

ACC's concern and the needful

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) which started functioning from November 2004 is yet to settle many organisational and procedural formalities. To the organisation's well-wishers and the general public this might appear to be annoying and frustrating but it must be admitted in all fairness that a very sensitive organisation entrusted with an onerous and an apparently thankless job should not rush without clearly setting and prioritising its task and fixing the procedure before embarking on the substantive job. The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC), the predecessor of ACC, for various reasons, better left unsaid, could not display an inspiring speed in disposing of the enquiries and criminal cases. The staffing pattern of the ACC and the quality of investigative and enquiring personnel and their superiors, inherited from BAC has, for practical reasons, not undergone any drastic change and thus it is perhaps not pragmatic to expect the ACC working wonders under the circumstances. The redeeming feature of the present dispensation has been the appointment of three distinguished citizens at the apex of the organisation to effectively steer the independent outfit through an admittedly unpleasant course.

The Daily Star in its editorial of 30th July last has considered the view that the ACC "has started showing positive dynamism at last." Reportedly, this view has been formed following the ACC Commissioner Professor Maniruzzaman's visit to Police Headquarters and the National Board of Revenue recently, with the stated objective of exchanging ideas and settling down to a minimum programme of action to combat corruption and improve the services. These two organisations were characterised as the nerve centres of public outfits known for a high degree of corruption in the public perception. According to the editorial, the Inspector General of Police has responded positively to the ACC proposals for joint surveillance, formation of a committee to review corruption situations every three months, and putting up of a list of general diaries and cases filed on a notice board at every police station with a copy of the same transmitted to the higher authorities.

Without any shred of doubt the above are a set of admirably well-intentioned proposals though the modalities of working out joint surveillance and formation of committee to review corruption situations may not be as smooth as expected in view of existing procedures and arrangements to do the same. The suggestion of putting up a list of general diaries and cases filed on a notice board at every police station with a provision

of sending copy to higher authorities has to be seen in the light of existing police regulations, in public interest, and examining the police department's reported readiness to work as a complementary force may be worthwhile exercise.

To do so as indicated in the last portion of the preceding paragraph, one needs to look at the concerned police regulations. A reference to the pertinent regulations is considered significant because readers may presume that the guidelines for running the day to day police administration or more specifically, the Police Regulations of Bengal popularly known as PRB, is silent with regard to inspection and supervision in so far as it relates to the general diary entries and filing of cases at the police station.

General diary and the perspective

Regulation 377 (c) of the PRB says "The general diary as prescribed under section 44, Police Act 1861 and sections 154 and 155, Code of Criminal Procedure shall be kept in all police stations..."

While the public would like the ACC to take exemplary measures for tackling corruption of the high and the mighty, it would greatly appreciate if efforts are made to venture beyond the happenings and dwell on the corrective measures that are required to prevent our polity from sliding into a situation where corruption becomes an accepted way of life.

Regulation 377 (b) says "Every occurrence which may be brought to the knowledge of the officers of police shall be entered in the diary at the time at which it is communicated to the station...."

Regulation 377 (c) says "all complaints and charges preferred, whether cognisable or not, the names of complainants, the names of all persons arrested, the offences charged against them, the weapons or property of which the police have taken possession and the names of the witnesses who have been examined" shall be recorded in the general diary. Further "In the case of a person arrested, his name, the number of the case in which arrested, the dates of arrest and receipt in station lock-up, the date and hour when forwarded to court, and the expenses, if any, incurred in feeding shall be noted".

In addition to the above, a host of many items pertaining to the political and socio-economic situation of the area under the concerned police station's jurisdiction has to be entered in the general diary. With the passage of time and under the changed circumstances, many such entries are not made and no note is taken of that although the regulations have not been modified. However, the aspect that requires our

attention is that the suggested putting up of list of general diary entries, presumably the important ones, on the notice board of every police station would involve extra manpower when existing strength is considered inadequate with additional sanctions of posts hard to come by and will entail extra expenditures on stationeries in a situation marked by acute shortage of forms that are legally prescribed and regulatory in nature.

