

# 'ACC guidelines can help prevent systemic graft in government offices'

Iqbal Mahmood took charge of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) five years ago with the goal of curbing graft. During these years, he took several bold steps like bringing reforms in the enquiry and investigation processes, introducing a hotline service and pinpointing loopholes and pockets of corruption within government organisations. Yet he had to face criticism for the long delay in investigating the BASIC Bank loan scam and failing to nab the big fishes. As the ACC chairman nears the end of his term this month, he shares his experience, achievements and expectations with The Daily Star's Mahbubur Rahman Khan.

How do you view your journey at the ACC?

First of all, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is a statutory body tasked with combating, preventing and controlling corruption and also promoting the best practices in professional conduct. My responsibility as chairman has been laid out in the Anti-Corruption Commission Act of 2004. It states that my sole duty is to execute the ACC's legal mandate to fight against corruption. This inherently puts the chairman in a precarious position as a just, indiscriminate application of the law will undoubtedly cause some negative opinions. Our goal has always been to let the law take its due course. I can say with utmost confidence that the commission has functioned in accordance with the law during my tenure.

I carried out my responsibilities with absolute impartiality. I am privileged to have had the support of the civil society, the media, politicians, the administration, my fellow colleagues and the public in general during the last five years. And I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported the anti-corruption mission of the commission.

Can you recall any particular struggle you've had while bringing major changes in the ACC during your tenure?

After joining ACC, I thought about how we could turn ACC into an institution that people could rely on. It is my firm belief that no institution can achieve its goal without public support. Without an integrated action plan, it is not easy to deal with offences like corruption. Hence, we took the initiative to formulate an action plan for the ACC, and in 2017, the ACC's Five-Year Strategic Action Plan was approved. This plan details multi-dimensional initiatives regarding inquiry, investigation, prosecution, administration, monitoring, evaluation and prevention. Before the approval of this strategic plan, the commission consulted with the media, members of civil society, NGOs, teachers, students, bureaucrats, politicians, development partners, etc.

Including vital members of society in forming our plan resulted in it being an instrument that would enable us to effectively and unwaveringly work for the people of this country. We started our journey with confidence. The public will be pleasantly surprised to know that the ACC has apprehended approximately one thousand perpetrators involved in corruption cases without the use of any firearms during my tenure. Even though ACC officials arrested offenders in the late hours of the night and, sometimes, were attacked by miscreants and suffered injuries, we did not slow down our operations. We have become successful to an extent that the public can rest easy knowing that no one is above the law. The law will apply to all people regardless of their position, and will inevitably take its course.

Some of your bold steps gained popularity and created hope among people. Yet there are issues like BASIC Bank. In the last five years, it has been repeatedly said that investigating officers or IOs have been trying to trace the destination

of the money involved with the BASIC Bank scam, while we've seen the IOs being able to trace the money in PK Halder's case so quickly. Why this difference? Is it a failure on the part of ACC?

This is a question I get asked often, and rightly so, because of the gravity of the crime. One has to take into account that these cases were lodged with the ACC before its restructuring. These cases and their investigations are still ongoing. As chairman, I am unable to comment on the cases under investigation, but it is a fact that the commission has already instructed the IOs to trace the destinations of the siphoned money relating to the BASIC Bank scam. The IOs are working tirelessly to complete the investigations. In the meantime, many new cases generated from the BASIC Bank scam were lodged, and many more will be lodged in the coming days. These are ongoing matters, but the perpetrators will

reforms than our guidelines. The systemic anomalies, corruption and procrastination prevalent in these organisations can indeed be mitigated exponentially after thorough examination and strict implementation of the laid-out recommendations.

The Cabinet Division, being responsible for matters concerning the ACC and for inter-ministerial coordination, can take up the responsibility of implementing and enforcing these recommendations as per their discretion. The public would be pleased to know that some of the recommendations were, or are, already being implemented by some of the government agencies.

