

TIB activities

Executive Director meets ADB representative

Executive Director Manzoor Hasan paid a courtesy call on Mr. Thipit Supa Pipat, the Bangladesh Resident Representative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 10 May. The Executive Director appraised the ADB Resident Representative about the various programmes of TIB. He also handed over to the ADB Resident Representative copies of the two recently published research papers (Corruption Data Bank and Survey on the meritorious students and teachers of Secondary schools). Mr. Thipit Supa Pipat lauded the programmes of TIB.

UNDP Resident Representative visits TIB office

The UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh, Mr. Jorgen Lissner visited the TIB office on 3 May. He met the Executive Director and was briefed about the various activities of TIB. The UNDP Resident Representative was highly impressed by the work being done by TIB and assured of providing UNDP assistance to the Chapter.

Meeting of TIB delegations with executives of the World Bank, IMF and Public Administration Reforms Commission

On 3 May 2001, TIB delegations separately met with World Bank Country Director Frederick D. Temple, IMF Resident Representative Ronald P. Hicks

and Chairman of the Public Administration Reforms Commission. A. T. M. Shamsul Haq. During the meetings, the TIB delegates outlined the various programmes under taken by TIB and presented copies of some of the reports.

Executive Director as instructor at BPATC

The Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) provides training for officers belonging to the various cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service. Executive Director Manzoor Hasan participated in the 35th Senior Staff Course as an instructor. The Senior

mentioned that Manzoor Hasan has previously delivered lectures at the 33rd and 34th Senior Staff Courses at the BPATC.

Focus Group discussion

A focus group discussion was held on 12 April on the "Parliament Guide" published by TIB. Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Dr. Md. Selim, MP and Mohammad Khalequzzaman, MP took part in the discussions that were held in a hotel in the capital. The MPs praised the TIB publication and said that the booklet

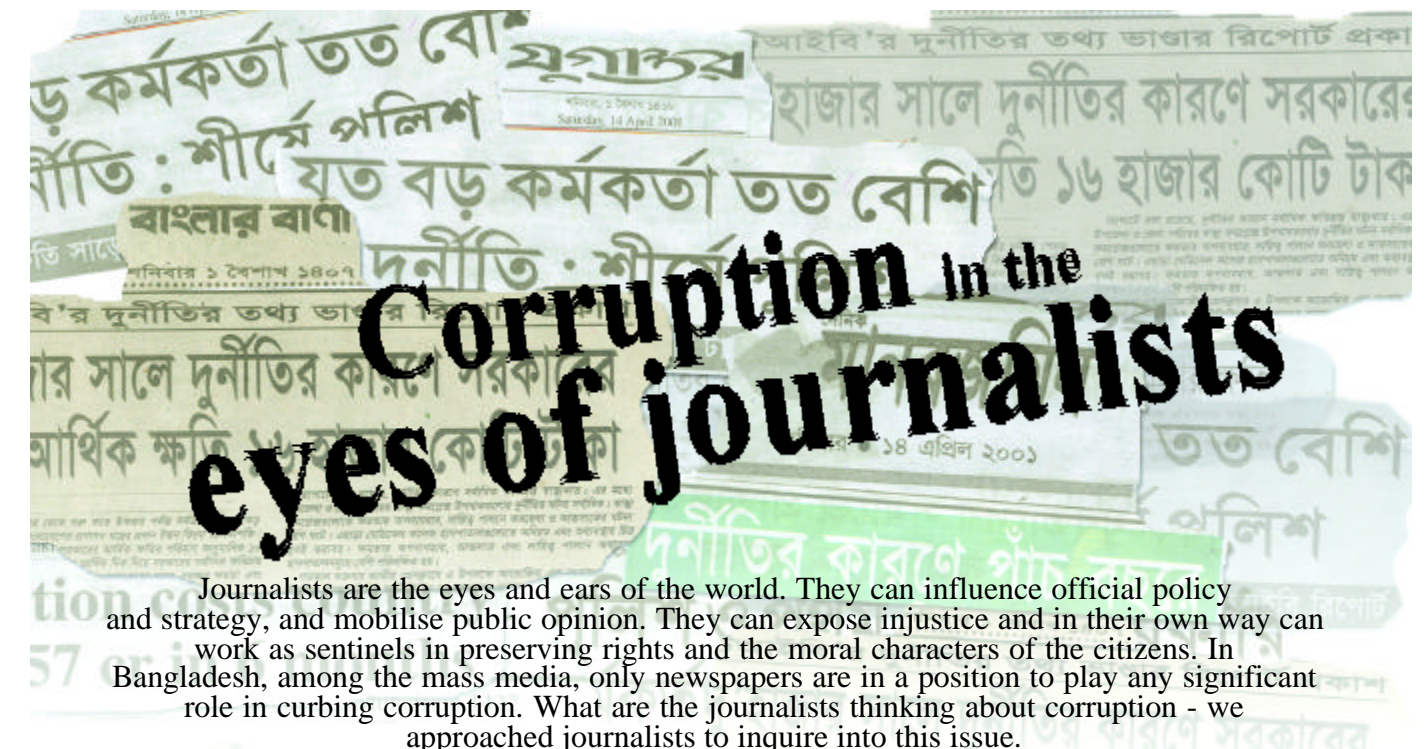
was an informative and useful handbook on the Parliament, which at the same time was brief and readable within a short period of time. They spoke of greater transparency and accountability in Parliamentary proceedings for making the Parliament effective. Referring to the Parliamentary Standing Committees as mini Parliaments, they said that the Standing Committees' authority should not be limited to only recommendation, they should also have the authority to take binding decisions. This way, action can be taken against any irregularity.

