

Speakers at seminar organised by Committees of Concerned Citizens of TIB

'Bribery, corruption destroys nation'

Human rights are being violated because of corruption. Conscious citizens need to be brought together and, through them, people from all walks of life have to be united if corruption is to be weeded from the society. Speakers at a seminar said this on "The role of citizens in checking corruption, and Transparency International Bangladesh."

The Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) of Mymensingh Sadar, formed by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organised the seminar on 26 May at the local District Council auditorium. Chairman of TIB Trustee Board and eminent educationist Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid was the Chief Guest at the Seminar. It was chaired by the Convenor of the CCC, Professor Islam and ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The former Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh, Mr. M Hafizuddin Khan was present as special guest. Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and Prof. Jateen Sarker presented papers on "Corruption and Good Governance in Bangladesh" and "Corruption: Society: Socio-cultural movements" respectively. In his paper, Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad mentioned that a lot of information is being brought out into the open about corruption owing



to the freedom of the press. What is necessary, he said, is to create a firm resolve in the minds of the citizens to resist corruption. He also said that it is only the conscious and compromising people who can ensure our ascent from the vicious cycle of socio-economic decadence to morally sound human level of sustainable and self-prospering development.

Prof. Jateen Sarker in his paper said that it would be inappropriate to judge all who are corrupt in society

with the same yardstick. He said that those who resort to malpractice owing to the scarcity cannot be handed out punishment by society unless effective measures are taken to resolve their scarcity. He stressed the need for seeking those blackguards whose nature it is to create scarcity and want in society. The primary responsibility of civil society is to ensure social punishment for those who are culprits by nature so that no one is pushed by scarcity into corrup

media reaction publication of the corruption database report

The Database Report on corruption related news was published on 13 April. The Report has been prepared on the basis of news items appearing in 21 national dailies. TIB's Corruption Database Report for the period July - December 2000 was launched at a press conference at the National Press Club. The event received extensive coverage in the print media as well as in Ekushey Television. Editorials and Post-editorials were written on this in most of the national dailies.

According to the Report, a total of one thousand nine hundred and forty eight reports on corruption were published in the media during the six months (July - December 2000). This means that on average 325 reports were published every month on corruption related issues and 75 reports every week. The sector identified as the most corrupt is the law enforcement - the police. The highest number of reported incidence of corruption is in Dhaka. And in Dhaka, the top-notched is Ramna Police Station. Corruption is usually prevalent among Class 1 Government servants. The loss incurred by the Government during the survey period on account of corruption is TK. 5657.6 core, which is nearly 2.6% of the GDP. Financially the most affected sector is health. Some action was taken in the case of only 31.4% of incidence corrupt practice and the Anti-Corruption Bureau has taken measures only in the case of 13.7% such incidents. The Report indicates that in the reported cases of corruption, there is extensive evidence of absolute power, whimsical power and lack of accountability among the employees concerned.

Chairman of the TIB Trustee Board, Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid, Members Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and Samson H. Chowdhury, Executive Director Manzoor Hasan and other officials were present at the launching. Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and TIB Research Assistant Abdul Alim responded to questions from the journalists. Previously, TIB had published the second Corruption Database Report for the period January - June 2000 on 25 September 2000.

tion and malpractice.

Prof. Khandkar Mujahidul Huq and Prof. Shumita Naha of Anandamohan College, Taleya Rehman, Executive Director of Democracy Watch, Prof. M. Ashrafuzzaman Selim of Bangladesh Agriculture University and Advocate Anisur Rahman participated in the discussion on the papers.

The Chief Guest, Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid said that corruption had enslaved human society. It is so all-pervading that it permeates our climate. Checking corruption will require action and the organizational strength of citizens to complement our wish for a corruption-free society. We need to commit ourselves to the attainment of a healthy and correct life and lifestyle.

