

Anti-graft drive

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body alongside hampering its effectiveness seriously. The cabinet finalised the amendments early this year by keeping the anti-graft body itself in the dark. Since March 2009 after the government came up with the draft amendment proposals, ACC has been expressing its strict reservation about at least half of the ten points. Moreover, the amendments ACC sought including increase in its personnel, making its laws supreme over other laws, and making the commission able to seek expertise from other government agencies were discarded by the cabinet.

ACC sources have also been complaining that bureaucrats were the brain behind amending the ACC act in the name of ensuring human rights against the background of the anti-graft drives carried out by the immediate past caretaker government. The minister's budget speech is in resonance of the bureaucrats' statements. "We remain ever vigilant of the fact that enforcement of this law does in no way violate fundamental human rights. We have also taken into consideration independence and accountability of the Anti-Corruption Commission,"

the budget speech read. "Specially, independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission in conducting inquiries and prosecutions is being considered with due importance," added the speech. "The government also talked against corruption in its election manifesto, but we have not seen enforcement of the law much in the last two and a half years," said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman. "Violation of human rights in enforcing the anti-corruption law can only be prevented if the government acts impartially, going beyond political identity of the corrupt," he observed.

Limon's arms case trial

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enforcers from carrying out their duties and attempted murder. Later, the leg had to be amputated. Limon was undergoing treatment at Nitor after his release on bail on May 9 from a prison ward at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal. He was shifted to Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in the capital yesterday afternoon. However, the judge of the special tribunal-1 yesterday adjourned till July 3 the hearing on the arms case following defence lawyer Nashimul Hasan's time prayer. On May 29, Jhalakathi

Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court fixed July 19 as the next date of hearing on the other case. On April 24, Sub-Inspector Arifur Rahman, the investigation officer of the two cases, submitted charge sheet in the arms case under the Juvenile Crimes Act, claiming that Limon was a member of "Mijan-Morshed gang". Sufferings of the 16-year-old compounded after the home minister, the prime minister's defence adviser and Rab high officials told journalists that Limon and his family were accomplices of criminals. However, hope for justice

rose in him after reading the news items on home ministry probe that did not find his criminal link. Yesterday, he was taken to the hospital in an ambulance around 1:15pm. The Gonoshasthaya authorities said Limon's tests, medicines, therapies, consultancy and bed would be free of charge. His family will only have to pay for his food that is supplied at a nominal cost. Nitor issued his release order on June 7 but handed it over to his family yesterday at about 9:25am. Nitor doctors said Limon would require physiotherapy for his amputated leg for the next few days.

No more push for PPP

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allocated Tk 100 crore for technical support while Tk 400 crore has been proposed under Viability Gap Fund for projects that are not commercially profitable but important for economic development and public services. In the outgoing fiscal year, the government allocated Tk 3,000 crore for 23 PPP projects mostly in the areas of energy and power. But expected results could not be achieved due to the absence of an integrated policy for PPP. "Now, the government has formulated a PPP policy, and necessary executive and financial power has been given to the office to discharge its functions. The initiative will get momentum," Muhith observed. In the upcoming fiscal year, the government has selected 16 projects to be implemented under the PPP framework. The finance minister said so far seven power plants with 178 megawatt capacity have been constructed under PPP. The bidding process has begun for another six power plants having a total capacity of 410 MW. The tender process for establishing a Hi-Tech park at Kaliakoir, a software technology park at Karwan Bazar, two projects in telecommunications sector

and one project in sanitation sector is underway, the minister said. "We have also initiated a programme for establishing eight land ports. Moreover, we are planning to build a satellite town on the outskirts of Dhaka," he said. Muhith said initiatives for management of Mongla Port and New Mooring Container Terminal at Chittagong Port and digitisation of land registration have been taken up under PPP. The construction of Dhaka Elevated Expressway and Mayor Hanif Flyover is also underway. To strengthen PPP initiative and attract investment from home and abroad, the government has created Bangladesh Infrastructure Finance Fund which will commence its function in FY 2011-12, he said. Businessmen think despite sheer failure in spending money under PPP initiative to implement big projects, the government should continue providing support to keep the momentum going. "The PPP will facilitate major projects, which will not give result overnight. So, the government should continue it," said Asif Ibrahim, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Otherwise, the private sector will not feel encour-