They suggested that TIB could look into the bottlenecks in Parliamentary proceedings and how these can be effectively resolved. TIB Executive Director Manzoor Hasan and Research Associate M. Anwarul Amin were present during the discussion.

International Conference against corruption in The Hague

The second conference of the Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity was held in the Dutch capital, The Hague. Representatives of nearly one hundred countries from around the globe attended this four-day Conference, held from 28 to 31 May 2001. US President George W. Bush sent a message on this occasion, which was read out in the course of the Conference. He said that corruption was not an untouchable issue and that the new US administration is committed to uprooting corruption globally. He wished the conference all success. The Conference was divided up into five separate workshops. Each workshop again was divided into sub-sessions. The Executive Director of TIB, Manzoor Hasan was invited to the Conference and he chaired the sub-session on Anti-corruption Programmes in Local Government. The Conference ended with the adoption of a final declaration on the theme "Defeating Corruption Through Integrity, Transparency and Accountability".

Course is designed for Joint Secretaries to the Government and equivalent ranking public servants. He delivered a lecture on Transparency in Administration on 11 May. It may be



Journalists are the eyes and ears of the world. They can influence official policy and strategy, and mobilise public opinion. They can expose injustice and in their own way can work as sentinels in preserving rights and the moral characters of the citizens. In Bangladesh, among the mass media, only newspapers are in a position to play any significant role in curbing corruption. What are the journalists thinking about corruption - we approached journalists to inquire into this issue.

Jasim Chowdhury Shabuj, Bureau Chief, Daily Jugantar, Chittagong. He said, corruption is rampant everywhere. The newspapers do not adequately cover the corruption-taking place around us. Many journalists feel insecure after publishing corruption related news. Government does not provide security if someone writes about delicate issues such as corruption. Therefore, as a result there is no enthusiasm on the part of journalists to focus on news about corruption.

Manik Shaha is a journalist from Khulna. Staff reporter of the Daily Sangbad and BBC reporter. According to him, corruption is one of the impediments to national development and progress. Starting from the individual to the highest institutional levels, corruption is everywhere. A social movement against corruption is the need of the hour. Examples of an alternative trend have to be set — examples that can provide the best remedy for this malaise.

Debabrata Chakraborty Bishnu is the Assistant Editor of the Daily Banglabazar Patrika. He said that there was bribery everywhere and unfortunate as it is, it is a fact of life that our entry into the 21st century was characterized by a crisis of values. There is no cover; everyone appears to be sitting ready to receive bribe. The question can rightly be posed, has the country as a whole ultimately become a market place of bribery? This is not a pleasant question, but then one cannot also ignore this very blatant fact either. This situation has not been created in a day. The venom has accumulated in trickles over many days. We have witnessed this during the period of every government since liberation. Its degree only,

over the years, has reached dangerous proportions.

