

CORRUPTION AND HUMAN INSECURITY IN BANGLADESH

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(Draft)

'I want my daughter to go to school, without having to make any unauthorized payments'
'I want my family to get the due medical care, without paying any bribes'
'I want enforcement of law and justice, without being harassed'
'I want guarantee of my right to life and protection against death and injury by violence' ...

If any statistically significant number of randomly selected citizens of today's Bangladesh were asked what they wanted in life, they would most likely give one or a combination of the above responses. There could definitely be other concerns, but the main theme in any event would be that the individual citizens have a feeling of insecurity, and of being deprived of their basic legal rights because of pervasive corruption. What follows here is an attempt to elaborate this theme. The paper first offers a brief conceptual overview of corruption, which is followed by an attempt to relate concerns of human security with implications of corruption. Finally it goes on to examine the extent to which corruption has become a source of human insecurity in Bangladesh.

The paper is based on research and review of the relevant literature on human security and corruption as well as secondary analysis of National Household Surveys on Corruption (1997, 2002, and 2005) conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), TIB's corruption data-base, and diagnostic studies. The analysis also draws from some of the Report Card surveys conducted by TIB on relevant sectors, a special tool of measuring corruption and facilitating citizens' response on selected areas of public service delivery.

I. Corruption: Inherent Bias against the Poor

Corruption is among the most frequently experienced problems in life anywhere, though with varying degree of spread and depth. The word corruption comes from the Latin verb *corruptus*, which means to break. Corruption is a behaviour or act that breaks away or contradicts from ethical and moral standard, traditions, laws and civic virtues. Corruption is defined by Transparency

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International and World Bank as abuse of public office for private gain. The UN's Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) defines corruption as the "abuse of power for private gain". Most often abuse of power and personal gain occur in both the public and private domains and usually by a collusion of individuals or groups of individuals from both sectors.

A more elaborate description of corruption is "the abuse of office whether in Government, administration or business ... (it) is about the giving and seeking of favours, it is about buying political influence, taking kickbacks, bribing officials. It is about subverting public good for private gain"¹. Corruption may also include any or a combination of such acts as embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, negligence of duty for private gain or promoting any vested interests - financial, political or otherwise, misuse of public or institutional fund and extortion. Corruption, therefore, is more than bribery. The wide variety of acts that are classified as corruption make definition of corruption wide and flexible, which is also partly the reason why corruption is studied under several disciplines – economics, political science and governance, development studies, sociology, anthropology and psychology.

In terms of actors, distinction is also made between grand corruption and petty corruption. Grand corruption usually involves people in high positions of power – political and Government leaders and public sector officials. In contrast, petty corruption is usually the fallout of grand corruption, and involves public officials at varying levels from top to bottom who use their respective positions of power or links with power, to solicit unauthorized payments or bribes for services to the members of the public that are in her or his jurisdiction. Petty corruption is also often called speed money or grease money in return for quicker than otherwise disposal of a service. When corruption becomes pervasive access of the citizens to the basic public service deliveries become a function of capacity to make unauthorized payments. In other words, corruption affects the poor and disadvantaged more than others in the society.

It should be noted that when corruption becomes systemic and widespread, distinction between grand and petty corruption becomes blurred and together they give the total picture of corruption. Another focus of the discourse on corruption is on whether it happens nationally or internationally, which are also linked with each other. Distinction is further made between political and economic corruption, though one is the other side of the same coin.² Amartya Sen recognizes

¹ Richard North, "Corruption: Stopping the Rot" in *BBC On Air*, August 2003, p.10.

² For a review of conceptual approaches, see by Zoe Pearson, "An International Human Rights Approach to Corruption", in Peter Larmour and Nick Wolanin, *Corruption and Anti-Corruption*, Canberra, Asia-Pacific Press, 2001, pp. 30-60.

motivational importance of personal gains from corruption, but also stresses values, norms and behavioural modes in different societies.³

In terms of implications, Amartya Sen warns that a “high level of corruption can make public policies ineffective and can also draw investment and economic activities away from productive pursuits towards the towering rewards of underhanded activities”.⁴ Corruption is an insidious menace that breeds and increases poverty. It prevents development, undermines democracy and governance. Corruption prevents rule of law, distorts market and stifles economic growth. It creates and perpetuates social and economic deprivation and inequality, and leads to violation of basic constitutional and human rights, breeds crimes, social frustration, discontent and insecurity. As the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan said,

This evil phenomenon (corruption) is found in all countries – big and small, rich and poor – but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately – by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid. Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance, and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development.⁵

The inherent bias of corruption against the poor and the various dimensions of its negative impact on them as well as prospect of poverty reduction are indeed widely acknowledged. Corruption, by its very nature, is about undermining of fairness and competition, and about disproportionality and inequality. Corruption affects the poor both directly and indirectly. Directly through increasing the cost of key public services targeted to them, lowering quality of such services and limiting or even preventing the poor's access to essential services as education, health and justice as will be shown below in case of Bangladesh. Indirect implications of corruption on the poor include diverting Government resources away at the expense of social sectors. By limiting growth and development corruption also reduces the scope and prospect of poverty reduction. In addition, while corruption affects everyone, the poor are more vulnerable especially because they are easy victims of bribery, extortion and intimidation.⁶

³ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp-275-8.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.275.