There was renewed hope after the introduction of 106 hotlines. But we've seen a drastic drop in the number of bribe-mongers caught red-handed after the enactment of the Public Service Act 2018, which prohibits arrest of any public

The commission proceeds with legal action on the basis of specific allegations relating to offences as stated in the Schedule of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2004. This has nothing to do with comfort or preference, but everything to do with the exact fulfilment of the commission's legal mandates.

The National Board of Revenue plays a big role in giving certificates

carry out its duties under the legal framework only.

According to the Transparency International Perceptions Index, Bangladesh's status has deteriorated. What can be done to reduce the magnitude of corruption in the country?

Corruption is a global problem. It is rampant in many countries of the world. Recently, the TI published

focus on actual groundwork. The reality of this world is that it more often does not correspond with concrete values and data. Whatever comes our way, we will have to analyse, adapt and overcome. Things have always been this way. Therefore, it is not worth our time denying that corruption in Bangladesh persists in a wider expanse. The commission has devoted much of its effort to combatting, controlling and preventing corruption and will continue to do so. As we have learned over time, hard work will pay off, resulting in better days in the future.

What needs to be done to make ACC more vibrant?

The commission is constantly working on revising, modifying and reinventing its legal tools and techniques. Whatever we might lack in capacity we make up for it in our sincerity. This is a continuous process. I believe we should continue to emphasise the need for engaging with the public as, according to our constitution, all the power in the Republic of Bangladesh belongs to the people. We should create an environment where people have a bigger platform and role in fighting against corruption. We still have a long way to go regarding raising public awareness against fighting corruption, but we are well on our way there.

What is your plan after retirement?

I have had the opportunity to serve the nation in various capacities for the last 40 years of my life. I have many good memories. However, the harsh reality is that I feel I was unable to give enough time to my family. I plan to make up for the lost time with them. I also have plans to pass on my experiences and knowledge to the future generation so that I am able to serve my beloved country in another capacity (teaching).



Iqbal Mahmood, chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

undoubtedly be brought to justice in due time. In order to carry out this justice effectively, the ACC has to complete a transparent, detailed and credible investigation.

One of the commendable jobs of the commission during your tenure was enquiring into institutional corruption. The ACC brought to light several dark spots of corruption in different service-providing government organisations but it was apparently ignored. People would have gotten better services had the authorities complied with the ACC's suggestions. You have also brought the matter before the media. Why are the authorities not sincere about fulfilling your recommendations?

As part of its mission to prevent and reign in corruption in accordance with the rules and regulations of the ACC Act, the ACC has made a host of recommendations for systemic reforms in the working processes of different ministries and divisions or their subordinate departments or agencies since 2016. However, the ministries and divisions concerned do not appear to have taken up any remarkable measures to implement those recommendations as of yet. We believe that for reduction of corruption and harassment, which are prevalent in the delivery process of public services, there are no better alternatives to systemic

servant on criminal charges without the government's approval. Isn't it one kind of interference in ACC's work on fighting corruption? What is your opinion?

I can confidently say that the ACC did not stop nabbing bribe-mongers after the enactment of the Public Service Act, 2018. On the contrary, a significant number of public servants were caught red-handed while taking bribes. More than 16 trap cases were launched during 2019 with the goal of catching bribe-takers red-handed. Similarly, in 2018, the commission made 57 arrests, while in 2019, the number rose to 123, which was about 116 percent higher than that of the preceding year. This indicates that the Public Service Act did not hamper the ACC's operations. The purpose of the act is to prevent government officials from engaging in corrupt practices, especially while carrying out public duties.

The ACC seems more comfortable with dealing with illegal asset cases rather than handling real-time corruption. What are the reasons behind it?

Taking legal action against entities in possession of ill-gotten wealth is a legal mandate of the ACC. Moreover, article 20 of our constitution states, "The State shall endeavour to create conditions in which, as a general principle, persons shall not be able to enjoy unearned incomes..."

to assets but often controversy is created at the time of enquiry and investigation, as the ACC found those illegal. Where are the loopholes? How can these be resolved?

