

# New ACC to spare none

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beyond the reach of the law.  
Formed in November 2004 with a chairman and two commissioners, the ACC failed to be functional even in over two years.

Throughout their stints and also before stepping down, the former chairman and the commissioners complained that they had been facing numerous legal and procedural snags in carrying out their duties.

Communications Adviser Major General (retired) MA Matin however observed that the ACC had been rendered a crippled body from the very outset by the four-party alliance government.

Against this backdrop, the present caretaker government decided to recast the commission and accordingly, appointed the new chairman and commissioners.

In the days following the resignations of the former ACC members, ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain has been overseeing the function of the commission. The ACC Act states that if the commission should ask anyone to submit their wealth statement the decision must come from a meeting of its chairman and commissioners.

But during the last couple of weeks when there did not even exist a commission, the ACC secretary

unveiled a list of 50 people accused of graft and asked them to submit wealth statements within a 72-hour time frame that ends at 5:00pm tomorrow.

Sources said the new commission would give an ex post facto approval to the ACC secretary's activities since February 7 or they might ask the government for an ordinance validating those.

Besides, it would have meetings with officials at the local administrations and representatives down to the union level across the country and seek their cooperation in combating corruption.

It also plans to caution everyone in the administration and other sectors—private or public—that from now on no one would be spared of action against corruption.

The ACC will increase its manpower and hire expert lawyers so that the graft cases are dealt with effectively.

In the past, the anti-graft body lost many a case that eventually amounted to certifying as not guilty the ones it had brought charges against. The reorganised commission will be determined not to repeat those.

It will look to different other measures as well including requesting the countries and organisations

having a vast experience in tackling corruption for counsel and technical support.

Sources said a number of countries are ready to help the ACC once it becomes functional.

Meanwhile, the ACC secretary has asked all staff of the commission to submit wealth statements within march 15.

Contacted, Hasan Mashhud yesterday told The Daily Star that he was ready to take up the new challenge that is to curb the corruption menace. He however declined to elaborate on his plans before assuming the post formally.

On the first day, the ACC members are likely to meet the president and the chief adviser. They would also meet Law Adviser Mainul Hossain and MA Matin, both members of the anti-graft advisory council, to discuss various aspects of combat against corruption.

## Prof Taher murder

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In the meeting chaired by RU Vice-chancellor Prof Altab Hossain, most of the members of Syndicate, the highest decision making body of the university, opposed Mahiuddin's joining the department, sources said.

According to the service rules of the University Act 1973, no university staff who is accused in a killing case, can join his service until disposal of the case.

The teachers and students of geology and mining department had also been strongly opposing his joining the department.

Earlier some pro-Jamaat Syndicate members who assured Mahiuddin of acting in his favour in the Syndicate meeting asked him to submit an appeal to the university administration for joining the department, campus sources said.

## Delhi for stable

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eighth member, he said, India, the host for the next summit in April, would work for ensuring that the grouping became a vehicle for peace and progress in the region.

Kalam made it clear that success of the dialogue process with Pakistan was "predicated" on that country's stopping terrorism from its territory.

"We remain concerned over infiltration and cross-border terrorism," Kalam said in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament, marking the start of the budget session.

Noting that the Indo-Pak dialogue process was "progressing steadily", he said, its success "is predicated on Pakistan fulfilling its commitment not to permit any territory under its control to be used to support terrorism in any manner".

"It is a matter of satisfaction that the dialogue process with Pakistan is progressing steadily. The Composite Dialogue, the Joint Commission and the Anti-Terrorism Institutional Mechanism have provided a structural framework within which all major issues are being discussed," he said.

Kalam gave an overview of India's relations with the US, Russia, China and Japan as also with neighbouring countries.

## Belhasa

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The PDB gave the BON Consortium 20 acres of land for this project.

On February 7, Obaedul in a letter to the PDB sought "some more days" for making his defaulted payment.

Wanted in multiple graft and criminal cases for swindling Tk 594 crore from Oriental Bank, Obaedul blamed the press for negative reports on him, saying it affected his cash-flow situation.

On January 21, the BON Consortium gave the PDB a Tk 6.22 crore cheque as land rent and initial development payment. But it bounced.