⁵ The Secretary General, “Statement on the Adoption of by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption”, New York, 31 October 2003, http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/speech_2003-10-31.html

⁶ Among many materials on corruption and poverty linkage, see for example, Sanjeev Gupta, Hamid Davoodi and Rosa Alonso-Terme, “Does Corruption Affect Income Inequality and Poverty?” IMF working paper, 1998; World Bank, “Voices of the Poor Programme”; Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer 2003*. Berlin, 2003. Deepa Narajan, Raj Patel et al, “State Institutions in Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?” World Bank / Oxford University Press, 2000.

To say that implications of corruption are most unbearable for Bangladesh is to state the obvious. It is a key national concern, a challenge to development, a formidable impediment to poverty alleviation within or beyond PRSP and Millennium Development Goals. Before moving on to analyze human insecurity implications of corruption in Bangladesh we briefly discuss the concept of human security as an effort to relate human insecurity with corruption.

II. Rethinking Security: Putting the Citizens First

Contemporary discourse on security is featured by a tension between two main conceptual approaches to defining security – the traditional approach, by which the state and its boundaries are the referent, and the other that places security concerns of the individual at the core. The key question in this tension is whose security is the debate all about? By conventional wisdom, security used to be viewed almost exclusively from the perspective of the nation-state within a global and regional system. The main conceptual basis being the external threats – perceived or real - security used to be interpreted in terms of military preparedness, deterrence, arms race, bilateral or multilateral defence co-operation or alliance. During the cold war period, security thinking was also dominated by ideological and military confrontation between the two superpowers and their respective blocs. This confrontation was transfused to the rest of the world by the superpowers' policy of expanding their zones of influence for which they used a variety of instruments including direct or indirect involvement in hostilities and conflicts, some of which already existed while others were fuelled by superpower confrontation.

This traditional, state-centric approach of treating national security essentially in military or defense parlance has been challenged for nearly two decades. One of the most widely referred articulations of this non-traditional approach to security was provided by the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme.⁷ But reflection of this debate can also be found in the disarmament-development discourse that took place during the mid and late eighties in various UN forums and beyond in response to the developmental implications of the arms race. Several high profile international commissions like the Brandt Commission, Brundland Commission, and later the Commission on Global Governance through their reports provided inputs that helped the shift of focus of security debate from the state to the individual.

⁷ United Nations, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: United Nations Human Development Programme 1994).

It should be added that although the human security approach is older than the end of the Cold War, the fall of communism helped further strengthening of arguments in favour of the shift of focus. Expectations of “peace dividends” of the end of the Cold war were not at all met, but the emphasis on human security became increasingly assertive. The onset of the “war on terror” has now made it more convincing than ever and indeed led to the blurring of dividing line between the security concerns of the state from that of the individual. What post-9/11 international security complexities have shown is that while security challenge can and does come from non-state actors, neither the state nor the individual is secure. And more importantly, the response to this challenge cannot be fully provided by traditional military approach.

Recent security literature⁸ also provides strong support to the notion that security cannot be properly understood, nor can the issues related to it be comprehensively approached without due focus on key issues of human concern such as poverty and socio-economic underdevelopment. Conversely, social and economic development has been identified as a vital prerequisite for achieving “real security”.⁹ This socio-economic approach to security cannot be interpreted to underestimate the other dimensions, particularly issues related to the protection of national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The point is that security, if viewed only in traditional military sense, “cannot have enduring appeal for hungry masses”, and while poverty constitutes a major source of insecurity of the vast majority of the developing states, security cannot be ensured without substantially reducing poverty and underdevelopment.¹⁰

In this paper instead of delving any further into the debate on the logic of paradigm shift¹¹, we are concentrating on human security – security concerns of the citizens in terms of freedom of the

⁸ See for instance, Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the post-Cold War Era*, (Second Edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado 1991). See also, Robert McNamara, *The Essence of Security* (New York, Harper and Row 1986); Theodore C. Sorensen, “Rethinking National Security” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1990); Stephen Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies” *International Studies Quarterly* (June 1991). A plethora of literature is in the offing as a result of many research projects undertaken by various security studies institutions all over the world on post-cold war and post-9/11 international security. One such project is the Ford Foundation sponsored research initiative on “Non-traditional Security in Asia” covering several dimensions including conceptual issues, and involving a number of research institutions in South, Southeast Asia and Far East. Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies is one of the institutions involved in the project working on “Human Security in South Asia: Discourse, Practice and Policy Proposals”. The conceptual basis of human security presented in this paper coincides with preliminary findings of the project, reports on which are expected to be published in the first half of 2006.

