

Revitalising ACC



Proposed amendments must not remain in the files only.

The Commission's proposed amendments to the ACC Act as well as solutions to other problems faced by the Commission must be acted upon at the earliest so that it can discharge its assigned functions and responsibilities efficiently.

M. ABDUL LATIF MONDAL

WHILE talking to an English-language daily on December 10, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Golam Rahman said: "The Commission now cannot work to curb institutional corruption because of lack of manpower and experts."

He added: "The Commission is waiting for the proposed amendment to the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, in which it has sought authority to include officials, including experts in different sectors and institutions, on deputation into its various teams to deal with corruption in different institutions."

Corruption is generally divided into two forms: (1) institutional corruption; and (2)

non-institutional personal corruption. Institutional corruption involves the despoiling of the moral character of an institution.

When a ministry deliberately furnishes distorted information in the parliament session, it is institutional corruption. Similarly, it is institutional corruption when a political party deliberately submits wrong statement of its annual income and expenditure to the Election Commission.

Non-institutional personal corruption is corruption of persons outside institutional settings. Corruption popularly means abuse of power by a public official for personal gain; but it also includes personal gain by a private individual.

While taking of bribe by a public official is corruption, the bribing of a cricketer by a

bettor to throw away his wicket in an international game is also corruption, although the cricketer and the bettor do not hold public offices.

The ACC was established to prevent corruption, both institutional and non-institutional, inquire and investigate into the offences determined by the Act, and file and conduct cases on the basis of investigation and inquiry.

But these goals could not be achieved due to a number of factors which include, amongst others, lack of political will to strengthen the Commission by the immediate past BNP government as well as by the ruling AL-government, inaction of the Commission in allegations against the party in power, the Commission's unwillingness to institute suo moto inquiry, absence of a capable prosecution team and lack of research activities on prevention of corruption.

It may not be denied that during the period of the last caretaker government the Commission sometimes acted oppressively against corruption suspects. But, it is also equally true that the reconstitution of the Commission by the post-1/11 caretaker government and amendments made to the ACC Act-2004 provided some degree of dynamism and vibrancy, aiming at making corruption a punishable offence and challenging the culture of impunity.

With the manpower and the expertise that it had, the Commission started formulating recommendations to curb institutional corruption in consultation with different institutions. The question may arise that if the Commission could make such strides during the period of the caretaker government, then why can it not do so now with more or less the same manpower and expertise.

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2010 released by Transparency International (TI) on October 26 showed that Bangladesh failed to achieve improvement over the last year. In a scale of 0-10, Bangladesh scored 2.4, the same as in 2009, and occupied 134th place among 178 countries featured in this year's index.

The latest survey by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) shows ram-

panant corruption in our police (79%), civil service (68%), political parties (58%), judiciary (43%) and parliament (32%).

Section 33 of the ACC Act provides that the Commission shall have its own prosecution unit consisting of the prosecutors required to conduct the cases to be investigated by the Commission and tried before the special judge. Until the appointment of its own prosecutors, lawyers temporarily appointed by the Commission shall conduct its cases. The Commission badly needs a capable prosecution team, but the government seems reluctant to facilitate it.

It appears from the ACC chief's disclosure that the Commission has sought authority to include officials, including experts in different sectors and institutions, on deputation into its various teams to deal with corruption in different institutions. The commission is "working on a limited scale in different institutions to curb corruption" till its proposed amendments to the ACC Act are accepted by the government.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed differs with the ACC chairman, saying: "As corruption is not institutional corruption because individuals in the institutions are engaged in such corruption, the Commission should not face any legal barrier in dealing with them." He further said that the law ministry was examining a bill comprising the proposals of the Commission and the recommendations made by a committee headed by the additional secretary of the cabinet division to make the commission more effective.

The people in general, and the civil society and the media in particular, were happy with the creation of the ACC. The Commission's proposed amendments to the ACC Act as well as solutions to other problems faced by the Commission must be acted upon at the earliest so that it can discharge its assigned functions and responsibilities efficiently. This will enable Bangladesh to stand with her head high as one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

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World's easiest test!

ASIA is the best place to be educated, a global survey said last week. I was astonished. Education elsewhere must be really bad!