As per the Land Lease Agreement (LLA) on Meghnaghat 2, the PDB can cancel the contract instantly for such a fault. The PDB, however, gave it one month's time.

The bid selected for the project was actually not submitted by Orion as it submitted its name as one of the two partners of a Japanese bidder, Nisso Eiwi, which has the experience to qualify for building such a power plant. But Nisso disappeared from the scene in 2004 and Orion brought in the German company Steag as the lead bidder.

The name of the consortium, however, remained the same—BON, representing Belhasa, Orion and Nisso—although it should have been BOS.

The government initially rejected the gross anomaly but accepted and approved the bid by August 2005 following pressure from Hawa Bhaban.

Orion signed a series of contracts with the PDB and other authorities for the power project and signed the LLA and the final deal on October 11 last year. The cancellation of the LLA automatically terminates the other contracts.

# Early election

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but the government should focus on the election since that is the main task of the caretaker government," a BNP leader said.

Sheikh Hasina in a discussion meeting on February 20 categorically said the people will not accept any government beyond the constitution, while Khaleda Zia during her meeting with Steve Chabot expressed fear that if the caretaker government stays in power for too long it might give rise to 'complications'.

Leaders of both the parties said the Election Commission (EC) reconstitution and depoliticisation of the administration were the main prerequisites for holding a free, fair and acceptable election, and the interim government already accomplished those, now the EC should take proper steps for holding an election without any delay.

"As the Election Commission has been reconstituted, we hope that they will start discussions with political parties and take our opinions, so that we all can move towards an election," Sabar Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the AL president, told reporters after a meeting between Sheikh Hasina and Steve Chabot on Thursday.

Uncharacteristically echoing Sabar, BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan said, "A few actions have been taken regarding the Election Commission and the administration, now the government should take steps to hold the election. Otherwise the very concept of the caretaker government system

might become questionable if an unelected government runs the country for too long."

"There is no logical ground for taking more than six months to hold an election," Nazrul Islam Khan told journalists after a meeting between Khaleda Zia and Steve Chabot in Hawa Bhaban.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Huq Inu yesterday said the question of the current caretaker government's tenure can only be settled by the chief adviser to the caretaker government keeping his promise of holding the election within the shortest possible time.

But a delay in holding the election in the name of a credible poll is not desirable, he said.

He also said the duties of the caretaker government are to establish an effective and neutral administration and to ensure a congenial atmosphere free from the influence of black money and muscle for holding a fair and credible election.

He was speaking at a national committee meeting of JSD in Shaheed Col Taher Auditorium in the capital.

He said uncertainty and chaos will engulf the political arena if holding of the election becomes uncertain.

He also proposed initiation of talks among the caretaker government and the political parties to avoid unintended political strife and misunderstandings.

# People to decide

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model around the world. "But whether or not that leadership in his arena will transform into a political leadership remains to be seen," Chabot said.

Asked for his opinion about some perception that the western countries support Prof Yunus in trying his luck in politics to bring about a qualitative change in Bangladesh's political culture, he said, "US will be an observer. We support democracy, free election and human rights. We like to see those continue in Bangladesh."

The leading American Congressman further said Washington would not determine which party to go to power or how many parties will be here in this country.

With regard to the Nobel laureate economics professor's debut in politics he drew a regal analogy, saying that in the United States, some people had thought that an actor should not get into politics. However, Ronald Reagan became a good president of the United States.

"And ultimately the professor's success will be determined on whether or not he will be able to draw people's support to make him a good political leader," said Chabot, who had nearly an hour-long meeting with Prof Yunus over the lunch Thursday.

"We are not pushing our policy on your government...our role is to encourage to hold election sooner," the American lawmaker said about the much-debated election matters here.

During his shuttle mission through Dhaka's sociopolitical circles, the Congressman met with Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and business leaders. All his talk focused on the current political situation and the matter of holding the stalled parliamentary elections.

Chabot said the United States likes to see the elections sooner than later, as Bangladesh, after all, is a democracy and democracies have elections. "We won't like to see drag on the election for long period of time," he told the reporters.