While the above deficiencies are surmountable in nature, the issue that is of paramount importance in view of ACC's aforementioned concern is perhaps the element of supervision over the activities of police station. The PRB was very particular over this vital management aspects as regulation 377 (J) says "The diary shall be completed, and copy of it dispatched in a cover to the address of the Circle Inspector (since redesignated as ASP circle) one hour before the departure of the post, whatever time that may be, and shall be a complete record of all occurrences during the previous 24 hours." Again regulation 192 (a) says "Circle Inspectors shall prepare

daily a report from first information reports and general diaries received. This report shall be submitted through the Sub-Divisional Police Officer to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, and then forwarded to Superintendent for submission to District Magistrate."

Regulation 192 (c) says "This report shall show all cases and unnatural death reported, all general matters of importance that have been reported by the subordinate police Regulation 51 (a) says that "The chief object of an inspection is to see that the police are working properly for the control and prevention of crime," and inspecting officers should pay particular attention to

i) conduct of investigations;
ii) the collection of information about criminals;
iii) the local progress of crime; amongst others.

Regulation 55 (c) says "A Circle Inspector shall supervise every case within his circle; and he shall visit the place of occurrence and test the evidence in every such case that is of importance."

Some of the relevant regulations have been cited above only to highlight the fact that the system of reporting, supervision, accountability, checks and balances in the oldest regulatory outfit, i.e. the police, are laudatory. Somewhere

along the journey of accelerated progression we have deviated from the golden path at our own peril and are now groping for a spectacular way out without caring to concentrate on the basics. The system as enunciated in the book is alright and it is mostly the functionaries who have been less than earnest in embarking upon proper course of action. The wisdom of yesteryears still hold good.

Joint surveillance and review of corruption situation

While the above suggestions are well intentioned, it might be profitable, under the present circumstances, for the ACC as an independent and supra-body to advise concerned department, to gear up their respective intelligence outfits by way of modernisation of its methods and selection of appropriate personnel for performing the extremely taxing job of unearthing corruption and framing charges. The ACC itself might consider upgrading and equipping its staff about the complaints of economic offenses committed by the high and the mighty. Reportedly, ACC has already sought assistance from external agency. This is a step in the right direction. At the risk of sounding redundant, it has to be said that the process of enquiries and investigations to find out the illegal acquisition of wealth is a complex and demanding job and there is a compelling need to allocate greater resources for that.

Review of corruption situations is a very wide subject. Previously, the BAC primarily looked into the corruptions of public sector and more specifically of the public servants. The Cabinet Division of the government was the apex body for final disposal. Now that the ACC is an independent outfit, the modalities for review of corruption situations have to be worked out in view of the changed situation and the sheer vastness of the subject. Several ministries including the Home, Finance and Law, amongst others, have to be involved in order to devise a framework for reviewing the entire gamut of corruption. In particular, proactive measures to prevent corruption from the very departments or centres of economic activities that breed greater degree of corruption, have to be encouraged.

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Muhammad Nurul Huda is former IGP and Secretary to the Government.

The big bang

GM QUADER

PEOPLE were simply caught by surprise on the last 17th of August with a series of about 500 simultaneous small bomb blasts in the 63 district headquarters out of a total 64, across Bangladesh. At least two people were killed and more than 100 others injured.

The Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Leaflets, issued in the name of that organisation, were found at many of the places where the explosions took place. These leaflets said: "Democratic system of governance is anti-Islamic as it vows for supremacy of people instead of supremacy of God. The present judiciary is not in conformity with Islam as it does not practice Islamic law. It is time to implement Islamic Republic and the Sharia law in Bangladesh" and "Bush and Blair be warned to get out of Muslim countries."

So far it is known, the terrorists had used commercially available explosives in small quantities for assembling crude improvised explosive devices fitted with timers. There seemed to be no intention of mass casualty. The explosions were meant to demonstrate the reach and the extent of the following of the organisation right across the country.

We have been listening from different sources and finding news paper reporting every now and then about the rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh. High handed activities of militant Islamic groups in different parts of the country especially in rural areas dominated the media at times. But, leaders of the political parties of the alliance now in power along with intelligence and law enforcing agencies of the government always denied those as untrue or at best exaggeration of fact. They even went up to the extent of terming those people as traitors who, as per their language, are engaged in fabricating and circulating baseless or blown up stories of terrorist activities by Islamic groups. As per government this is being done with an ulterior motive, with the intention of tarnishing the image of the country to discredit the government.

