

## 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 Hosein and MA Matin, both members of the anti-graft advisory council, to discuss various aspects of combat against corruption.

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## 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," Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the AL president, told reporters after a meeting between Sheikh Hasina and Steve Chabot in the capital.

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.

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 Hava 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.

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 Mahmudia, 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.

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## 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.

Col 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.

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## 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 Sadiq Rahman Mashrey 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

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 women 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.

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

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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 Jatiyatabadi 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 Vigarunnisa 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 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

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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.

## Academics question

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saying "the hurdles on the way should be removed".

"But the questions remain unanswered whose hurdle is it... his slogan in politics is 'amrao pari' [we can], but who are this 'we'? Are they the people of the country or anybody else?" Anu said.

Citing an example of Argentina, he said wholesale privatisation will bring no benefit to the people, rather their ownership of resources should be established to alleviate poverty.

With such privatisation Bangladesh can be an open space for the global corporate bodies, but will not change the fate of the common people, he observed.

"The models of corporate NGOs are also supplementary to organisations like the World Bank," he said, adding, "It is not enough to go to the poor to be a bank for the poor."

"Yunus must make his ideological position clear answering his stand in the last 35 years when there were violations of human rights and politics of domination, and he must reveal the amount of money that has gone out of the country through another of his ventures, GrameenPhone," Anu said.

Dhaka University Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury said protection and expansion of capitalism is the ultimate goal of Dr Yunus as all of his projects are business-oriented, which is deeply linked to capitalism.

"If he becomes a redeemer, he will be one for the capitalists, not for the poor," the noted educationist said. "Dr Yunus is not new in politics. His entrance in politics is set to sustain the politics of domination."

Strongly criticising Yunus