The TIB Chairman said that the nature of corruption, its root causes etc. need to be taught in schools and colleges. Students must be told how corruption enters the administration and snatches away people's rights. Prof. Murshid referred to the Constitution and said that the state has clearly defined obligations to the society under several provisions of the Constitution. He said that the Constitution is our treasure and that it is possible to create a welfare state on the basis of the various provisions of the Constitution. The Government is violating the Constitution—this is the complaint of everyone. The state must stop this. Citizens can take their complaints to the Courts and challenge the state. We are the ones who have to ensure the freedom of rights of the unemployed so that they do not have to bribe people for a job.

The Chief Guest said that a 'cooperative' approach would have to be taken to check corruption. This cooperation, he said, would be a cooperation of values. TIB believes that man is not perfect, but can certainly rid himself of imperfections. TIB cannot bring about any dramatic change, but is working with people with great confidence. A great change has already come about because of TIB's efforts.

He said that we require a social, cultural, moral movement which will be led by a good, honest and a positive civil society.

Special Guest Hafizuddin said that there are many people in society who are ready to give time and energy for any anti-corruption movement. Honesty on an individual basis does not cleanse society of corruption; rather society is gradually erodes if

First Coordination meeting of South Asian TIs held in Dhaka

Representatives of Transparency International (TI) from five South Asian Countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal) met in Dhaka during 3-8 April 2001 for a regional coordination meeting. The meeting had threadbare discussion on the results of the survey conduct by TIB in 1997 on countrywide corruption. The meeting identified 7 (seven) sectors as corrupt sectors in the five countries and drew up a comprehensive questionnaire. The meeting decided to undertake a coordinated survey under the South Asian TI Chapters in line with the survey conducted by TIB.



Those present at the Regional coordination meeting included the Chairman of the TI Advisory Committee, Dr. Kamal Hossain, Member of the TI Trustee Board Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, Executive Director Manzoor Hasan, C. M. Ramakrishnan of TI India, Nooruddin Ahmed and Mansoor Ali Shah of Pakistan, Pradeep Peiris of Sri Lanka and Ashish Thapa of TI Nepal. The Chief Coordinator for the coordination meeting, which was held in a local hotel, was Dr. Jamal Munshi, Professor, California State University and TIB senior Research Fellow.

there is no collective effort. The Committees of Concerned Citizens must therefore create honest people through an anti-corruption movement and by inculcating moral and religious precepts. The former Comptroller and Auditor General said that for the society to survive we need to abandon corruption. And for this, we need political commitment. In this, the responsibility of the people is to elect honest men in the national elections.

Advocate Anisur Rahman Khan, in commenting on the two papers presented by Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and Prof. Jateen Sarker said that the corrupt were very powerful. They are not afraid of the society at large. He called for raising collective voice for checking personal corruption side by side with institutional corruption so that the individual strength and influence of corrupt persons can be effectively neutralized.

Dr. Ashrafuzzaman Salim said that it was very difficult to draw a line between good practices and malpractice. This he said, is because things have come to a stage when one cannot survive without resorting to corruption. He said that launching a movement against corruption will require the united efforts of the whole society. Prof. Sumita Naha said that we are up to our throats in corruption. Corruption has become like the air

around us - we are pleasantly unaware of it, although it is all pervasive. We can break through this stifling coil of corruption if we ourselves become aware of the corruption around us and make everyone around us aware.

Taleya Rehman, Executive Director of Democracy Watch said that we are all, to some extent prone to corruption. Some are corrupt on their own accord and some are forced into it.

Mujahidul Haq said that checking corruption requires administrative reform, and that such reforms were not being undertaken. He called upon the Government to revise and amend old and outdated laws. ADC, Mymensingh Mr. Mojibur Rahman said that there was urgent need for structural change at the local government level if corruption is to be rooted out. There is no scope for accountability in the current local government bodies. There was a question answer session at the end of the discussion. Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and Prof. Jateen Sarker responded to various questions posed by the audience. People representing various classes and professional groups attended the seminar. Representatives from the U.S, U.K, and Canadian missions were also present.