⁹ Yezid Saigh provides an interesting insight in his “Confronting the 1990s: Security of the Developing Countries”, *Adelphi Papers* no. 251, IISS London 1990.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ I have written elsewhere on the subject, especially as it relates to Bangladesh. See for instance, Iftekharuzzaman, “Challenges to the Security of Bangladesh: Primacy of the Political and Socio-economic”, in *Arms Control*, Vol. 13, No3, December 1992, pp. 518-530; Iftekharuzzaman, “South Asia”, in Paul Stares, *The New Security Agenda: A Global Survey*, Tokyo & New York, Japan Center of International Exchange, 1998, 272-290; and Iftekharuzzaman,

individual from want and freedom from fear. As the UNDP report of 1994 argued, “the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests ... It has been related more to nation-states than to people. ... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolizes protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards”.¹² The report listed several components of human security: economic security (understood in terms of right and opportunity to earn a basic income), food security (access to food in physical and economic terms), health security (right to good health and protection against disease), environmental security (access to clean water, air and protection against land degradation), personal security (protection against physical threats and violence), and political security (basic human rights and freedoms).¹³

According to the UN Commission on Human Security, human security means protecting fundamental freedoms of the individual.¹⁴ It means protecting the individuals from threat to life, survival, and creating conditions in which their livelihood and dignity is made secure. Human security in this sense means freedom from want, poverty and freedom from fear. It also implies freedom to choose and take decisions on one’s own.

Human security, in practical implications, requires a combination of protection and empowerment – protection from insecurities by developing norms, processes, practices and institutions that address insecurities systematically and sustainably. Empowerment of the individual so s/he can become active and full participant in making decisions that concerns her or him. The concept of human security in this sense is also anchored on values and principles of human rights, democracy and good governance without which the individual freedoms cannot be achievable.

Notable among many other efforts in understanding human security is the definition provided the Canadian Government, broadly shared by the Norwegian Government, which instead of emphasis on underdevelopment and poverty as such, stresses on insecurity of people resulting from violent conflict. The Canadian-Norwegian approach identified several agenda of human insecurity, such as landmines, International Criminal Court, human rights, international humanitarian law, women and

“Bangladesh, A Weak State and Power” in, Muthiah Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, 315-337.

¹² UNDP 1994

¹³ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*; Sverre Lodgaard, “Human Security: Concepts and Operationalization”, Paper presented to the Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Peace, Geneva, 8-9 December 2000, PD/HR/11.1, United Nations.

¹⁴ United Nations, Outline of the Report of the Commission on Human Security.

children in conflict, small arms, child soldiers, and child labour.¹⁵ Subsequent initiatives by the Canadian Government and the Human Security Network sponsored by them added on such challenges as public safety, transnational organized crimes. Significant level of importance has also been attached to Governance and accountability of the public and private sector institutions in accord with established norms of democracy and human rights.¹⁶

The Japanese Government, which has been one of the earliest to adopt a “comprehensive” approach, which is for all practical purposes similar to the Canadian stressed on equal emphasis on freedom from want and freedom from fear – preservation and protection of the life and dignity of individual human beings, covering such threats as poverty, environmental degradation, illicit drugs, transnational crimes, HIV/AIDS, refugees and anti-personal landmines.¹⁷

Another thoughtful, multi-dimensional and gender-sensitive framework was provided by Kanti Bajpai, who defines human security as the protection from threats to the personal safety and well being of the individual. His framework is perhaps the widest and most comprehensive encompassing both military and non-military sources of threats to security. But his emphasis on abuse of women and children as a vital component of human insecurity is of particular interest.¹⁸

In view of the above, what do we mean by human security in the Bangladesh context? In simple terms, it means access to basic prerequisites of human development such as education, health, gender equity, justice, and rule of law. Operationally it implies empowerment of the citizenry and their effective participation in decisions that affect their lives. For the purpose of this paper we have selected the following key elements of basic needs to examine the extent to which corruption has been contributing to human insecurity in Bangladesh: access to education, health, justice, and protection against physical threats to safety.

III. Corruption and Human Insecurity in Bangladesh

Corruption is a key challenge against development, and a major political issue in Bangladesh. Presence of widespread corruption, and its debilitating impact in the society, polity and economy are acknowledged by all major political parties - in the Government or outside. At the same time political

¹⁵ “Canada, Norway change their ways” new approach bases foreign policy on human issues”, *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 May 1998, A-18.

¹⁶ Canadian Foreign Ministry website, www.dfait-maeci-gc.ca

¹⁷ Yukio Takasu, “Towards Effective Cross-sectoral Partnerships to ensure Human Security in a Globalized World”, Statement made by the Director General of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Third Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia’s Tomorrow, Bangkok, June 19, 2000.

¹⁸ Kanti Bajpai, “Human Security Audit”, Kroc Institute Report, www.nd.edu/~krocinst/report/lead.html

leaders, from the highest to the lowest levels both in the government and outside, in their public pronouncements commit themselves to fighting corruption and to establishing a corruption free Bangladesh. A glance at the election manifestoes of the major political parties including the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the main opposition party the Awami League (AL) reveals the high level of importance and priority attached to the issue of corruption.

