



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH

Overwhelming youth engagement marks the 3rd International Anti-Corruption Day in Bangladesh

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) observed the 3rd International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) with great enthusiasm with particular emphasis on participation of the young generation who raised voice against corruption and undertook many innovative programmes. They also vowed to follow-up with further proactive and result-oriented activities. Events were marked by intensification of demand for accession of Bangladesh to the UN Convention against Corruption. In view of the forthcoming national elections, the other special thematic highlight was TIB's demand for effective oversight role of the Parliamentary Committees in ensuring accountability of the Government.

This year's observance of the IACD was designed and implemented mostly by the young generation including TIB Volunteers, cultural activists, and other support groups with the slogan "***The youth shall definitely prevent corruption.***" Volunteers all across the country organised various programs such as rallies, cultural events, essay, debate and painting competitions, human chain, poster and sticker campaigns, street theatre shows, publication of brochures and leaflets etc. One remarkable event was a cross-country bi-cycle rally by volunteers from south-western district of Faridpur. The rally started in Faridpur and ended in the capital Dhaka in nearly 9 hours. Along with encouraging youth participation, TIB and 36 Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) all around Bangladesh organized various programs both at national and local levels. Activities included the following:

1. **Anti-Corruption Debate - Parliamentary Style:** For the first time a Parliamentary Style Debate Competition was arranged where students from colleges and universities from across the country took part. This event was held between 29-30 November in partnership with the debating societies of Dhaka University, Rokeya Hall, East-West University and North-South University. Two leading national newspapers – The Daily Star and Prothom Alo and a private TV channel, "Bangla Vision" joined as media partners. A special TV program was also aired on this competition. During the competition the participating students debated on issues like role of parliamentarians in fighting corruption, parliamentary code of conduct, and the debaters perception and expectation of an ideal Member of Parliament.
2. **Cartoon & Essay Competition & Cartoon Exhibition:** The first ever cartoon competition of this type had been a great success with 313 entries in two categories. An exhibition of selected cartoons was also held at a popular gallery in Dhaka during 7-10 December. The exhibition received huge media coverage. Besides, like previous years, an Essay Competition in the national level was also arranged.
3. **Anti-Corruption Cartoon Album:** Work on publication of the first ever anti-corruption cartoon album is nearing completion. The volume will include work of leading cartoonists of the country as well as the cartoons that received awards in the Competition mentioned above.
4. **National Seminar in Dhaka:** A seminar on ***Corruption and Parliamentary Oversight: Primacy of the Political Will*** was held on 9 December in Dhaka. Presented by the Executive Director, the paper argued that the performance of the Parliamentary Committees in terms of their constitutionally assigned oversight function was far from the expectation level. The seminar was told that very few of the Committees attached due priority to addressing corruption, while recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committees on various ministries were hardly implemented. The main reason for the failure is the absence of political commitment to make the Committees effective. A number of recommendations were

put forward to make the Committees effective so that Parliament is successful in reducing corruption and ensuring accountability of the Government. See: www.ti-bangladesh.org
Lawmakers from major political parties attended.

5. **New TV Messages:** On the eve of the IACD, TIB reinforced its electronic media communication campaign with a new TV spot highlighting the failure of the Parliamentary Committees in playing their due role in ensuring accountability of the Government. It calls upon the would-be MPs of the next Parliament to be aware of the public demand for effective Parliament and Parliamentary Committees. Another new spot calls for action by all from respective positions to contribute to transparency in the election process. The message comes from a young owner of a printing house who declines to print multi-coloured election posters of a corrupt candidate, knowing well that he could have earned sizeable profit. He declines to take the job because he is convinced that if the corrupt candidates are elected it will harm the nation. He also reminds the audience that printing of coloured posters is illegal.
6. **Programs outside Dhaka:** 36 Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) organized programs in their respective areas all over the country. These programs included signature campaigns with a call for the government to sign the UN Convention Against corruption, seminars, rallies, cultural programs, essay, debate and cartoon competitions, poster and sticker campaigns etc. In all CCC areas people from all walks of the society took part with great enthusiasm and expectation. In a number of areas where CCCs have not been set up, alliances were formed this year with some socio-cultural groups to observe the Day.
7. **Campaign for acceding to the UNCAC:** An important common feature of activities in the CCC level was a signature campaign to reinforce TIB demand upon the Government to accede to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). In addition TIB Executive Director took part in a TV Talk Show in Channel I in which he put forward TIB's arguments in favour of Bangladesh's accession to the Convention. On 10 December in a seminar organized in the Bangladesh Public Affairs Training Complex, in which TIB Chairman and Executive Director took part, the Advisor to the Caretaker Government who was the Chief Guest declared that the Government would take all measures to expedite the accession process. Taking this as a significant development TIB is going to further intensify the demand for translating the commitment into reality without any further delay.
8. **Anti-Corruption Youth Concert:** Finally, the high point of this year's IACD observance by TI-Bangladesh was the first ever anti-corruption youth concert on 29 December 2006 in Dhaka. The event was earlier scheduled on 9 December, but had to be postponed for political uncertainty. Most of the leading artists and musical groups of the country performed in the 8 and a half hours non-stop open-air concert (14:00-22:30 hours), participated at the ground by nearly 30,000 youngsters. The live on-line transmission was featured by more than 7,500 on-line viewers sending impromptu feedbacks - the highest record for any such transmission yet in Bangladesh. The Nobel Prize Winner Prof Muhammad Yunus told the audience that corruption was a huge giant - the biggest impediment to Bangladesh's development. He stressed the importance of collective social movement against the menace with active involvement of the youth. *The programme ended enthusiastically with an anti-corruption oath taken by the young participants.* It was telecast live and/or covered as main news item by most channels. Print media covered it extensively.