I mentioned this to a headmaster friend, who replied that he wanted to introduce an entrance exam for his school. "We accept anyone who will pay, but the parents of the kids like to be able to boast that it's tough to get into," he explained.

Parents are strange creatures. They were irritated when he said that there was no waiting list for his school, so he started pretending that there was. This also annoyed them.

One parent lectured him on the evils of grade inflation, and then demanded that his son be given "A" grades, despite having an IQ to match his shoe size.

Another tried to bribe him with a dusty box of mooncakes, which had clearly been passed around since Confucius had been the big name in Asian education.

The headmaster asked me to write an entrance exam like the sort of contests you get in the media, which are so easy that it's almost impossible to get them wrong.

So here it is:
THE WORLD'S EASIEST ENTRANCE EXAM
Time limit: 30 minutes.

General knowledge:

- 1) Greens are a healthy vegetable. What colour are they?
- 2) What time is it when both hands are on the 12?
- 3) What does UN (United Nations) stand for?
- 4) How many weeks are there in a two-week period?

5) What do coffee shops sell?

Mathematics:

- 1) A bald man's hair is 0.0 inches long. Convert this to centimeters.
- 2) If I had three apples in my left hand, how many apples would I have in my left hand?
- 3) If two and two equal four on every day of the week, what does two and two equal on Tuesdays?

History:

- 1) What was Henry VIII's personal name?
- 2) What was Chairman Mao's surname?
- 3) What rank was Admiral Nelson?
- 4) How many rules are there in The Ten Commandments?

Geography:

- 1) What language do Dutch-speakers speak?
- 2) What country is the Queen of Denmark Queen of?
- 3) Where is the North Pole?
- 4) Name the moon, which revolves around the planet Earth.

Biology:

- 1) Birds are a type of bird. True/ false.
- 2) What insects do anteaters eat?
- 3) What is the breast colour of a robin red-breast?
- 4) How many cells do single-celled amoebas have?
- 5) What substance do woodpeckers peck?

SCORE:

13-21 right answers: Congratulations, you're in!
7-12 right answers: Congratulations, you're in!
1-6 right answers: Congratulations, you're in!

0 right answers: Try again!

We tested the exam out on a group of five children. Only two of them passed. The third spoke only Urdu, the fourth Hokkien, and the fifth lost the paper.

So we decided to shorten the test to just one question and allow the parent or guardian to answer it.

"Does he know his own name? Yes/ No."

This time, most of them passed. The Hokkien-speaking family just sort of glared at me, but I took that as a "yes."

Besides, there are no wrong answers in that sort of test.

If only the same was true for real life.

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Brace for change

As the old economic order withers, the financial markets -- and not governments -- will be the arbiters of how capital and trade move, and how severe government adjustment policies need to be. This situation will be accompanied by more than one major financial crisis and more difficulty for global traders and investors moving across the world.

JEFFREY E. GARTEN

AS the first decade of the 21st century comes to a close, leaving the steady growth of last century's second half a distant memory, what does the future hold for the global economy? For the next several years, we can expect exceptional turbulence as the waning days of the global economic order we have known plays out chaotically, possibly destructively.

For the longer term, a more promising picture awaits as a new set of international economic arrangements gains support from governments, business and civil society, and as a wave of exceptional innovation bears fruit. The transition will be a treacherous ride that no government would rationally choose to take. Yet the die seems cast.

It was inevitable that the Bretton Woods system could not last indefinitely, even after its adaptation from fixed to floating-exchange rates in the early 1970s. After all, the world economy has changed beyond recognition. Since 1990, global GDP increased from about \$20 trillion to nearly \$60 trillion, world trade has increased 1½ times faster, foreign direct investment three times faster, and foreign exchange trading almost 100 times faster, according to McKinsey & Co.

Over the same period, businesses have expanded across borders at breakneck pace. In 1990 the US S&P 100 earned about 25% of its revenues abroad, while 20 years later the figure topped 53%, based on calculations done by Credit Suisse. This kind of interdependent growth has outstripped the rules made for another era. It has revealed the impossibility and even illegitimacy of governance arrangements revolving around a handful of rich western industrial countries and Japan. And it has created the need for new theories, still under debate, about how the world economy operates, including the ways shocks are transmitted across borders.