The ruling BNP during the 2001 national election pledged to establish a “violence and *corruption-free* prosperous Bangladesh”.¹⁹ According to BNP without eliminating the limitless corruption prevailing in the society and state no effort for development and public welfare would be easy. It promised a number of high priority specific actions for uprooting corruption. These include appointment of an Ombudsman, establishment of an Independent Anti-corruption Commission by restructuring the Bureau of Anti-corruption, establishing transparency and accountability in sales and procurement of public and government-controlled institutions, establishing strict control of any efforts for abuse of influence, and publish accounts of wealth of the Prime Minister, Ministers and all individuals of equivalent status including people’s representatives.²⁰

The AL also attached high priority to fighting against corruption placing it in the context of the party’s commitment to establish good governance and pro-people administration that would be accountable to the people, transparent, efficient and honest.²¹ The AL promised to set up an “Anti-corruption Council’ aimed at eliminating corruption and setting up an effective constitutional and institutional system. The AL also promised to take necessary firm action to implement recommendations and programs of various international forums including the United Nations in preventing corruption.²²

Fighting corruption also figures prominently in political commitments of other major parties.²³ On the other hand there is a growing public concern and discontent about corruption in the country. There can be no disagreement about a national consensus prevailing in the country about the unbearability of the high cost of corruption and the need to combat it with greatest urgency and priority. Corruption has become a key issue of public discourse in recent years not merely because of

¹⁹ Bangladesh Nationalist party, *Election Manifesto: National Election 2001*, p. 12.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 13.

²¹ Bangladesh Awami League, *Election Manifesto 2001*, p. 14.

²² Ibid, p. 15.

²³ See, for instance, Jamyate Islami Bangladesh, *Election Manifesto 2001 (Abridged)*, p. 9, Islami National United Front, *8th National Parliament Election 2001: Election Manifesto of Islami National United Front*, p. 1, and The Eleven Party (left alliance), *8th National Parliament Election 2001: Election Declaration and Commitment*, p. 6. Corruption is the third most important demand of the on-going 9 point movement launched by the major opposition parties led by AL, 11-party alliance, JSD and NAP.

the debatable annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by Transparency International which has for the fifth year in a row ranked Bangladesh at the bottom of list²⁴, but also for the growing acceptance of corruption as a major political issue by all major political parties and indeed the Government²⁵, as well as because of the way corruption affects the lives of the common people – especially those without access to power.

Irrespective of Bangladesh's position in international ranking in terms of indices such as CPI, there is hardly any doubt that corruption is pervasive. The World Bank estimated as early as in 2000 that "if Bangladesh could reduce its corruption level to those prevailing in countries with highest reputation for honest dealing it could add between 2.1 and 2.9 percent to annual per capita GDP growth. This would contribute to a sustainable reduction in poverty".²⁶ In a more recent report the World Bank identified corruption as the main predicament against investment in Bangladesh.²⁷ That corruption is a key predicament against good governance in Bangladesh is also beyond any dispute.

Corruption's inherent bias against the poor is easily discernable in Bangladesh. While corruption affects everyone, the poor are more vulnerable especially because they are easy victims of bribery, extortion and intimidation. The poor in Bangladesh are directly affected by the increasing cost of key public services by way of unauthorized payments, low quality of such services and limiting or even preventing the poor's access to essential services as education, health and justice. As the following charts show access to such services has become a function of the capacity to make unauthorized payments.

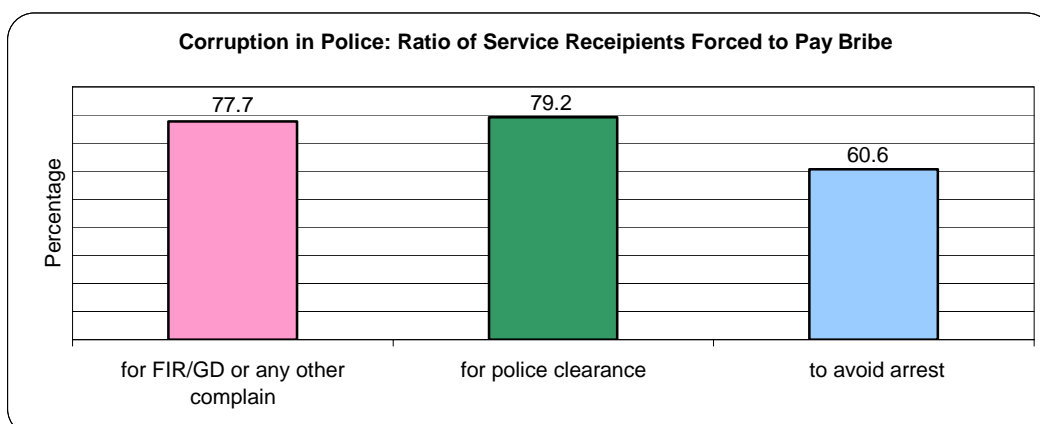
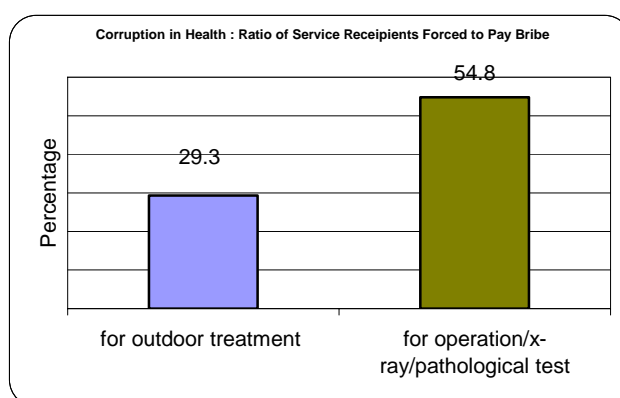
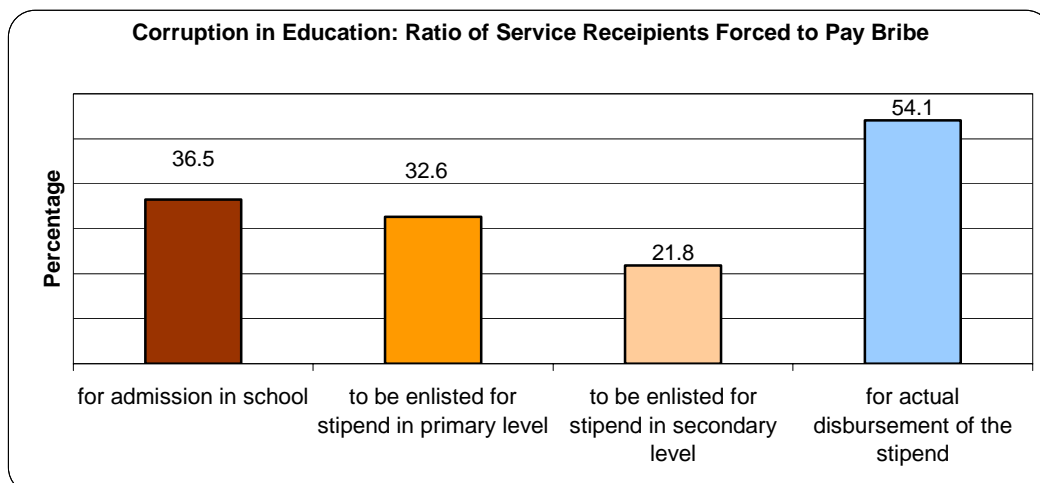
²⁴ The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published annually by Transparency International (TI) is a composite index worked out drawing upon corruption related data generated by a number of surveys (16 in 2005) conducted by reputed international institutions. The index reflects views of analysts and businesspeople including experts who are locals in the countries concerned. In case of Bangladesh, sources that the information were drawn from in determining the ranking in 2005 included surveys conducted by Economic Intelligence Unit of the Economist magazine of London, Columbia University, a multilateral development bank, Gallup International, the World Economic Forum, etc. For more on CPI including its methodology, see, www.transparency.org. For a critical review of the CPI, see, Nurul Islam, *Looking Outward: Bangladesh in the World Economy*, UPL, Dhaka, 2004, pp. 62-74, and Iftekharuzzaman, "Opening Statement at the Global Launch of CPI, London, 18 October, 2005, www.ti-bangladesh.org.

