

# President ACC's last hope

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development partners.

The bill might be presented to President Abdul Hamid anytime next week and upon his assent would become a law.

The president might do something to honour the public sentiment against the controversial provision, if he wants. When the bill would be placed before him, he can return it to parliament with a message requesting that the new provision be reconsidered.

Article 80 (3) of the constitution provides the president with this significant power to exercise within 15 days since a bill is placed before him. It is his discretion whether he would exercise this power or not. He requires no advice of the prime minister to do so.

If the president exercises this authority, parliament would consider the bill together with his message. If the bill is again passed by parliament with or without this controversial amendment, it will again be presented to the president for his assent.

This time, the president is likely to give his assent to the bill within seven days. If he does not, he would be deemed to have assented to the bill on the expiry of seven days.

So, the president appears to be the last resort to salvage the ACC from becoming toothless after losing its independence to file graft cases against government officials.

If the government refuses to act as per the president's suggestion in case he returns the bill, it would by no means undermine his office. It would rather brighten the image of his office and his effort would keep alive the hope for a strong anti-graft watchdog.

The office of the president, of course, knows

the public sentiment against the controversial provision. Passage of the bill has already triggered a huge outcry. The ACC and several legal experts have termed it unconstitutional and asked the government to scrap it. Donor agencies and the country's development partners have also expressed their concerns.

The responses to the provision are justified. The fight against corruption is likely to fall flat if the government officials, who are involved in implementing the annual national budget of more than Tk 2 lakh crore, are given special protection from graft charges. This would definitely add to the pervasive culture of corruption in the public administration to go with impunity.

This, of course, is an extraordinary situation that demands intervention of the president. It now depends on him whether he would exercise his constitutional authority or not. He is to decide whether he would follow the path of his predecessors without enquiring into the reality or do something different.

Since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, only the then president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed once used this constitutional authority during the past Awami League rule [1996-2201]. But the House did not consider his message and refrained from passing the bill again.

Non-exercise of this power makes the apparently established impression even stronger that the president has nothing to do for the nation even in any extraordinary situation.

It's up to President Abdul Hamid now if he would open a new era in the history of parliamentary democracy by exercising his constitutional power at an appropriate time.

# Nasim Osman's

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Around 9:30pm, Rajib, Kalam, Mamun and Liton returned with Toki and took him to Azmeri's office room.

"I could hear his screams for mercy, for help. But nothing could stop the torturers. In a few minutes, the screaming stopped. A drop-dead silence enveloped the room .... Then Azmeri came out of the room and said, 'everything is over. Dump the body wherever you can'."

An eerie silence fell over the courtroom as Bhromor was describing the horrifying tale of how Toki was brutally tortured and killed.

On Azmeri's order, Bhromor, Rajib, Kalam, Liton and Mamun put the body in a jute sack, loaded it in the trunk of Azmeri's car and drove off to the Shitalakhya at Charagope. Rajib, Liton, Mamun and Kalam dumped the body into the river and in 15 minutes, they returned to Azmeri's

office, Bhromor added.

Rapid Action Battalion members arrested Bhromor, following up the information provided by Azmeri Osman's close aide Yusuf Hossain Liton who had earlier been arrested in a narcotics case.

Following Liton's statement, Rab members also recovered bloodstained trousers from the office of Azmeri Osman on August 7.

Toki was found dead on the banks of the Shitalakhya in Narayanganj on March 8, two days after he went missing.

Rabiul Haq, assistant superintendent of police now in Rab-11, also the investigating officer of the case, said he had not received the copy of Bhromor's confessional statement yet.

Appropriate steps would be taken to have the culprits stand trial once the copy was received, he added.

# No compromise

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compel the "oppressor and undemocratic" government to quit.

Backing their views, Khaleda said, "If you [journalists] and we can remain united, we'll be able to get a true democratic and people's government in state power."

# 6 killed

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another jeep bound for Cox's Bazar in TNT area on the highway around 7:30am, said Md Giasuddin Miah, officer-in-charge (OC) of Ukhia Police Station.

Five people were killed on the spot whereas 32 others had sustained injuries, he said.

Critically injured Saydul Amin had succumbed to his injuries at MSF Hospital in the area, he added.

# Verdict Sunday

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judgment in any of the 16 cases against Tarique who has been in London since September 2008.

He, however, has secured bail in other cases.

Elder son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and late president Ziaur Rahman, Tarique was arrested in 2007, during an anti-graft crackdown by the military-backed caretaker government.

He has been shown fugitive in the money-laundering case while his friend Mamun is in custody.