Under the circumstances, the general population seemed to be unprepared for such a well orchestrated bomb attack. The bombs were detonated at or near government offices, courts, press clubs and other important public places. The success of the operation lies in the fact that it occurred at different places covering the entire country almost simultaneously; the places of occurrences were crowded with people inclusive of law enforcing agencies at the time of the blast yet there happened nothing which could hinder the successful completion of the entire episode.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia condemned those responsible as "enemies of the country, people, peace, humanity and democracy." Mr. Lutfozzaman Babor, the state minister, Home, described the incidents as an organised attack. Mr. Abdul Mannan Bhuiya, the secretary general of BNP the major partner of the ruling coalition and an important minister of the government said, the persons responsible for the attack whoever they might be would be caught and punished.

Can these statements be considered to provide enough assurance that the militants with their terrorism agenda would now be dealt with by the government with full thrust? Could the people of this country feel safe from destructive activities of these fanatics after what has been said and done by the government? It is doubtful or to be more precise it may not be doubted that it is not going to happen. This is not the first time that similar occurrence took place. The nation had to listen to such rhetoric every time without finding any effective effort but talk, not to speak of having any positive

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outcome.

In early 2002 an Islamic militant group calling themselves Shahadat al Hiqma which was operating mainly in Rajshahi region, came forward with their fundamentalist agenda. They called press conference and distributed leaflets and hand bills propagating anti-state messages quite openly under the very nose of the government and its different agencies. Interestingly, the government was somehow found deliberately overlooking the happenings. Naturally, the political and civil society created a big hue and cry with the help of the press. As a consequence, on February 9, 2002, the Government had banned the Shahadat al Hiqma. Some leaders of that group were arrested at that time. It was known that those arrestees were subsequently released.

Crack-downs had been ordered by Begum Khaleda Zia after bomb explosions at Dinajpur on February 13, 2003, and after a gunfight on August 14, 2003, between the police and JMB activists in Joypurhat. But, that crack-down fizzled out after a period of time. All those arrested between February and August, 2003, had been ordered to be released and not many were prosecuted in courts.

The government of Bangladesh again declared crack down on Islamic militants on February 23, 2005 and banned activities of some

militant Islamic groups. But, it was widely believed that the said crack-down on Islamist militants was in fact an 'eye wash' to satisfy the donor community.

Apparently, the said crack-down was initiated out of panic of stoppage/curtailment of aids from donor countries and agencies. The decision of crack down and ban on militant outfit in Bangladesh coincided with reports that Western donor-countries had held an informal meeting at the World Bank headquarters at Washington DC, from which Bangladesh was excluded. The members discussed the deteriorating security situation in Bangladesh. European Union (EU) countries were contemplating the curtailment of aid to Bangladesh because of the failure of the government to act against religious extremist elements, which had stepped up attacks not only against the leaders of the opposition Awami League headed by Sheikh Hasina, but also against the Ahmadias and moderate Muslims advocating secularism and religious tolerance and against Bangladeshis working for foreign non-governmental organisations

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(NGOs). On that very day during Washington meeting, when the EU officials called for action, the ban order was issued.

EU officials, reportedly, described the situation in Bangladesh as very precarious and alleged that governance had failed due to reluctance to act against the religious extremists due to electoral considerations. Consequently, while the EU demand was not accepted, it was agreed by the participants that they should once again mount pressure on Dhaka to act against the extremists and improve governance and law and order.

Though the crackdown should have been against all the Islamic militants but the government's ban order was selective. It was against Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jam'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) only. Governments ban did not extend to another militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HUJI) which was rumoured to have definite linkage to Al Qaeda of Osama bin Laden and his International Islamic Front (IIF).

As had been already described, the government and its alliance partners always vehemently opposed the very existence of militant organisations in Bangladesh. But, the denial lasted till 23rd of February, 2005, the day of Washington meeting of donors. It is

really interesting to note that how in a day the government suddenly not only accepted the fact of existence of terrorist Islamic groups in Bangladesh but started to make accusations and take actions against the militant fundamentalists for creating anarchy and social unrest by misleading groups of youths exploiting their religious sentiments. In the first place it is puzzling how a government could so deny a fact with full knowledge of the same just to maintain personal and partisan interest.

It is understood, the government has been facing a serious image crisis abroad for the last several months over the militant issue. It is also coming out that major donor countries and agencies have been raising the issue in every meeting with the government. Some donors even threatened to stop aid and co-operation.