²⁵ Notable among the leading Government leaders who stressed the pervasiveness of corruption in Bangladesh are: Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman, who said "There is no ministry of the Government where corruption does not take place", quoted in *Bangla Bazar* and *Manabjamin* 6 July 2005; Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, "The political leaders of the country are the most corrupt people", quoted in *Inquilab* 27 July 2005; and Prof. Rejaul Karim, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs, "For the sake of development corruption has to be eliminated not only from the election process, but every other sector", *Ittefaq*, 2 September, 2005.

²⁶ The World Bank, *Corruption in Bangladesh: Costs and Cures*, Dhaka April 7, 2000.

²⁷ The World Bank, *Improving the Investment Climate in Bangladesh 2003*. Other international and national organizations that have expressed informed concern about corruption in Bangladesh include United States Trade Center of the US Embassy (2003), Japan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (Sokokai), UNCTAD World Investment Report 2003, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries: Cost of Doing Business in Bangladesh 2003. Development partners of Bangladesh including the World Bank, ADB and members of the Bangladesh Development Forum have been expressing concern over the spread of corruption, and its implications on governance in Bangladesh. See for details, TIB, *Corruption Data Base*, 29 September 2003, 31 August 2004.

**Access to key public services:
A function of capacity to make unauthorized payments**



Source: Calculated from, TI-Bangladesh, “Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey 2004”, Dhaka, April 2005.

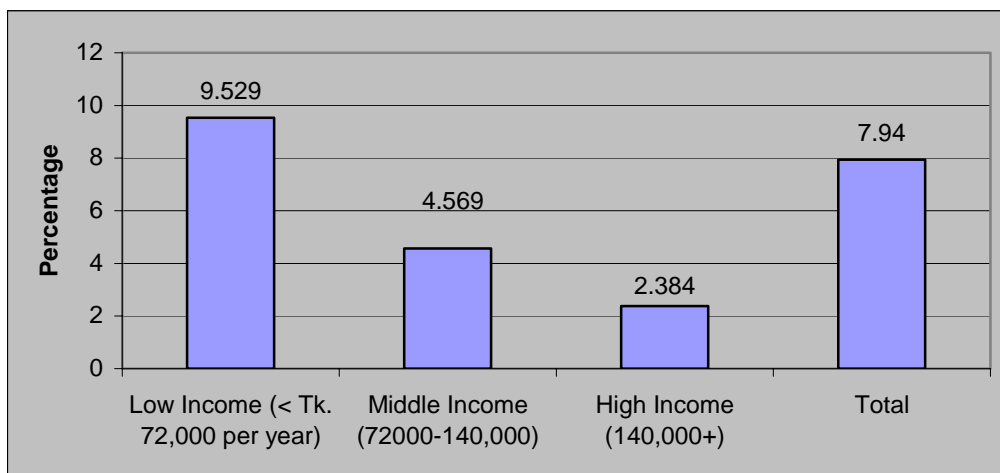
Drawn from the TIB Household Survey 2004 (released in April 2005), the first chart show that 36.5, 32.6, 21.8 and 54.1 percent of the households who received the four key selected categories of services in education – admission of kids to schools, enlistment for government stipend at primary

