

## ACC secretary

FROM PAGE 1

to contact later. On the other hand, all through yesterday, Maj Gen (Retd) MA Matin worked as the director general (DG) and acting secretary to the commission as usual.

"I'll continue working as the DG and acting secretary as long as the commission wants me to," Matin told reporters while leaving the office at about 3:30pm, it being a Thursday.

Sources said Reza did go to the ACC office yesterday and had an hour-long close-door meeting with some top commission officials but did not join.

Commissioner Maniruddin said it was not even a (formal or official) meeting, as the newly appointed

secretary was yet to join. "He came here just to see us and left after some casual talks."

The government, ignoring the commission's selection of Matin as its secretary, named Reza a former acting secretary, for that post, sources said.

The government on March 6, 2002 contracted Matin as the DG of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) for a two-year term. After his service contract expired in March last, the government issued a notice asking him to carry on at the office until further orders.

He was absorbed into the ACC and has been serving as its DG since its formation on November 21. The commission also asked him to work as its acting secretary.

ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan also sought government approval of Matin's appointment as the ACC secretary, but has not received any response yet. The government rather cancelled Matin's contract on December 11.

In a move against the cancellation, the ACC chief instructed Matin to continue working as before, saying it is for the commission to decide about the commission.

"During its formation, the commission was authorised to absorb all the Bac staff and to decide whom to allow to continue here," Justice Sultan had asserted earlier.

An ACC high official on condition of anonymity yesterday said, "The commission is to choose its secretary and the government to approve it. But, in this case, it is the government that takes the decision, even without the commission's knowledge."

Many of the ACC officials apprehend the very independence of the commission would be thrown into question if the government in this way imposes its decision on it.

Justice Sultan yesterday declined to make any comment on the appointment of Reza. "Everything will run in line with law" was his only remark to the journalists on duty at the ACC office.

Talking to the BBC Bangla Service yesterday evening, Commissioner Mia said the commission would decide its stance on the issue after scrutinising the legal aspects.

Asked whether there would be two ACC secretaries from now on, Mia said, "No. The man who had been appointed later was told to come later."

## PM orders completion of Saarc preparation

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed all concerned to complete the preparations for successful holding of the forthcoming Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit.

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The consultant says other than interested banks, the following institutions should be considered as potential investors. These are

The much-awaited cellular phone service of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) will be launched on December 28 with a tariff rate higher than expected.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will formally inaugurate the service styled as "Teletalk" at a function at the International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office.

This will be a soft-launch of BTTB's mobile phones, which will be made available to public by early next year, sources said.

The BTTB will initially provide 2.5 lakh cell phone connections of GSM (global system for mobile communications) technology.

The call tariffs of BTTB's mobile phone have meanwhile frustrated the prospective customers who expected lower rates from the state-owned company.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the telecom watchdog, has already approved the tariff rates for BTTB's mobile phone.

BTTB will charge Tk 5 per minute for peak hours (8:00am to 8:00pm) and Tk 2 per minute for off-peak hours for its post-paid package.

The zonal call tariff will be Tk 3 per minute and inter-zonal Tk 5 per minute, sources said. The subscribers will be able to call to zonal fixed phones also.

The call charge for prepaid phones will be Tk 4 per minute during peak hours and Tk 2.6 during off-peak hours. All the tariffs are excluding value-added tax (VAT).

Post-paid subscribers will have to pay monthly rent of Tk 350 plus VAT.

The BTTB will charge Tk 4,500 for a post-paid connection and Tk 3,000 for a prepaid connection, excluding the price of handsets.

The opposition called upon all irrespective of party affiliations and opinions to work for overthrowing "this failed and rejected government".

President of Workers Party of Bangladesh Rashed Khan Menon and its General Secretary Bimal Biswas in a statement yesterday criticised the government for increasing prices of diesel and kerosene and said the step would bring negative impact on agricultural and transport sector in the country.