About his meeting with Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina -- the two paramount leaders of the two rival political camps -- the Congressman said both the leaders now preferred elections in the near future without specifying the time.

In this context, he observed that the incumbent caretaker government is now cracking down on corruption and undertaking some reforms that are also important. But he felt that these should be addressed in a short period of time.

Asked if foreign investors could feel discouraged in the event of a long absence of an elected government, the US lawmaker said, "I think one of the things that speak highly about Bangladesh is that it is a democracy and it has elected lead-

ers, which is respected by the United States and countries around the world."

If Bangladesh has no elected government year after year, it would give the wrong signal to those countries, the people and companies who might be interested in making investment in this country, he observed.

Chabot repeatedly stated that it is not up to the United States to determine the specific dates for the election, it is up to the people, the government and the constitution of Bangladesh.

On the arrests on charge of corruption, he said it is important that the basic civil rights and human rights are exercised during the crackdown and those who are in jail should be treated with respect. "They [arrested people] should not be abused or tortured and any violent methods should not be used against them, and that is important for the US government."

About the fate of the Trade Bill Bangladesh is pursuing for duty- and quota-free access to American market, he said free trade is a challenging issue in the US Congress. However, he said he personally believes that both the countries could be benefited when tariffs are kept down and barriers reduced.

He mentioned that Bangladesh exported goods worth \$ 3 billion last year against Bangladesh's imports totalling \$ 300 million from the United States.

Chabot, however, said foreign companies take decision about doing business and investment in any country considering political stability and the level of corruption. He noted that the level of corruption in Bangladesh keeps US investment low.

"If Bangladesh is successful in bringing down corruption and ensuring political stability, more businesses will come to this country," he told the journalists.

# US soldier gets 100-yr for rape, murder of Iraqi girl

REUTERS, Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

A US soldier who pleaded guilty to raping and murdering a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and killing her family was sentenced to 100 years in a military prison, the US Army said on Thursday.

Sgt Paul Cortez, 24, was also given a dishonourable discharge under a plea agreement he reached with prosecutors prior to a court-martial that spanned three days, an Army spokesman said.

Cortez, of Barstow, California, was not eligible for the death penalty under his plea agreement, accepted by the court on Wednesday.

Col Stephen R Henley, the military judge, found Cortez guilty of conspiracy to commit rape, four counts of felony murder, rape, housebreaking and violating a general order.

Under terms of his plea agreement, Cortez agreed to testify against the three others still facing prosecution in the case.

During the court-martial, a sometimes emotional Cortez recounted how he and his companions drank whiskey, played cards and plotted to attack the family at Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad, in March 2006. The group poured kerosene on the girl's body and lit her on fire in an attempt to cover up the crime.

Cortez testified that Spc James Barker, who also pleaded guilty in the case, and a since-discharged soldier, Pvt Steven Green, chose the family to attack because there was only one man in the house and it was an "easy target."

Once at the house, Green, the suspected ringleader, took the girl's mother, father and little sister into a bedroom, Cortez said, while he and Barker took the teenager, Abeer Qassim al-Janabi, to the living room, where they took turns raping her.

He said Green, who has been charged as a civilian and awaits trial in a Kentucky jail, shot the girl's family in another room and then raped the teenager.

## Pakistan test-fires

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Although Pakistan and India have been careful to avoid saying whom they suspect, Indian officials have hinted that they suspect Pakistan-based Islamic militants, a claim dismissed as "absurd" by Pakistan.

On Wednesday, Pakistani and Indian officials signed an agreement in New Delhi to reduce the risk of an accidental nuclear war between them.

Pakistan became a declared nuclear power in 1998 in response to nuclear tests by India.

Pakistan also tested its first missile in 1998, while New Delhi tested its first atomic bomb in 1974.

After witnessing the missile test on Friday, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Gen Ehsan Ul Haq, congratulated the scientists and engineers for "achieving an important milestone in Pakistan's quest for sustaining strategic balance in South Asia," the military statement said.

It also quoted Haq as saying that "Pakistan's strategy of credible minimum deterrence was fully in place and was a guarantee of peace in the region."

In separate messages, Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also congratulated the scientists and engineers for upgrading the missile.

## Short notice

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houses on that land, locals said.