level, enlistment for government stipend in secondary school, and disbursement of the stipend respectively - were forced to unauthorized payments. In the health sector, as the second chart shows, 29.3 percent of the surveyed households who received outdoor treatment were victims of corruption, whereas 54.8 percent of those who needed X-rays were victims. The third chart shows that 77.7, 79.2 and 60.6 percent of the households who had interactions with police had to pay bribes for filing of general diary (GD)/first information report (FIR), police clearance certificate and to avoid arrest respectively.

Estimates from the same survey show that about 7.94 percent of the annual household income was eaten up by corruption in six selected sectors (education, health, land administration, police, justice and income tax).²⁸

Disaggregated by income categories, the bias against the poor are more evident. As the chart below shows, households in the low income category of Taka 72,000 per year lost 9.529 percent, whereas middle income group (Tk. 72,000-140,000) lost 4.569 percent and high income group (Taka 140,000+) lost 2.384 percent of their annual income.

Chart Showing Household Income lost to Bribery by Income Categories



Source: Calculated from TIB, *National Household Survey 2005*

Further disaggregated by those who are directly affected by corruption in selected sectors, the ratio of loss is higher for all income categories. For instance those who were forced to make unauthorized payments to the Police, lost 9.39 percent of their annual household income; those having experience of bribery to the tax department paid 8.26 percent of their annual household

²⁸ A recent study estimated that in Cambodia (ranked 132nd compared to Bangladesh's 158th in CPI) on average unofficial payments of households to public officials is 2.2 percent of their income. See, World Bank, "Cambodia Governance and

income, while as high as 34.93 percent of annual household income of those affected by unauthorized payments to lower judiciary was lost on this account.²⁹

a) ***Human Insecurity: Limited Access to Education***

Bangladesh is ranked at the 139th and 138th position among 177 countries in terms of human development index (HDI) and per capita gross domestic product (GDP- purchasing power parity) PPP respectively. Education is obviously a key challenge of development. Agreeably, Bangladesh has achieved some recent progress in education. During the period 1990-2003, for instance, adult literacy rate rose in the country from 34% to 41%, youth literacy from 42 percent in 1990 to 48 percent in 2003, whereas net primary enrolment from 71 percent in 1990 to 84 percent in 2003. However, nearly 60 % adults and half of the youth remain illiterate. Drop-out rates remain high – only 54% of grade 1 reached grade 5 in 2001/2.³⁰

Some key elements of the Government's education policy are: primary education must be free for all children; girl students upto the eighth grade must be entitled to free education. All children at the primary level should be given text books as free. For the poor, there is a food-for-education programme, and Primary Education Stipend Scheme for the hardcore poor at the rate of Taka 100 per month. About 40 percent of the rural students are entitled to this stipend scheme.

Education receives highest allocation (nominally though) from national budget followed by defense. Education's share in total government expenditure rose from 10.3% in 1990 to 15.5% in 2000-02. Despite this apparently high allocation, because of corruption education suffers from misallocation and shortage of fund. School infrastructures are very weak, teachers are ill-paid and untrained, teaching methods lack innovation, books, materials and equipments are in short supply. A significant portion of whatever resources are allocated for education, and because of corruption access to the basic provisions of education is dependent on capacity to pay bribes. It should be noted that we are considering here corruption in education only at the service delivery end. Other areas of corruption like resource allocation and disbursement, procurement, appointments, transfers, pensions, etc. are not covered.

Corruption Diagnostic: Evidence from Citizen, Enterprise and Public Official Surveys", May 2000, in www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance

²⁹ Based on secondary analysis of the Household Survey data.

³⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005.Tables*.

TIB Household Corruption Surveys (1997, 2002 and 2005)³¹ identified the education sector as one of the most corrupt sectors. Successive Corruption Database Analyses by TIB identified education as one of the second most corrupt sectors. The 2005 report (data from January-December 2004) ranked it as the second most corrupt sector.³²

According to the Household Survey 2005, while over two thirds of the children of the poorest families were left out of the list of beneficiaries of the PESP – stipend programme, 27 percent of the enrolled were from the children from the richer and influential families. As already mentioned nearly one third (32.4 percent) of the students had to pay bribes to be enrolled for stipend, whereas as high as 46 percent of the students were paid only part of the stipend amount. On the other hand 40 percent of primary level students had to pay bribes in the name of “admission fee” at an average rate of about Tk. 200 which was supposed to be free.

In case of enrolment for food for education benefits, 16 percent of the selected did not meet the criteria. 15.5% of the selected poor students had to pay bribes for enlistment. In terms of actual disbursement of the food, on average every student was given 2.5 kg foodgrain less than the allocated amount every time. The amount of foodgrain eaten up by corruption was 1241 tons in 8 selected upazilas.

Total annual value of unauthorized fees collected from students was estimated to be 546 million taka. The hardcore poor were annually robbed of 25 million taka of their stipend fund. The illegal fees and lost stipend at the delivery end was estimated as 3.3 percent of the overall annual government expenditure for primary and mass education in 2005-6.