They urged party's leaders and workers across the country to protest the decision by holding rallies and processions.

against communal harmony and Bangladesh's interests, the prime minister urged the members of all religious communities to raise their voice against those canards and project the true picture of the country.

She said the government works for the welfare of all religions as it believes in religious values. And she mentioned that the government in last three years had provided grants as far as possible for development of mosques, temples and churches and for celebrating religious festivals.

Khaleda observed that the social combination of Bangladesh is such that scope remains open for people of all faiths to attend a festival of any religion. As a result, the social ties among various religions get further strengthened.

The prime minister hoped that the Christmas festival would also make communal cordiality and inspire all to work unitedly for national development.

Referring to government support to Hindu Welfare Trust and Buddhist Welfare Trust, she said the formation of a welfare trust for the Christians is under process.

Association secretary general P Costa said the Muslims are their best security guarantee and they are enjoying it much.

The government controls the prices and imports of petroleum products through Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation that is set to incur a loss of Tk 2,200 crore. It pays the government more than Tk 3,500 crore as import duties yearly.

The agitators will bring their programme to a close by holding a 'grand rally' in Dhaka and laying siege to Ahmadiyya headquarters

## Rupali Bank to find

FROM PAGE 12

bank has a large national network of 493 branches in all districts. It has been in business for over 33 years and is widely recognised and regarded by depositors and borrowers alike.

Rupali, a share market-listed corporate entity, also has access to significant low-cost deposits, enabling it to fund loan and other credit products at competitive rates.

"Bangladesh will be regarded by many investors, particularly those from outside the country, as having a difficult and challenging political, security, economic and banking environment," warns the GBRW, while identifying the risk factors.

Parliament functions with difficulties, with the government facing non-selective opposition to almost all its policies and initiatives, it further observes. Serious deterioration of law and order is another risk factor. Some banks, like the NCBs, suffer from political interference, corruption and union influence.

Frequent major flooding, uncertainty in the garment export sector arising out of the post-Multi-Fibre Arrangement regime, continued weakening of taka against the US dollar and Bangladesh's image as the world's most corrupt country also pose major risks to investors.

Overstaffing, union problems, negative attitude to privatisation and failure to hold shareholders' meeting and pay dividends cloud the image of the Rupali Bank.

Rupali is regarded to have a board of directors that has failed to operate in accordance with modern corporate governance standards, making the bank less competitive, the consultant notes. The investor interest will depend critically on the restructuring and the treatment of the problem loans and addressing the deeply entrenched board and management weaknesses.

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International Finance Corporation (IFC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Agha Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), Commonwealth Development Company (CDC), German Development Company (DEG), Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO).

These institutions have already invested in various financial institutions. For instance, the AKFED owns 70 percent of Investment Promotion and Development Co (IPD). The ADB acquired 20 percent of United Leasing Company, and the IFC and Housing Development Finance Corporation of India each owns 15 percent of Delta-BRAC Housing Finance Co.

Some of them have already invested in banks. The FMO, for instance, owns 30 percent of the Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd, the IDB 7.5 percent of Islami Bank and the IFC 20 percent of BRAC Bank.

The government appointed the GBRW back in May, tasking it with releasing a set of information of memorandum in the next month for formally seeking funding from interested investors.

Draft 3-yr

FROM PAGE 1

adopted under donor pressure in early 2002. The IPRSP is the guiding force of the government's anti-poverty measures, for which the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have already given more than \$700 million in loans.

The donors have said their future loans to Bangladesh will be given on the basis of the PRSP's directions.

The government earlier this year formed the national steering committee to design the PRSP and assigned Planning Commission Member Mesbahuddin Ahmed to serve as the focal person. The committee held discussions at national and regional levels with cross-section of people and organisations, and gathered feedback from representatives of the poor in drafting the paper.

around Dhaka is increasing day by day. Improper application of pesticides and disposal of industrial wastes are adding to the pollution.

Water of Dhammendi, Gulshan-

Baridhara and Ramna lakes is also

not usable due to pollution.

