The resignation of the four advisors did not just originate in their apprehension of being associated with a partisan administration but in their perception that the president had reduced the advisory council to a subservient role which was contrary to the basic tenets of the institution of caretaker government. Some examples of the perceived undemocratic conduct and partisan bias of the decision making process under the CTG, which were discussed in the media, are presented below:

- The appointments of two new members of the Election Commission after the leave of absence of the Chief Election Commissioner Justice M A Aziz. These appointments by-passed the council and each one of the appointees was politically affiliated to the 4 Party Alliance.
- The direction by the chief Advisor, without consulting his advisors, to the chief election commissioner, to set a date for the elections.
- The repudiation of the "package" agreement negotiated by some members of the advisory council with the principal political alliances. This "package" which was prepared though extensive consultations within the advisory council, presided over by the chief advisor, in fact carries the signatures of all members of the advisory council including the chief advisor.
- The deployment of the army, contrary to the explicit advise of the members of the advisory council.
- The retention of some of the key portfolios of Establishment, Foreign Affairs, Home, and Law by the chief advisor. In the previous CTGs these portfolios were typically assigned to particular members of the advisory council and such portfolios as law enforcement overseen by a committee of advisors. In the present CTG the chief advisor made himself chairman of a number of such key committees, and then, in his executive capacity, by-passed particular decisions of the committee, because of his control over the particular ministry.
- The decision to advise the attorney general to move the chief justice in his residence to over-ride the judgment of the Appellate Division on the legality of the assumption by the president of the office of chief advisor, by issuing a stay order. This important action took place with consulting the advisory council.

Many more such examples of decision making by the chief advisor, bypassing the council or overriding the decision of the oversight committee of the council, could be cited and will no doubt come to light when the full story of this sad phase in our history are brought to light.

Whilst debate may continue about the facts and circumstances governing the conduct of the chief advisor, such perceived undemocratic and partisan conduct strikes at the very foundations of CTG, thereby compromising the credibility of the forthcoming elections. In the eyes of the Grand Alliance and possibly a much wider public, for all practical purposes, the present chief advisor may no longer be deemed to be presiding over a non-party CTG but appears to be perpetuating the mandate of the 4 Party Alliance. The reconfigured advisory council, following the resignation of four of its members, appears to have visibly lost its independent voice and now seems to be functioning largely as the mouthpiece of the chief advisor, which in effect has eroded the non-partisan character once projected by the CTG prior to the exit of the four advisors.

The inability of the CTG to project a non-partisan identity seems to have impacted on the actions of the Election Commission. Notwithstanding the leave of absence of the Chief Election Commissioner, Justice Aziz, and the belated leave taking of SM Zakaria, the remnants of the Election Commission appear to feel no pressure from the CTG to project the transparency and ensure the credibility of the forthcoming elections. The Election Commission, thus, appears to lack the urgency, motivation and competence to preside over a genuinely free and fair election. Within the time available to it the commission is unlikely to fully correct the electoral roles before the polls which will seriously compromise the credibility of the election and according to Justice Naimuddin Ahmed may even be constitutionally challengeable. As far as the Grand Alliance is concerned, they have lost all confidence in the Election Commission.



STAR

Decisive action by the CTG in 2001 in reshuffling the administration at all levels gave clear signals to all members of the administration, that the CTG was determined to ensure a free and fair election. A certain amount of reshuffling of the administration by the CTG has perhaps taken place but these actions have generated no confidence within the Grand Alliance that the administrative architecture put in place prior to the resignation of 4 Party Alliance has been reconstructed to ensure a non-partisan character to the administration. Crucial positions such as the office of the attorney general or the heads of the security agencies or at the crucial district, upazilla, and local level where the actual conduct of the election is overseen, have been largely left intact. As a result Grand Alliance electoral candidates perceive