Other reported instances of corruption were in purchase of books unauthorized payments for promotions to higher class, and various extra curricular activities like sports, religious festivals, expenses for visiting officials.

On a closer look, implications of corruption on the poor are much more severe. The table below shows the percentage of surveyed population grouped according to income category forced to make unauthorized payments for access to education. In all four types of unauthorized payments the highest proportion of victims of corruption (38.4 to 50.3 percent) are in the category of respondents living below daily income of less than 1 dollar. The next highest category of victims (33.2 to 41.1

³¹ Methodology (for 2005 survey): 3000 households (70% rural, 30% urban) covering 55 districts; Multi-stage random sampling; period of data collection: 10 September to 24 October, 2004. For further details see, TIB, National Household Survey on Corruption, 2005.

³² Methodology: Round the year scanning of reports on corruption in 25 leading newspapers - 18 national and 7 regional; 15-20 percent reports randomly checked for corroboration

percent) are in the income category of \$1 to less than \$2, which means that between 71 to 87 percent of victims of corruption in education are living on a daily income of less than \$2.

Table 1: Victims of corruption in education: Distribution by daily income category

Figures in percentages

#	Unauthorized payment for	Respondents living on daily income of			
		Less than \$1	+\$1 to <\$2	+\$2	Total
1	Admission to school	41.9	35.9	22.2	100.0
2	Enlistment for stipend in primary school	50.3	37.1	12.6	100.0
3	Enlistment for stipend in secondary school	43.2	41.1	15.8	100.0
4	Actual disbursement of the stipend	38.4	33.2	28.4	100.0

Source: Secondary analysis of data from: TIB, *National Household Survey 2005*.

b) *Human Insecurity in terms of access to health service*

Like any other developing society health is a major developmental challenge for Bangladesh, and a priority sector in public resource allocation. Bangladesh has agreeably made some significant progresses in health care in recent times. During the period from 1970-75 to 2000-5, for instance, life expectancy at birth rose from 45 to 63 years, infant mortality has come down from 145 out of 1000 live births to 46, and under 5 mortality rate fell from 239 out of 1000 live births to 69. However, there is long distance to go before achieving “health for all” – a policy adopted in 2000.

In pursuance of the health for all policy, the government has allocated nine percent of its development budget on health for the 2004-2005 fiscal year, which is the fifth largest public expenditure. At the same time health has also become one of the key sectors of corruption resulting in deprivation of the people at large, especially the disadvantaged, of the benefits of basic health facilities and services.³³

The health sector is bedevilled by lack of accountability of service providers including medical practitioners in public hospitals, who are allegedly more involved in private practice than

³³ The sources of data for this section are: three national household surveys on corruption in Bangladesh; Report Card Surveys on Health conducted with the help of Committees of Concerned Citizens in the Mymensingh region; Focused Group Discussions with patients who sought or received services in Nalitabari Health Complex and TIB’s Corruption Data Base.

their commitment and duties as employees of the Government. They are also reportedly linked with other types of malpractices such as sending patients to private clinics where they have business interests. Other corruption indicators include misappropriation of medicine supplied in hospitals and health centres for the poor patients; poor-quality food provided to patients; pervasive influence of middleman and extortionists in hospitals often with the connivance of members of the medical staff at various levels; and above all, in many cases corrupt hospital management. Corruption is deep and pervasive in the entire public health services sector including the hospitals attached to medical colleges, regional and sub-regional public hospitals and clinics, offices of the Civil Surgeon, and various population planning delivery outlets.

Successive reports based on TIB Corruption Database (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003) and the Household Corruption Survey 2002 and 2005 identified the health sector as the fourth most corrupt sector.³⁴ According to the Household Corruption Survey of 2005, 47.56 percent of the respondents failed to get admitted into the hospitals through the normal prescribed procedure and had to take recourse to ‘alternative means’, which in case of 56 percent meant payment of bribery.³⁵ Nearly 30 percent of the respondents seeking services from outdoor of the hospitals had to make unauthorized payments at an average rate of Taka 60 to doctors while 20% of the indoor patients had to bribe at an average rate of Taka 478 to doctors of public hospitals for receiving medical advice.

The 2005 Household Corruption Survey further revealed that 37% of the patients who had to undergo a surgery were forced to pay at the rate of Taka 1420 as bribes. 57% patients had to pay at the rate of Taka 516 as bribe for getting an X-Ray done. In addition, 60% of the patients who had to take a pathological test had to pay at the rate of Taka 410 as bribes.³⁶ The amount of bribe paid for delivery of new-born babies is between Taka one to five thousand.³⁷

A 2002 TIB Report Card Survey on health revealed that 49.5% of the patients complained that the doctors did not pay due attention to patients. The survey also revealed that only 34% of the patients are satisfied with the service they received from the doctors. Only 1% patients are satisfied with the degree of cleanliness of the government hospitals.³⁸

The TIB report card survey 2005 on health services in Rajshahi area revealed that patients are victims of 13 other types of bribing, which include: unauthorized payments for bed allocation, using

³⁴ *Corruption Database*, Transparency International Bangladesh, and *Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey*, TIB, 2002 and 2005.

