaries but the situation at the upper level of the administration is miserable. "The government is dead against giving contract service to retired officials but lack of efficient officials at top level is forcing it to go for this," he added.

The ministry has already awarded the job of printing seven books to private sector, the minister said, adding, "The government has a plan to transfer printing of more books to private sector in order to bring dynamism at the NCTR."

The government will also take steps to monitor price and quality of rapid reading books and complete printing and distribution of board textbooks by the middle of the year aimed at printing and distributing board textbooks well ahead of an academic year.

He also blamed the journalists of not having enough knowledge about the country and the society, and suggested them learning more before commencing with journalism.

Later, he visited some printing presses at Arambagh and Fakirpul area in the city.

Mayur Khoka and Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas yesterday visited the market.

The traders however said no-one

came to help them after the fire. "The

major, ministers or high government officials visited the burned down market but we could not reach them to express our agony," a trader told reporters yesterday at the market.

Several traders alleged that the market committee leaders, the BNP men and their people have kept them on watch since the fire broke out and barred them from talking to the press and the authorities.

Traders who run the business with small amount of capital badly need immediate aid, said another trader.

"The authorities should remove the rubble from the spot to make it suitable for our business to star again," he said.

Mayur Khoka and Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas yesterday visited the market.

He said a high powered monitoring committee led by an additional secretary of the ministry has been formed.

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