Locals said the government acquired the land in 1961-62 to rehabilitate non-Bengali people. That time most of the local people got compensation for their land. But still those owners of the land and their families are living in Damalcourt area as the government could not secure possession of the land until now.

"The government can acquire this land if they want but they should think about us also," said freedom fighter Nuru Mia who was born at Damalcourt and now living there with his family.

"We buried our parents here in Damalcourt. How can we leave this place forever within three days?" he said.

Many families who rented house in Damalcourt area were seen making preparation to shift from there.

Hearing that the government people would come with bulldozers and knock down everything, Adel Mia hired a pickup to move to Gazipur. But many others are yet undecided where to go.

"House rents in the surrounding areas as well as in Mirpur, Badda, Kamrangchiar and Tongi have greatly increased. Moreover, the owners are demanding 'advance money' for three months," said Lily Begum.

"The government should have given us at least a month's time so that we could move from here smoothly," said the woman who had enrolled her son and daughter in schools at Damalcourt last month.

# Lone burn unit

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of the large number of patients while the task requires at least 400 regular plastic surgeons, said BPSU Project Director Prof Samanta Lal Sen.

"There should be one burn unit at every divisional hospital as it is very tough and troublesome to bring a burn patient with almost 40 percent injury to Dhaka from remote places," he said.

Besides, it takes more than Tk 1 lakh to treat a burn patient with such major injury at private clinics, which most people cannot afford, he added.

Decentralisation of burn management facilities is a must, said BPSU Assistant Professor Muhammad Quamruzzaman, adding that doctors at the upazila and village levels should be provided with at least a month-long training on the basics of burn injury management.

According to a BPSU report, incidents of burn in 2006 saw 52 percent flame burn, 26 percent electric burn, 14 percent scald, and six percent chemical burn.

Childhood burn causes death to 340 children (aged 1-18) every year, according to a 2003 survey of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh (CIPRB).

"If we consider children between 1 and 17 years, burn is the fifth leading cause of illness from which over 3,400 children become permanently disabled," Dr Sairur Rahman Mashreky of CIPRB said.

"The risk of death is very high if one burns 40 percent of the body," said Ronald William Hiles, a retired plastic surgeon from Britain. "In the west people get earlier treatment, especially designed burn unit and especially skilled manpower immediately. Besides, burn situation is far better there because of preventive measures," he added.

In Bangladesh the number of doctors and nurses should be increased considering the huge number of patients. At least 1,000 doctors are needed to deal with the patients including four hundred regular surgeons, Hiles told The Daily Star.

Hiles has been visiting Bangladesh regularly for the last couple of years to conduct surgery free of cost at DMCH.

Increasing awareness about burn prevention is a must. Multi-sectoral

involvement is also important for burn prevention, Hiles said, adding that political personalities, professionals, and the electricity authorities should work in this regard.

Post-burn contracture can be severe and may lead people to deformity, experts said, stressing the need for immediate treatment to burn victims.

However, it is good news that the BPSU is going to increase its capacity by adding 50 more beds soon with all advanced facilities.

"The construction is over and an administrative process is going on to recruit manpower. A proposal for 200 employees has been submitted to the director general of Health Directorate about four months ago," said Samanta Lal, who has been struggling for the last 21 years to establish the burn unit and run it full-fledged.

Government recognition of the burn unit was an important factor and from now it can train doctors and nurses interested in building career in burn management, he said.

A distinct ward with 20 beds will be provided for woman victims of acid burn while a 26-bed plastic surgery ward, 14 paying beds, a rehabilitation and physiotherapy ward with 10 beds, a 20-bed cleft-lip operating theatre (OT) will be set up at DMCH.

Another 20-bed ward will be established for surgery of various injuries and deformities of hand as well as for training doctors and nurses with audiovisual facility.

A total of 200 employees, including 41 physicians and 47 nurses and physiotherapists, are needed to run the fully-fledged burn surgery unit.

Burn management is a total care, which can even take six months to complete. So, rehabilitation facilities as well as dedicated and trained doctors and nurses must be there at burn units, experts said.