If the charges are proved against the two, they will face maximum seven years' imprisonment, the highest punishment in the Money Laundering Act, 2009.

Judge Md Motahar Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-3 yesterday fixed the date after completion of arguments by the prosecution

and the defence.

Earlier, the court had recorded statements of 13 prosecution witnesses including the complainant and an FBI official.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against Tarique and Mamun on October 26, 2009, on charges of siphoning off Tk 20.41 crore to Singapore between 2003 and 2007.

On July 6, 2010, after an investigation, the ACC pressed charges against the duo.

On August 8, 2011, the court issued an arrest warrant against Tarique in the case.

The trial of the case began on September 11, 2011, with the deposition of complainant Mohammad Ibrahim, a deputy director of the ACC.

On May 26 this year, the same court cleared the way for the ACC to seek the help of Interpol in arresting Tarique.

# Three failed companies

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power plant, which produces around 15 to 20 MW of power. The purchase committee has approved contract extension for this plant. Quantum has proposed converting the fuel type of this plant from diesel to cheaper heavy fuel oil (HFO).

Earlier, power ministry officials had termed the plant a dead project and said it could not be revived through a contractual extension.

The remaining two plants belonging to Precision (55 MW gas fired rental plant in Ashuganj) and RZ Power (50 MW diesel fired plant in Thakurgaon) have no unpaid penalty issues.

As per the purchase committee approval, the defaulter rental companies, which had obtained court injunctions to stop the PDB from collecting penalties, would withdraw their court cases. The firms could also pay up the penalties in instalments upon mutual settlements.

Besides, the power tariffs of all these rental plants would be marginally lower

during the extension period than their original rates.

To resolve the country's power crisis urgently, successive governments from 2007 signed dozens of rental power contracts as a short term measure. Rental power plants take short time to install and decommission and they charge higher costs for power than the conventional power projects.

# Sociable people

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the study found.

Presenting her research on Tuesday, lead researcher MaryAnn Noonan told the Society for Neuroscience annual conference: "Human beings are naturally social creatures."

"Yet we know surprisingly little about how the brain manages our behaviour within our increasingly complex social lives -- or which parts of the brain falter when such behaviour breaks down in conditions such as autism and schizophrenia."

# Killed on orders from Yusuf

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300-400 shops at Morrelganj Bazar and shot several Hindu men dead after Yusuf directed his followers to exterminate the Hindus and pro-liberation people in May, 1971.

Jamaat Nayebe-e-Ameer Yusuf, historically known as the founder of the infamous Razakar force, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani army, is facing 13 charges for his alleged involvement in crimes against humanity and genocide committed in greater Khulna region during the war.

During his 44-minute testimony, 58-year-old Jalil said Yusuf organised Muslim League and Jamaat men for forming the Razakar force and trained them, armed them, gave them clothes and sent them to different areas of the country.

Jalil said Bakar took part in the Liberation War under the leadership of Liakat Ali Khan. "Around 8:00am on May 13, 1971, I was at home when I heard from people that Razakars had killed my

brother taking him to the [a Razakar] camp. My brother-in-law Hamezuddin Talukder and I went to the Razakar camp," said Jalil.

"I saw Razakar AKM Yusuf there and my brother's blood-stained body was lying on the camp ground. As we had sought permission to take my brother's body for burial, Yusuf gave us the permission," said emotion-choked Jalil.

Jalil said many people including undercover freedom fighters were in front of the camp and from them he learnt that Yusuf had directed Razakars to torture and shoot Bakar dead.

Around 10:00am on May 17, 1971, Yusuf along with 20-22 Razakars went to Morrelganj Bazar and he directed extermination of the Hindus and pro-liberation people. The Razakars looted and torched 300-400 shops out of 500-600 shops there, and 22 houses, including two belonging to freedom fighters, said the witness.

Around 9:30pm on May 19, 1971, Yusuf again

went to Morrelganj Bazar but this time with the Pakistani army while Razakars were at Morrelganj Launch Terminal. Yusuf once again directed Razakars to kill pro-liberation people, said Jalil.

Around 10:30pm, the Razakars and the Pakistani army picked up 5-6 people, including Niranjan Das and Satya Ranjan Das.

Of the people picked up, Pijus Gharai and Amar Das managed to flee from the Pakistani army and the Razakars, said Jalil.

When the tribunal asked how he learnt about the matter, the witness said he had seen the incident himself along with many others.

He also said Razakars had killed physician Abdul Majid following the order of Yusuf on July 26, 1971.

After his testimony, defence counsel Mizanur Rahman asked seven questions before the tribunal adjourned the case proceedings until Sunday.