The main functions of the National Board of Revenue are to assess, collect and manage taxes or duties for the exchequer. Generally, the tax collectors are less concerned about the sources of income. On the other hand, the responsibility of the Anti-Corruption Commission is to take lawful action against those who have earned assets beyond known sources of income. Pursuant to sections 26 and 27 of the ACC Act of 2004, and the Money Laundering Prevention Act of 2012, action is taken against entities that have accumulated assets by means of taking bribes, engaging in corruption or via any other illegal means. The ACC is bound to

its report on the Global Corruption Perceptions Index in which Bangladesh seems to have moved down in rank. During the same time period, the TI published another report (The Global Corruption Barometer: Asia 2020) where it was indicated that 86 percent of the people in Bangladesh had confidence in the ACC. This goes to show that

not all factors were considered in generating these reports. This is natural as these organisations operate as outsiders, and as a result, are unable to take into account all aspects of our situation in Bangladesh.

Empirical data, which they have less of, is vital in order to look at the bigger picture. We should treat these reports as optional tools in our arsenal which we may or may not learn from—in other words, less focus on hard numbers and more

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ  
কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়  
২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন  
মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ

**উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহবান বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

তারিখ: ০৩/০৩/২০২১ খ্রিঃ  
২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বৎসরে ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ কোর্সের নিম্নোক্ত লাইসেন্স প্রদানের জন্য 'দি দায়িত্ব প্রকটিকরণ আইন-২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকটিকরণ আইন-২০০৬' এবং 'তদীয় সংশোধনী অনুসারে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে টিকাদার নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশি টিকাদারদের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্র.সং.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বত্ত্ব মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ।
০১।	সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
০২।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনাকারী প্রধান	কমান্ডিং অফিসার (এসপি), ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
০৩।	কি কারণে দরপত্র আহবান	২০২০-২০২১ ও ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বৎসরে লাই-১, ২, ৩, ৪, ৫ ও ৬-এ বর্ণিত কাজের জন্য টিকাদার নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে।
০৪।	সম্প্রদায়িক সন্ত্রাস জেলা	ময়মনসিংহ।
০৫।	দরপত্র আহবানের সূত্র নম্বর	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্মারক নং-এসআই-২৭৩-২১/৭৯৯
০৬।	তারিখ	০৩ মার্চ ২০২১ খ্রিঃ
<b>কাজের বিবরণ</b>		
০৭।	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)
<b>অর্থের উৎস</b>		
০৮।	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক বাত	পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা হতে সংশ্লিষ্ট বাতে অর্থ বরাদ্দ গ্রাভি সাপেক্ষে।
<b>বিশেষ তথ্যাবলী</b>		
১০।	দরপত্র প্যাকেজ নং	০৭/২০২০-২০২১
১১।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	০৩ মার্চ ২০২১ খ্রিঃ
১২।	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০১ মার্চ ২০২১ খ্রিঃ বেলো ১১:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৩।	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের তারিখ ও সময়	০১ এপ্রিল ২০২১ খ্রিঃ বেলো ১১:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৪।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০১ এপ্রিল ২০২১ খ্রিঃ বেলো ১১:৩০ ঘটিকা।
<b>অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা</b>		
১৫।	দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	(ক) এপিবিএন হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা। (খ) ডিআইজি, এপিবিএন, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা। (গ) কমান্ডিং অফিসার (এসপি), ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
১৬।	দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী অফিস	কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়, ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
১৭।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	কমান্ডিং অফিসারের কার্যালয়, ২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
১৮।	প্রিজার সবার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	২ এপিবিএন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ। তারিখ: ২৮/৩/২০২১ খ্রিঃ, সময়: ১২:০০ ঘটিকা।
<b>দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত তথ্য</b>		
১৯।	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	জনাব মোহাম্মদ নাজরুল হোসেন।
২০।	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী	কমান্ডিং অফিসার (এসপি)।
২১।	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	২ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ।
২২।	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম	ফোন: ০৯০২৮-৭৫৩৪৪, ফ্যাক্স: ০৯০২৮-৭৫২০১
<b>বিশেষ শর্তাবলী</b>		
ক।	নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।	
খ।	কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	
গ।	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তভাবে আইটেমের পরিমাণ বৃদ্ধি অথবা কমানোর বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের ক্ষমতা রয়েছে।	
ঘ।	দরপত্র দাবি করা সত্ত্বেও বিজ্ঞপ্তি তথ্যাবলী দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী অফিস হতে এবং দরপত্র তফসিলে পাওয়া যাবে।	
ঙ।	দরপত্র পিপিআর/২০০৬ ও পিপিআর/২০০৬ মোতাবেক সকল শর্তাবলী কার্যকর হবে।	
চ।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত প্রতিটি কাজের জন্য পৃথক পৃথক নামে পৃথক পৃথকভাবে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।	