Fundamentalist militant Islamic groups consider secular progressive forces and left leaning political parties not only as rival but as enemy who are to be eliminated if necessary. Political parties at present opposed to the alliance government including the main opposition Awami League fall under the category of elements to be considered enemies by the militants. In that way, the Islamic militants and alliance government seem to have same or similar political goal in respect of dealing with main opposition Awami League and its partners.

It has been seen that rise of so called Islamic fundamentalist forces have rather benefited the alliance government. The militants targeted their activities including torturing and killing of the political elements towards those who are also opposed to the present alliance government. It is obvious, personal and partisan interest of party in power took priority over national interest, the issue of rule of law or ensuring safety and security of people in addressing the militant fundamentalist activities of so called Islamic groups.

Whatever commitment given or actions taken by the present alliance government so far in respect of curbing the so called Islamic militancy have been found to be to hush up the hue and cry and to let the situation cool down. Nation is yet to see any meaningful effective move to prove that the government means business. It may be concluded that whatever the present government says or does, the people of this country may not find any option but to pray to Allah for their safety and protection from the fanatics who are out there to kill innocent people in His name.

GM Quader is an MP

Tiger Woods, a golf legend at twenty-nine!

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

ALTHOUGH the writer is an avid sports fan, golf never appealed to him. How can golf be a true sport when golfers are not required to run? Growing up, I had heard of American golfing legends Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. In 1973, I had to watch Tom Weiskopf's victory in the British Open only because the golf major shared BBC television time with England vs. West Indies cricket test. The following year, the British Open was in the news because the winner, South African Gary Player, had a black caddy. The spotlight shone on golf again in 1986, when at the age of 46, Jack Nicklaus won the Masters for his 18th and last major. Then a phenomenon called Tiger Woods burst into the scene in 1996 and turned not only golf, but also the sports world topsy-turvy.

In a sport that is lily white, Tiger Woods is "Cablanasian" (Tiger -- coined acronym for his heritage: his father Earl Woods is black with Caucasian and Native American blood; his mother, Kultida, is Asian (Thai.)) Earl Woods named his only son "Tiger" after a Vietnamese friend. Exactly nine years ago, The New York Times chastised Woods, then a 20-year old sophomore at Stanford University, who had won three Junior Amateur US Opens and three Amateur US Opens, for not turning pro. In August 1996, Woods turned pro and opened his first press conference at Milwaukee with, "Hello, world!" The golf world has not been the

same since.

Experts predicted that Woods would take at least two years to win his first tournament on the pro circuit. Woods won two tournaments within two months! Then in April 1997, in golf's first major, The Masters at Augusta, Georgia, Woods won by twelve strokes, breaking Jack Nicklaus's record for the lowest under par score (1965). Tiger Woods did not win another major until the PGA championship of 1999. In the intervening 28 months, he retooled his swing. For the uninitiated, it appeared ludicrous that someone who had won the prestigious Masters tournament in such a runaway would not be happy with his swing. Woods believed that not enough of his club face was making contact with the ball, with the potential to make his drives wayward. As he revamped his swing under the tutelage of Butch Harmon, Woods won only one minor tournament and no major in 1998. He remained winless in 10 majors in a row, dating back to his first.

By early 1999, the fruits of his new swing were in evidence -- he won eight tournaments that year including the last major, the PGA at Medinah, near Chicago. The year 2000 will go down in history as the greatest year in golf by any player. Woods won nine tournaments. After a horrendous first round, Woods failed to win the 2000 Masters, which was very deservedly won by Fijian Vijay Singh. Then Woods took off and won the next three majors. Woods decimated the field at the US Open at Pebble Beach, California

LETTER FROM AMERICA

It is easy to forget that Woods is only 29. Golfers are supposed to reach their prime in their 30s. Jack Nicklaus won his last major in 1986 at the prime age of 46! Prize money has skyrocketed since Tiger Woods entered the world of professional golf exactly nine years ago. Already Woods has earned over 50 million dollars playing golf, compared to over five million that Nicklaus earned.

and won by an unprecedented 15 strokes! Next, he won the British Open at the home of golf, Scotland's St. Andrews, by eight strokes, thus completing the career Grand Slam at the tender age of 24! In August 2000, he outdueled Bob May to win the PGA Championship for his third major in a row. Woods won his fourth major in a row, the 2001 Masters, thus completing what is known as "Tiger Slam." No one in the history of golf had held all four major titles at the same time.