The old order had to die also because the United States -- its creator, rule enforcer, market of last resort and chief cheerleader, now racked by deficits, debts, and a polarised and inward-looking political system -- can no longer shoulder the burden of these roles. No one country is remotely capable of replacing America, and effective collective leadership is nowhere in sight.

All these factors have been dramatically aggravated by the global credit crisis of 2008-2009 and subsequent recession in the

West -- obvious convulsions of the old and now discredited economic order. While an impressive international effort to bail out financial institutions and stimulate economies with government spending stopped the disaster from reaching 1930s proportions, the debacle revealed a number of fault lines that may be worsening. After all, the major global trade and financial imbalances that helped cause the financial

implosion show no signs of narrowing. In addition, gaping holes in the regulatory structure for banking still exist, including the absence of rules to wind up global banks, and scant international supervision of the shadow banking system. The aftermath of the credit implosion may, in fact, be leading to another set of crises less susceptible to a concerted bailout. The severe sovereign-debt and banking problems in Europe may just be gathering steam, as financial pressures careen from Greece and Ireland to Portugal and Spain. While so much attention has focused on consumer and industrial demand in US and China, the deflationary policies enveloping the EU, the world's largest economic unit, could badly undermine global economic growth. The difficulties could cause Europe to

tiation since the Uruguay Round in 1995. More recently, the Copenhagen Climate Change talks failed a year ago, and the Group of Twenty Summit in Seoul concluded with no progress just last month.

It's hard to imagine how this go-it-alone trend will change in the next few years, primarily because of the massive domestic preoccupations. In Washington all politics will be about cutting high levels of unemployment and federal-budget deficits. The EU will be in a fight for its very survival as an economic super-state, with the focus not just on saving national economies and banks, but also preserving the euro, but also pulling up its long-cherished social safety nets by the roots. China, too, needs to make massive internal adjustments such as stimulating sustainable

redouble its focus on exports at the same time that US, Asia and Latin America are also betting their economies on selling more abroad, thereby exacerbating already-high currency tensions. It could lead to the resurgence of state-sponsored industrial policies, already growing around the world. And together, these factors could ignite the virulent and destructive protectionism that everyone fears.

In theory, we could see a major effort by key governments to develop domestic policies to take into serious account the global problems we face. But as Ernesto Zedillo and Kishore Mahbubani have eloquently argued in this space, world politics are moving in a different direction. After all, there has not been a currency accord since the 1985 Plaza Agreement or a successful global trade nego-



A storm rising in the financial world.

consumer demand, retooling an energy-intensive industrial structure and dealing with widening income disparities.

As the old economic order withers, the financial markets -- and not governments -- will be the arbiters of how capital and trade move, and how severe government adjustment policies need to be. This situation will be accompanied by more than one major financial crisis and more difficulty for global traders and investors moving across the world.

This very chaos could, however, provoke a shock effect that compels a sharply elevated level of cooperation among key governments. They could work more closely with their globally integrated firms, to advance a design of a new order. That could encompass new currency arrangements, a strengthened World Trade Organization, an International Monetary Fund with enforcement capabilities, a high authority with serious oversight for global financial regulation.

A new order could involve a G-20 that has a vision and some clout, and establish a comprehensive regime to deal with climate change. Most importantly, it could be characterised by a mindset among governments that takes full account of the interconnections among national economies.

Some hope for optimism lies in the possibility that by the end of this decade, many domestic hurdles, such as US fiscal problems and European debt pressures, will be on a sounder trajectory. Also, by then, a new generation of leadership could emerge, weary of failed policies of the previous 10 years and much wiser for it. These men and women are likely to be willing to move ahead with the many new ideas that are sure to evolve during a period of chaos and instability.

On top of that, we should not lose sight of the unprecedented possibilities that modern communications have created to tap into and amplify the innovative capacities of people in every corner of the world. Never in world history has there been such capacity to link new ideas, great talent and huge pools of money in support of progress.

Nor should we forget that some of the trends now emerging, such as the hyper-urbanisation of the planet, could produce unprecedented innovations in energy, transport, health care and more as the creativity produced by urban clusters is unleashed. And of course, we are on the verge of several new global industries wrought by the confluence of massive computer power, biotechnology and nanotechnology -- all of which could well transform the globe for the better.

The great challenge facing our leaders is to shorten the time and blunt the pain between the chaos and its much more positive aftermath. It's a tall order.

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