# A day out with great minds

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British-Pakistani writer, journalist and filmmaker Tariq Ali compared the present political situation of Bangladesh with that of Pakistan. He observed that the two countries had a lot in common in terms of political assassinations, military coups and dictators.

Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman, chairman of Bangla Academy, called on those who oppose Hay's celebrations on the academy premises to join in and meet the great minds in the field of arts and literature.

Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi, one of the producers of the festival, compered the inaugural ceremony, where Egyptian writer and activist Ahdaf Soueif, Bangladeshi litterateur Syed Manzoorul Islam, Hay Festival producer from Wales Lyndy Cooke and Country Director of British Council Bangladesh Rosemary Arnott also spoke.

Around 200 Bangladeshi writers and 50 literary personalities from 11 countries were present at the event, meshing different cultures of the world and

exploring their similarities and differences.

At least 19 books have been scheduled for launch at the festival.

Veteran freedom fighter A Qayyum Khan launched his book of memoirs, "Bittersweet Victory", which offers an insider's account of the Liberation War.

"It is an attempt to analyse the war, not just glorify the heroic aspects of it," said Afsan Chowdhury, a journalist and researcher.

Catherine Masud showcased her documentary titled "Friends of '71" to portray yet another unexplored avenue of the war.

Noted writers Pankaj Mishra, Eliot Weinberger and K Anis Ahmed led a section of the guests into an engaging discussion about the global nature of literature, debating over how and when a particular literary piece transcends the local to appeal to the universal.

The panel also discussed the art of translation, answering questions about the degree of authentic-

# 5pc annual hike offers long term solution

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"We announced a big pay rise for them. This is just not right," Labour Secretary Mikail Shipar said.

Raju said that he expects normal service to resume in all garment factories from Friday.

"There are still many sorts of conspiracies going on in the sector. But, we will not tolerate any further unrest."

Meanwhile, Abdus Salam Murshedy, a former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the owners are counting on no further conflict with the workers as their demand has been met. "Everybody

should play a responsible role here."

He added that many small and medium garment factories will face difficulties in implementing the new salary structure as their profit margins are lower than the bigger ones.

Following widespread criticism and unrest, the government on June 26 formed a six-member panel headed by Judge AK Roy to recommend a new salary structure for the country's 3.5 million garment workers.

Originally, the workers' representative on the wage board demanded the minimum pay be hiked to Tk 8,114, but the owners were willing to

increase to Tk 3,600, which they later raised to Tk 4,500.

After a series of meetings, the wage board, through voting, on November 4 locked down the figure of Tk 5,300. The garment owners initially rejected the amount, which sparked off labour unrest. But after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday night, they agreed to it.

The minimum wage for garment workers was last revised in November 2010 to the existing Tk 3,000 from Tk 1,662.50 fixed in 2006. In 1994, it was Tk 930 per month, up from Tk 627 in 1985.

# 2 more burn victims die

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to surface the ever-important question: "Why us when we have done no wrong?" This time the question was wailed by Nasima's mourning sister Rahima.

"My sister was not involved in politics, then why she had to die? Why it is her, not the politicians who caused the hartal?" cried out Rahima.

She (Nasima) was just coming home from work and that too not during hartal hours, but the day before, she added.

Nasima had writhed about in excruciating pain for seemingly endless nineteen days, before she finally gave up.

Yet her struggle began long ago, after her daughter's death, said Rahima.

"Five years ago, Nasima's husband married another woman following a miscarriage which made Nasima very sick. She later joined a garment factory to become able to pay for her medical expense. Her physical condition was one of the reasons for which she could not escape from the burning bus. The sickness was also a reason for her to go to the factory on the eve of the hartal," said the sister adding that she just could not afford to lose the job.

A few days ago, lying on the hospital bed Nasima had shared with The Daily Star her fear of

not being able to work anymore.

She said, "Even though I was sick, I could take care of myself before. Who will look after me now?"

Now her death has eliminated the need for having that question answered. But it revealed the degree of injustice she had faced throughout the last years of her life.

The other deceased, Abul Kashem, was brought to DMCH from Feni with 76 percent burns he had sustained Tuesday night, on the third day of the last opposition-sponsored hartal.

His son Rabiul Haque Kawsar wailed the same grievances on Wednesday as he blankly watched the father writhe about on the cold, hard hospital stretcher. Kashem was unable to lie down because his back was burnt, nor was he able to sit up, as he was too weak.

"Our father was just a farmer. He was on a rickshaw going to the market. Rickshaws are allowed during hartals, then why did they attack him with a petrol bomb?" he asked.