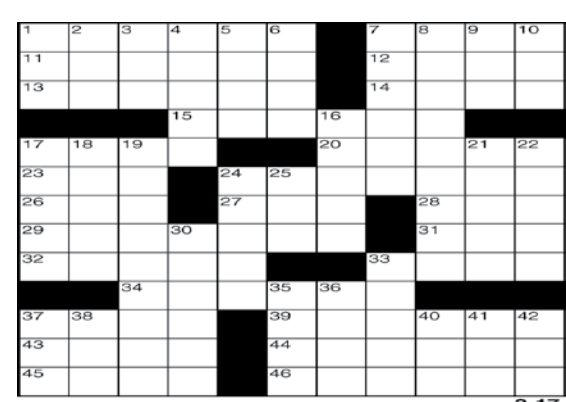
উল্লেখ্য, উক্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি CPTU এর ওয়েবসাইটে ([www.cptu.gov.bd](http://www.cptu.gov.bd)) পাওয়া যাবে। (৩য়মার্চ লাই-১ এর ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য)।

মোহাম্মদ নাজরুল হোসেন  
বিপি নং-০৯০৮০১০০৪৪  
কমান্ডিং অফিসার (এসপি)  
২ এপিবিএন, মুজাগাছা, ময়মনসিংহ  
ফোন: ৭৫৩৪৪, ফ্যাক্স: ৭৫২০১

ক্রিডি-৪৪২

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Religious retreat
  - 7 Big gulp
  - 11 One of TV's "Friends"
  - 12 Washed out
  - 13 Entertain
  - 14 Cruise stop
  - 15 Tear off
  - 17 June honorees
  - 20 Messing on TV
  - 23 Memorable time
  - 24 Disbursed
  - 26 Guitarist Paul
  - 27 Swearing-in vow
  - 28 Maximum amount
  - 29 Takes a breath
  - 31 Stephen of "The Crying Game"
  - 32 Dark fur
- DOWN**
- 16 Spanish farewell
  - 17 Sub shops
  - 18 Place for a game
  - 19 Odometer
  - 20 setting
  - 21 Held power
  - 22 Travel aid
  - 24 Stacked
  - 25 Sports drink suffix
  - 30 Brass and bronze
  - 33 Over-flowing
  - 35 Fizzy drink
  - 36 God of war
  - 37 Topper
  - 38 -Jima
  - 40 Uncle, in Acapulco
  - 41 Go astray
  - 42 Glimpse



## YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C A R E W A O R T A  
 U V U L A T R I E S  
 B E L L S T H E C A T  
 A R E A W E M O  
 E B O N Y  
 M A R D I S E U S S  
 G R A S A S I A  
 M I T E R T R A C T  
 L I M O S  
 A P T N A P A M S  
 C H E W S T H E F A T  
 E R I E A R E N A  
 S W I G S T A W N Y

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