aged," he said. Ibrahim also urged the government to step up efforts to implement various projects it has already undertaken, and increase its efficiency in utilising the fund being allocated. Economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said "The government should find out reasons why the initiative is not being taken despite the allocation. The finance minister should spell out strategies to help take it off." Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI), said the country could not achieve any success in PPP in the last two years, as the framework was centralised to the Prime Minister's Office. "Frankly speaking, the people handling the issue have neither experience nor quality. As a result, the whole process has become slow," he told The Daily Star. "It took one and a half years to formulate a policy. Now we have policy, but it is not functional. We should not confine it to our narrow thinking," Mansur said. The analyst said PPP initiative should be limited to the finance ministry and other line ministries. "There is no need to involve the highest authority in this issue," he observed.

Tax-free import to make

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country to sell TCB-imported sugar, soybean oil, chick-peas, red lentil and onion. Muhith, however, did not propose any allocation to help TCB buy enough essential items to keep a rein on the galloping prices. Over the last one year, prices of rice edged up, although Bangladesh had had outputs above the estimated demand in the past two years. In the recent weeks, rice prices slipped a bit due to bumper production of Boro yet it is higher than that of the same day last year. Besides, hikes in house rent, clothing and other household products pushed low and fixed-income groups to a tighter corner. Even though the government's various measures to intervene through different safety net schemes contributed to keeping the prices of

grains to a tolerable level, it did not help curb prices of other essentials. Muhith yesterday once again pledged to frame the Competition Act 2010 to ensure fair competition in the commodity market and prevent all forms of anti-competition including collusion and cartel. He said the law is at its final stage. He believes building an adequate stock of food for crisis period and making arrangements for distributing grains among ready-made garment and textile workers at reduced prices will have a positive impact on local food market as these schemes will increase supply and influence traders' sentiment. The finance minister also asked the nation to be braced for more price hikes of petroleum in global market which will raise the commodity prices.

increased intervention in the market that suffers from occasional shortfall of supplies due to illegal hoarding and control of supply chain by a small number of importers and processors. The finance minister said the government has taken steps for comprehensive reorganisation of TCB. A draft has been prepared for modernising the 1972 rule for TCB, and initiatives have been taken to increase its manpower. Last year too, Muhith pledged to make TCB more efficient and effective to keep essential food prices stable and within people's buying capacity. "We have planned to build an emergency stock of basic essentials worth Tk 2,500 crore through TCB this fiscal year," he said, citing that 1,999 dealers have been appointed throughout the

Target hefty revenue Record spending

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be to rid taxpayers' mind of fear," said Hossain Zillur Rahman, former adviser to caretaker government. "The government has to ensure that its incentives reach different sectors through its policy measures. The government expedites a sector's growth by exempting it of taxes or providing incentives to that industry," he said. The NBR Modernisation Plan includes raising the Tax-GDP ratio, initiating web-based services, and settlement of 80 percent tax-related cases by 2016. The reform proposal seeks to increase tax-GDP ratio to 13 percent by 2016 from 9.3 percent now, and correct the flaws in the revenue collection system. The government plans to launch web-based services for e-registration, e-filing, tax-return, declaration submission, tax payment and rebate by 2016 in the hope that it will help accelerate revenue collection. Asif Ibrahim, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said the government should adopt a business-friendly taxation system. "Most of the time, the taxation system seems unfriendly to entrepreneurs, and budget hardly makes any difference to that situation. The government should ensure that local manufactures and entrepreneurs get necessary support," he said. "The government has to ensure that businessmen are not harassed by any taxmen," Asif said.

The draft of VAT and Direct Tax Act 2011 has been finalised, and will be placed before parliament by December. The government plans to expand all three departments of the NBR to enhance its capacity further. The NBR will set up several departments -- Customs Excise and VAT Commissionerate, Appeal Commissionerates, and two extra benches in the Appellate Tribunal. Moreover, the Alternative Dispute Resolution system will be made effective from fiscal 2011-12 to swiftly collect dues of Tk 8,000 crore stuck in lengthy court procedures. The ADR, an out-of-the-box legal framework, will enable authorities to resolve cases through mutual understanding and negotiations. In this system, both parties compromise on certain aspects to strike a balance. Nearly 19,000 NBR-related cases now remain pending with courts.