According to journalist Bishnu, it needs no elaboration that the country cannot hope for development or progress while such a poison tree of corruption thrives in our midst. If governments were to dispense with the thought of bagging votes and, for a while, give their thoughts to eradicating corruption in the national interest, then perhaps we could see a breakthrough. Bribery and corruption cannot be the end-all for a nation or a country.

Kajol Rasheed Shaheen, Assistant Editor of the Daily Rupali, said somewhat in a literary vein — corruption ails Bangladesh. What can be more unfortunate? Although, our independence today is a youth of 30, it is ailing due only to the corruption that we practice at the individual, social and state levels. But then, one need not panic. There is a clear indication of the coming wind of change discernible in the awareness level of the new generation, and therefore the promise of a new morning beyond the dark dank corruption of today.

Journalist Ranjan Sen says, corruption is everywhere this is the reality. Politicians are held to be responsible for this. But he does not hold this view. This is because politicians have run the country for only 13 years since independence. For the rest of the 30 years, civil and military bureaucrats have run it. And corruption has been most widespread in those years. The report published by the Bangladesh Economics Association shows that 75% of the foreign aid received over the last 30 years has been wasted or misspent. Of this, 61% is due to the bureaucrats, businessmen and consultants, the remain-

ing 14% has gone to the politicians. Staff Reporter Ranjan Sen of the weekly Bichitra says, it would not be possible to create a corruption free Bangladesh without collective resistance.

Sub-editor of the Daily Prothom Alo Dipu Hasan says that bribery and corruption cannot receive social approval in any civilised society. But it is the corrupt elements that are today the big-wigs of our society. It is quite difficult to do stories on corruption. Since there is no law on providing access to official records, no one in government offices is willing to give out any information. It is therefore not possible to write informative investigative reports on corruption. It is important to allow the press ready access to official records and information in the interest of establishing a corruption-free government and a democratic society.

Staff Reporter of the Daily Ittefaq Anwar Aldin says, corruption is deep-rooted in the Administration. If we are to check this, we have to change everything. According to him, those who are engaged in investigative journalism find obstacles at every step of their professional work. Their lives are threatened. Despite all this, when a report on corruption is prepared, its fate remains uncertain because the newspaper's "policy" determines whether such a story could be published or not. Then there is of course the owner's perspective. It is also not possible to show the whole of any corruption case because we see only a part. Most of it happens hidden from sight. And for journalists, it is also not always possible to obtain evidence of corruption.

Mohammed Imam Uddin

Mobile Theatre



TIB has formed a mobile theatre unit so as to be able to convey the all-pervasive nature of corruption to the general public. The old but effective forum of the People's Theatre has been adopted by TIB to generate awareness about corruption among those who are victims at the grassroots level, but who constitute the silent segment of society that are deprived of their rights. Democracy Watch, which is a component member of the Governance Coalition, has joined hands with TIB in this venture.

This People's Theatre troupe has been formed by a group of energetic, hard-working and promising young theatre activists from Democracy Watch Mymensingh. Funding for the programme is provided by TIB. The troupe has so far staged 12 shows in various locations in greater Mymensingh. The first show was staged on 8 June. 'Barnamala' (The alphabets), staged in the open-air stage of the Mymensingh Saheb Quarters Park, highlighted the systemic corruption in primary education. This 30-minute people's theatre presentation portrayed the misappropriation of wheat under Food for Education programme, bribery and related malpractice involving teachers and officials of the Education Department, apathy of teachers towards the students, cruelty and lack of sincerity etc.

The manuscript was prepared by Jewel Kabir Akash, a brilliant student of M. A. final year at Jahangirnagar University. Costume design, make-up and music were also done by Akash. Kamal Hossain Mintu was the research and production advisor, while Ribbon Khandakar, recent graduate from the same university, directed the production.