However, Feni police alleged that Kashem had been wounded making crude bombs and lodged a case in Phulgazi Police Station in this connection.

The morgue sources, on the other hand, confirmed that there were no splinter injuries on Kashem's body, as it is typical in case of a crude

bomb explosion. He had only sustained burn injuries and nothing else.

With the deaths of these two arson victims looming grimly as a probable future, there is increased fear about the other critical patients in DMCH.

Yet doctors and medical staff are trying their optimum to revive all the victims.

However, the injustice of it all is not lost to anyone.

Momtaz, mother of Al-Amin, helper of a human haulier that was torched in Hazaribagh on November 6, told The Daily Star, "Why does it have to be my son instead of those who do politics? I pray no other mother sees her child going through this."

Al-Amin with 30 percent burns had to be transferred to the intensive care unit after his condition deteriorated on Wednesday.

With 90 percent burns, Mantu Chandra Paul also hangs on the edge in the intensive care unit. Pickets had set alight a human haulier he was travelling by in Laxmibazar last Sunday.

"Who will take the responsibility of his state? Will it be the government or the opposition?" his brother-in-law asked The Daily Star.

His question heavily hangs unanswered like an elephant in the room.

# Turmeric powder way too toxic

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The researchers said they were yet to conduct similar studies in other parts of the country.

"It appears that use of artificial colour in turmeric powder is one of the reasons for lead contamination," said Prof Quazi Quamruzzaman, chairman of the DCH Trust.

Turmeric powder with high level of the toxic metal was primarily responsible for lead contamination in the blood of 284 children, aged between 20 and 40 months.

A high level of lead -- above 5 microgram per decilitre -- has been found in the blood of 80 percent of the children, while 10 microgram per decilitre of lead has been detected in the blood of 26 percent of the kids.

The researchers collected samples of water, soil, dust, rice, chilli and turmeric from the children's homes to know the source of lead in their blood.

No lead was found in the water samples tested at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

A tolerable level of lead was found in soil examined at the laboratory of Harvard School of Public Health.

The other samples will be tested later, according to a DCH statement.

Quamruzzaman said more work needs to be done, as the study involved "a minimum sam-

pling" in a country of 16 crore.

"To get the answers to all questions, we will carry out random survey throughout the country," he said.

The study was conducted between 2012 and early this year to find out whether presence of arsenic or any metal in the mother's body has any impact on the child's health.

"We are surprised to find high levels of lead in children's blood although we were not expecting to find that. There should be no lead in children's blood because it is highly toxic for them," said Maitreyi Mazumdar, staff neurologist of Boston Children's Hospital.

"Lead exposure has many health consequences for children. Lead is associated with cognitive deficits. Children with lead in blood do worst in schools and they cannot reverse that because it damages their brains permanently," said Maitreyi, who led the team.

Lead also causes heart and kidney problems, speech and language impairment, and affects muscle and bone growth.

High levels of lead in blood could be life threatening and could cause seizures, unconsciousness and death, said the DCH statement.

Quamruzzaman said food contamination contributes to kidney failure and heart diseases, and presence of lead in blood is a reason for the spread of these diseases.

The joint research team found lead in turmeric powder before the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) detected lead in Pran's turmeric powder last month, he said.

Later, Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the BSTI also found lead in Pran's turmeric.

The researchers said they tested samples of turmeric powder collected from the children's homes, not those of any particular brands.

"We waited for sharing the findings because we wanted to be sure," said Quamruzzaman.

The use of powdered spices in families is on the rise across the country, and various types of chemicals and methods are used in processing those.

"It is necessary to examine all these chemicals and methods," said the DCH statement, urging the government to strictly monitor the market to ensure food safety.

Quamruzzaman said those involved in using toxic chemicals in turmeric powder should be given exemplary punishment.

Mahmuder Rahman, member and coordinator of the DCH Trust, said a detailed research is needed to detect the source of lead contamination in turmeric powder and determine whether the heavy metal comes from soil or during the post-harvest and processing phase.

# Father takes his own life

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from her home which was in a hilly area, said Sub-Inspector Pijush Singh of Mirsarai Police Station.

Hearing her screams, locals rescued her and the police arrested Joynal and his aide Alauddin,

21, on Wednesday.

Pijush said the girl's father had committed suicide around 7:30pm Wednesday and that they recovered his body and sent it to Chittagong Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

He said, "The father might have committed

suicide being shocked by or ashamed of his daughter's ill fate."

Officer-in-Charge Imtiaz Bhuiyan of the police station said Joynal and Alauddin had been sent to jail after they were produced before a court yesterday morning.