VAT REFORMS
The government has initiated reducing turnover tax on the SMEs to three percent from existing four percent. The annual turnover margin remains at Tk 60 lakh as before. Companies listed under the turnover tax like those under VAT will be given business identification number to allow them to participate in export and import trading. Besides, the government has proposed increasing supplementary duty on imported electric fan to 30 percent from 20 percent, and slapped 20 percent supplementary duty on electric multi-cord, switch and socket to support SME industries. The finance minister proposed making the VAT law more tax-friendly by reducing penalty for evading VAT. He suggested that the maximum penalty should be the amount equal to one and a half times of the evaded revenue in place of the existing two and a half times of the evaded amount. According to the proposal, the NBR should take quick steps to improve its human resources by providing training to its employees and recruiting staff in its 18 tax zones across the country. The NBR has already recruited 72 staff for the VAT section. It will set up two tax information and service centres in Dhaka and Chittagong next month to help the country's one million taxpayers file their tax returns without any hassle.

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subsidy will be slashed in the new budget, which signals that it will make large scale adjustment in subsidised products like power and energy. To meet the increased expenditure, an ambitious target of collecting foreign assistance and non-tax revenue has been set, although the government failed to do so in the current FY. Also, the government aims at collecting higher value added tax (VAT) and income tax and reforming those sectors. Development expenditure, up by 27.83 percent from the revised budget, has been fixed at Tk 50,642 crore, of which Tk 46,000 crore is for annual development programme (ADP). Non-development expenditure, raised by about 24 percent, has been fixed at Tk 1,02,903 crore. In the current fiscal year, non-development expenditure was hiked by only 11 percent against the previous year's revised budget. The highest expenditure in a single sector -- 11 percent of the total budget -- is on interest payment. Allocation in the sector is Tk 17,997 crore, with a 24 percent spending rise in the next fiscal year. Expenditure on interest of the domestic loan will be Tk 16,519 crore. Block allocation in both development and non-development expenditure increased by 655 percent against the revised budget and will stand at Tk 6,826 crore. Where the block allocation will be spent could not be known in detail. For new recruitment in different ministries and divisions, an additional Tk 1,161 crore has been proposed for pay and allow-

ances for the next fiscal year. The subsidy is eight percent of the total revenue budget while it was 8.3 percent in the current FY. However, no details of the subsidy were available. Tk 4,500 crore has been allocated as agriculture subsidy which was Tk 4,000 crore in the current FY. But in the revised budget, it was increased to Tk 5,700 crore. Revenue earning has been increased by 24.37 percent to make it Tk 1,18,385 crore. Of that amount, NBR tax has been raised by 21.52 percent and non-tax revenue by 40 percent. Proposal has been made to increase income tax by 24.68 percent, VAT 21.32 percent and supplementary duty 19.66 percent. In the next fiscal year's budget the deficit has been estimated at Tk 45,204 crore or five percent of the GDP. To meet the deficit, the new budget proposes increasing foreign borrowing by 71 percent with a target of Tk 18,685 crore, although in the current FY the government failed to utilise one-third of the targeted foreign assistance. Bank borrowing was raised by 17 percent in the revised budget of the current fiscal year. In the budget of the next fiscal year, it has been raised by 10 percent over the revised budget and the borrowing target has been fixed at Tk 18,957 crore. In the same way, borrowing target from the savings instrument has been set at Tk 8,251 crore which was Tk 6,438 crore in the revised budget. To meet the target, the finance minister has announced to increase the rate of interest on savings instrument and reduce tax rate.

Target hefty revenue

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Edn gets raise


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government adviser on primary and mass education, told the Daily Star in an instant reaction. "Neither we see any step nor any allocation for implementation of the education policy," she said, adding nothing has been said about allocation for research. However, Muhith proposed an allocation of Tk 1,000 crore for establishing a foundation to provide scholarship and full-free studentship to the poor and meritorious students from class VI to undergraduate level at public and private educational institutions from next fiscal year. "A fund will be created under this foundation titled

'Prime Minister's Education Assistance Foundation' with public private financing, where government will provide a portion of the seed money," Muhith said. He also proposed to create a "band of national icons" through talent hunts in language, literature, mathematics, science and IT from grass-root level competition. The minister had no special allocation for implementing the National Education Policy 2010 which seeks to introduce a modern and job-oriented education system. He spoke about quality education and stressed the need for an integrated plan without laying out any plan.