# CBA leader

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Bakir came to limelight during the immediate past BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government's regime as he was often found on TV screen and newspaper pictures sitting or standing beside influential BNP leaders including immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia.

A collective bargaining agent (CBA) leader, Bakir, has managed to grab three vital posts of three renowned workers organisations simultaneously. Bakir is still the president of Sonali Bank Employees Union, and of Bangladesh Bank Employees Federation, and the joint secretary of Jatityabadi Sramik Dal.

Getting benefits as a CBA leader, Bakir became an owner of houses, flats and cars. He caught everybody's attention in 2005 when he spent Tk 15 lakh and used 150 microbuses and private cars during the parents' association election of Viqarunnisa Noon School.

Bakir has not been sitting in his chair in Sonali Bank for quite a while now although he has been enjoying all the benefits from the bank. He allegedly uses a car worth Tk 40 lakh of the bank, which is usually reserved for the use of the chairman or the managing director.

Bakir as the Sonali Bank CBA president recruited around 200 employees since 2001 and allegedly took Tk 50,000 to Tk 1 lakh in bribe from each of them.

Bakir purchased a piece of land in his home district Narail and built a market on it. His wife owns a six-storey eye-catching building at Malibagh in the capital. Bakir uses

two mobile phone sets, and his wife, son and daughter use separate mobile sets on top of them having two T&T land phones in their residence.

His wife, son, daughter and brother-in-law have separate accounts in Dhaka Bank and Islami Bank where they have savings of cores of taka.

He spent Tk 1 lakh every month for his loyal followers in anticipation of the next general election.

Bakir, who was born at Jugania village under Kalia upazila in Narail on November 28, 1957, received his secondary school certificate from Bagudanga High School in 1973 and the higher secondary certificate from Gopalganj Government College in 1975. He got involved in politics of Chhatra Union during his days in college.

Bakir joined Sonali Bank as an office assistant in 1977. He received his bachelor's degree (pass course) from Jagannath University College in 1979 while working.

Bakir joined Sonali Bank Trade Union as a general member in 1984. He became popular after being elected the publicity and publication secretary of Sonali Bank Employees Union. He was also elected the president of the organisation in 1988.

Bakir as a CBA leader played an active role in the anti-Ershad movement. He was elected the president of Sonali Bank Employees Union four times. He was also elected the president of Bangladesh Bank Employees Federation in 1991.

# Military options

**FROM PAGE 16**  
of a Security Council ultimatum to suspend uranium enrichment.

In London senior British government officials fear that US President George W Bush will attack Iran before his final term in office ends in a little less than two years time, The Times reported yesterday.

They fear that Bush will seek to "settle the Iranian question through military means," the daily reported, quoting unidentified senior British government sources.

"He (Bush) will not want to leave it unresolved for his successor," one of the sources told The Times.

According to The Guardian daily, meanwhile, much of the intelligence provided by American agencies about Iran's nuclear facilities to UN inspectors has turned out to be unfounded.

Citing unnamed diplomatic sources in Vienna, the base for the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), most of the tip-offs about supposedly secret weapons sites have led to dead ends.

"Most of it has turned out to be incorrect," an unidentified diplomat at the IAEA with detailed knowledge of the agency's investigations told The Guardian.

"They gave us a paper with a list of sites. (The inspectors) did some follow-up, they went to some military sites, but there was no sign of (banned nuclear) activities."

"Now (the inspectors) don't go in

blindly. Only if it passes a credibility test."

The reports follow comments made on Thursday by British Prime Minister Tony Blair who insisted there is "no planning" under way for an attack on Iran, and added that he knew of "nobody" in Washington who was planning an invasion either.

"You can't absolutely predict every set of circumstances that comes about but sitting here now talking to you, I can tell you Iran is not Iraq," Blair told BBC Radio.

"There is, as far as I know, no planning going on to make an attack on Iran and people are pursuing a diplomatic and political solution for a good reason -- that it is the only solution that anyone can think of as viable and sensible."

Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett also said on Thursday that Britain remained committed to a negotiated solution and would now consult with its international partners to find a way to prevent Iran acquiring the means to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran has failed to comply with a United Nations Security Council demand to halt uranium enrichment, according to a report issued by Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the IAEA.