Woods won the first two majors of 2002 -- the Masters and the U. S. Open at Bethpage, Long Island, New York. With his victory at Bethpage, Woods had won seven of the previous 11 majors. The rest of the pro golfers became despondent. Major winner Davis Love III openly said that when Tiger starts well, the rest of the field plays for second. Providentially for the rest of the field, Tiger once again was unhappy with his swing. This time he enlisted the assistance of a new swing coach,

Hank Haney, to redesign his swing again with the much hotter Nike driver, in order to drive the ball straighter and further. Once again, he would go winless for 10 straight majors, from Bethpage's US Open in June 2002 to Masters, April 2005. In the intervening period the critics were mercilessly critical of Woods' unending tinkering with his swing. Even Butch Harmon, Woods' previous swing coach, criticised Woods openly after the US Open in June 2004, a criticism echoed by the writer in the pages of The Daily Star last year. As Woods reconstructed his swing, Vijay Singh, who had a sensational year in 2004, replaced Woods as the world's number one player for a few months.

Once again Woods confounded his critics. With his new swing, this year he won his fourth Masters and finished second at the US Open to Maori New Zealander Michael Campbell, a tournament Woods would have won with half decent putting. In July, Woods completed his



second career Grand Slam by winning by five strokes his second British Open, also held at St. Andrews. That was Woods' 10th victory in the majors; only Walter Hagan (11) and Jack Nicklaus (18) remain ahead of him.

This year's final major was held

in the Baltusrol Golf course, in Springfield, New Jersey, forty miles from the writer's residence. The writer's two sons were fortunate enough to get jobs as volunteers at the major tournament (August 8 - August 14). The first morning, the writer received a call from his very excited younger

son very early in the morning: "Tiger Woods just passed 10 feet in front of us!" (Woods practices at dawn.) My sons followed Tiger Woods' practice for full 18 holes on Tuesday and beseeched Woods for his autograph on the Baltusrol flag by shouting, "I got up at four in the morning for you, Tiger!" Woods follows strict rules; autographs only before and after his rounds, not during it. Fortunately, my sons got every other top players' signatures, including that of the second-ranked player in the world, Vijay Singh. On the final day (Sunday), for all 18 holes they followed Woods and his entourage which always includes his mother ("wears very bright colours," my sons observed) and his Swedish wife, Elin. Woods always wears a red T-shirt during the final round on Sunday. When my younger son found Elin and the entourage also wearing red, he asked Elin whether the red colour they were wearing was to show support for Woods. She said, "Yes." Woods' caddy, New Zealander Stevie Williams' parents were also in the entourage following Woods. Occasionally, Williams came to enquire after them. On occasions when Woods came to the entourage for a drink, my sons noticed that he appeared to be in a trance and never looked at anyone!

At Baltusrol (par 70 course), Woods shot himself out of the contention with an error-filled 75 in Thursday's first round, which made every other top player relax and play well. With errant putting, Woods barely made the two round cut, on the number, on Friday,

Still, although struggling with his putting, with his characteristic charge on Saturday and Sunday, Woods finished tied for 4th. Phil Mickelson deservedly won the PGA Championship for his second major. Nevertheless, with two wins (Masters and British Open), a second place finish (US Open) and a tie for 4th in PGA Championship, Woods came within four strokes of winning golf's Grand Slam in the same year. Last week, he won the NEC Invitational for his 5th win of this year and his 45th career victory.

It is easy to forget that Woods is only 29. Golfers are supposed to reach their prime in their 30s. Jack Nicklaus won his last major in 1986 at the prime age of 46! Prize money has skyrocketed since Tiger Woods entered the world of professional golf exactly nine years ago. Already Woods has earned over 50 million dollars playing golf, compared to over five million that Nicklaus earned. Tiger Woods holds the record for the lowest score in three majors (Masters, US Open and British Open) and shares the record in the fourth, PGA, with Bob May. There are only two records that motivate Tiger Woods: Nicklaus's total wins in the majors (18; Woods has 10) and Sam Snead's total number of PGA tour victories (82; Woods has 45). If Tiger Woods remains healthy and as motivated, it is inconceivable that those goal would elude him. These days, as professional golfers tee-off with Tiger Woods, they know that they are playing alongside a living legend, who happens to be only 29-year old!