Roads get priority

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work around the capital to cut tailbacks. While a road along Dhaka flood control dam and a circular railway are at project formation and feasibility stage, dredging in the Dhaka rivers is going on for a circular waterway. A combined allocation of Tk 9,798 crore has been proposed for the development and non-development budget of roads and railway and bridges divisions, which is 29 percent higher than the revised budget of the present fiscal year. The national budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year also has a special Road Fund for maintenance of the existing roads. It has Tk 653 crore for the water transport sector. Maintenance fund often remains under-utilised due to inefficiency, said economist Hossain Zillur Rahman, a former adviser to a caretaker government. Though the waterway should be developed as the number one transport mode, the insignificant budgetary allocation simply indicates the extent of negligence shown to the sector, observed analysts. Prof Anu Muhammad, who teaches economics at Jahangirnagar University, noticed no priority to the mass transportation system and projects in the budget. It envisages modernisation of railway with Tongi-Bhairab Bazar double-lane

rail track, 326-kilometre new broad gauge track, 128-km Dhazari-Cox's Bazar new line, 53-km long new track on Khulna-Mongla port route and procurement of nine locomotives. But some experts termed such development initiatives patchy and are not meant for railway's integrated development. With the railway and waterway neglected consistently, the communications infrastructure has developed disproportionately, noted Hossain Zillur. According to experts, development of these transport routes would not only cut the transportation costs significantly but also could contribute to boost agriculture and conserve environment. The government showed special interests in allocation for mega projects involving enormous funds like elevated expressway, Padma Bridge and four-lane highways, as they serve various interest groups including contractors, political lobbyists, consultants and suppliers, they observed. Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said wrongly chosen and poorly implemented road projects like unfinished bridges only imply waste of public resources.



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The candidate will be expected to maintain excellent working relationship with external consultants and donors and retain liaison between field operations and the Head Office. The selected candidate will prepare reports for donors and ensure requirements are being met. The incumbent must be prepared to undertake extensive field visits.

Educational Qualification:
The applicant should have a Masters Degree in any subject from any reputed university. No 3rd class/ division/ equivalent CGPA in any academic examination is acceptable. A Law Degree will be given preference.

Experience:
- The incumbent should have a minimum of 8 years proven experience in programme coordination, implementation and management while working in human rights, gender justice and/or development.
- The applicant should have experience in handling grants, proposals, donor requirements and M & E.

Age: Not more than 50 years.
Salary: Tk. 80,000/- (Consolidated).

Research Fellow

Job Description:
The candidate will meet with HRLS Head Office staff to ascertain market research goals for the land entrepreneurship model tested in the initiative. She/he will develop a market study plan and conduct research through primary and secondary research methods in Rangpur and Gaibandha. S/he will analyse demand, consumer behaviour and competition in the land measurement market and document results in reports using charts, graphs and explanatory text and will also use market survey results to develop pricing frameworks, marketing and sustainability statistics for the land entrepreneurship business model and must be prepared to undertake all research in Rangpur and Gaibandha via frequent field visits.

Educational Qualification:
The applicant should have a Masters Degree from any reputed university. No 3rd class/ division/ equivalent CGPA in any academic examination is acceptable. An MBA or Degree in Marketing will be given preference.

Experience:
- The incumbent should have a minimum of 7 years previous experience in conducting market research for social enterprises, bottom of the pyramid value chain or corporate CSR.
- Must be familiar with developing and executing market surveys, conducting financial modelling.
- The candidate should have proficiency with research methodologies.
- Must be familiar with statistical software such as SPSS/ SAS/ STATA and skill in MS Excel.
- Field based market research experience is a must.

Age: Not more than 40 years.
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Job Description:
The candidate will provide land law expertise in design and revision of curriculum and ensure property rights. S/he will provide land law expertise in teaching modules and training. S/he will be resource person for land law related queries and provide land law expertise to HRLS Head Office staff as needed. The incumbent must be prepared to undertake sporadic field visits.

Educational Qualification:
The applicant should have LLB degree from any reputed university. No 3rd class/ division/ equivalent CGPA in any academic examination is acceptable. A Masters Degree in Law will be given preference.

Experience: The incumbent should have a minimum of 5 years court practice.
Age: Not more than 40 years.
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Other requirements for all positions:
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- Sound computer literacy.

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