"Declining groundwater level will greatly increase risks during earthquakes. It could lead to subsidence of the clay soil plate Dhaka is situated on," warned Dr ANH Akther Hossain, managing director of Wasa.

Asked about the remedial actions, he said the wetlands and water bodies should be preserved to recharge the groundwater level.

"It is not possible for us to decrease the withdrawal of groundwater as treating surface water in full volume is not possible due to contamination. So we should go for groundwater recharging," said Akther.

He feared that the continued fall of groundwater table could even lead to desertification in and around Dhaka.

Quoting a Wasa report, officials said that in the 1970s, underground water table was on an average 11.3 metres below the surface and in the 1980s 20 metres.

Sources say two treatment plants of the Wasa can only meet 20 percent of the city's demand of water by making use of the surface water sources. The rest is met from deep tubewell water.

Wasa deep tubewells pump out 140 crore litres a day. Moreover, there are over 400 private deep tubewells.

## Zealots declare

FROM PAGE 12

in November last year.

The government has no right to ignore people's demand for declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim by giving in to any pressure by any foreign nation or country," he said during a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

The IKNMB will launch the agitation through laying siege to the Ahmadiyya concentration in Bogra town on February 25 next year.

They will also besiege Ahmadiyya-inhabited areas in Sylhet, Comilla, Mymensingh and Narsingdi in the next eight months.

The IKNMB will hold 'grand rallies' and bring out burial processions carrying shroud in six divisional headquarters. It will also hold similar programmes in all district and upazila towns between January and September.

The IKNMB will hold Khatme Nabuwat mahfil and bring out burial processions in all police station areas in the capital in October and November.

In a bid to mount pressure on the government, the IKNMB will march to parliament when it is in session.

The agitators will bring their programme to a close by holding a 'grand rally' in Dhaka and laying siege to Ahmadiyya headquarters

in Bakshibazar on December 23.

They announced to replace the signboard at the Ahmadiyya concentration by one reading: "This is a place of worship for the Kadianis (Ahmadiyyas). Do not mistake it for a mosque."

Declaring 2005 as 'Khatme Nabuwat Year', Nazmul Haq said, "The government's ban on Ahmadiyya books was merely an eyewash as the government is yet to implement it."

"We don't want to drive the Kadianis from this land but we don't want them to introduce themselves as Muslims," said IKNMB Amir Mahmudul Hasan Munzazi.

"We'll leave the street if the government passes a law declaring them non-Muslim."

The IKNMB leaders, meanwhile, asked civil society leaders to stop standing beside Ahmadiyyas.

Claiming that civil society leaders Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Shahrir Kabir and Hena Das and journalist ABM Musa have no association with common people, the IKNMB leaders threatened them of dire consequences.

"You are experts in your own subjects and pass your time doing research. Don't interfere with religious matters, it is not your subject," Nazmul Haq said, pointing to them.

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## PM opens Hajj flight

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated the Hajj flight-2005 of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, praying for safe journey and performance of holy Hajj by the pilgrims.

The day's first flight carried 274 pilgrims to Jeddah.

The prime minister requested the pilgrims the guests of Allah -- to pray for peace, welfare and prosperity of the country and the Muslim Ummah.

This time, Biman will operate 85 Hajj flights, including 15 for ballotees holed out to Harbhajan Singh at long-off. Aftab had shown the urgency with two fours and a straight six but Rajin Saleh failed to

operate Hajj flights from Chittagong.

Bashar found an inspiring part-

ner in another Chittagong boy Aftab Ahmed (30 off 49) and the pair put

on 62 crucial runs before Aftab holed out to Harbhajan Singh at long-off. Aftab had shown the urgency with two fours and a straight six but Rajin Saleh failed to

operate Hajj flights from Chittagong.

Bashar also perished when he

tried to clear the boundary but

during his 65, he became the second

Bangladeshi batsman to reach 1,000

runs in both forms of the game after

Mashud.

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