³⁵ *Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey*, TIB, 2005.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *The Quality of Health Services in Nalitabari Upazilla Health Complex*, TIB, 2003.

trolleys, getting supplies like saline, bandage materials, food from the canteen, medicine from the hospital pharmacy all of which are supposed to be free of cost. Patients suffer long delays in getting attention of doctors who often prefer patients to visit them in private clinics where they are involved in practice on commercial basis. Patients are also forced to buy medicines or conduct tests from pharmacies or clinics which have business relationships with doctors and other staff of the public hospitals.

Among respondents affected by corruption in hospitals, 56% reported corruption by doctors, 36% reported corruption by hospital staff, and 5% by nurses. Of those who were affected by corruption in hospitals, 61% respondents said that this was done directly by the service providers, 17% said corruption was practiced indirectly through a third party.³⁹ All patients complained that they had to wait for long time in the hospitals as the doctors are very irregular and do not attend the hospitals on time, apparently because they remain busy with their private practice.

The survey revealed that per capita annual spending on bribery for those who received service in government hospitals was about Taka 1847. In rural areas, the expense is Taka 1711, and in urban areas it is Taka 2256. On the basis the Household Corruption Survey 2005, the annual amount of bribe collected by health officials was estimated to be Taka 1,140 million, which is 5.24 percent of annual public expenditure on health. Other complains of corruption include: mismanagement, unavailability of the staff including duty doctors, lack of professional attitude, negligence of duty by the cleaning and other support staff.

Like in education, implications of corruption in the health sector on the poor are also much more severe. Table 2 below shows the percentage of surveyed population forced to make unauthorized payments for access to health. In both types of unauthorized payments the highest proportion of victims of corruption (42.4 and 43.6 percent) are in the category of respondents living below daily income of less than 1 dollar. The next highest category of victims (35.1 and 35.4 percent) are in the income category of \$1-plus to \$2, which means that between more than 77 percent of victims of corruption in health are living on a daily income of less than \$2.

³⁸ *Report Card Survey on Health: TIB, 2002.*

Table 2: Victims of corruption in health: Distribution by daily income category

Figures in percentages

#	Type of corruption	Respondents living on daily income of			
		Less than \$1	+\$1 to <\$2	+\$2	Total
1	Unauthorized payments to doctors for outdoor treatment	42.4	35.4	22.2	100.0
2	Unauthorized payments for surgery, X-ray or pathology	43.6	35.1	21.3	100.0

Source: Secondary analysis of data from: TIB, *National Household Survey 2005*.

c) *Human Insecurity – law enforcers as law breakers*

Recent years have witnessed a growing concern in Bangladesh regarding the role of police as the law enforcing agency. It is widely believed that the police has not only failed to arrest the deterioration of the law and order situation, but in many cases violation of law takes place with the connivance, if not participation of the police. Series of such accusations has tarnished their image as custodian of people’s safety and security. Media reports are replete with evidences of involvement of a section of police in abuse of power. Because of the growing intensity of such wrongdoing, the relatively rare examples of their good deeds get overshadowed.

Accusations against the police include harassment, extortion, bribery, arbitrary arrest, and custodial torture or even killings. It is a commonplace wisdom that hardly any police investigation takes place against law-breakers unless they are bribed upto their satisfaction. There are numerous evidences of unauthorized and extra-judicial harassment, torture and deaths in police custody including alleged killing of arrested individuals in “crossfire”.

Alleged extra-judicial killing of the arrested and suspected criminals has indeed stepped into third generation. The first generation was during “Operation Clean Heart” by the army under debatable circumstances officially described as heart-failure⁴⁰, which was followed by the police in the form of “cross-fire” officially claiming that each time the apprehended criminals get killed while trying to escape from custody. The force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) drawn from members of the police, army, air force, and paramilitary force with the special task of curbing crime then opted for a

³⁹ *Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey*, TIB, 2002.

⁴⁰ The operation clean heart “not only destabilized criminal justice system, but also infringed fundamental human rights of citizens”. See, Shahdeen Malik, “Human Security in Bangladesh: Recent Trends and Response”, Paper prepared for Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka, 2003.

more conspicuous copy-book scenario of arrested persons being killed in cross-fire between the RAB and accomplices of the arrested. The authority claims that RAB has succeeded in improving law and order situation, a view not necessarily shared by all. While some arms have been recovered, over two hundred people were killed in a highly debatable condition.⁴¹ The majority of these deaths happened in the hands of RAB, others in the hands of police. These deaths sparked widespread criticism from the civil society and human rights organizations as well as the opposition political parties joined by development partner countries. There are also frequent media reports of extortion, robbery and collection of bribes under coercion or threats.⁴² The human rights organization Ain o Shalish Kendra has produced a chilling account of violations of the right to fair trial.⁴³

The Government continued to deny any violation of human rights, nor did it accept the allegation that such killings could be treated as extra-judicial. In any case, there is a growing concern that law enforcing agencies, especially the police, are doing more of law breaking than law enforcing.

TI-Bangladesh's analyses of its Corruption Database identified the police as the most corrupt sector for the last four consecutive years 2000-4.⁴⁴ Household Corruption Surveys 2002 and 2005 have also identified this law-enforcing agency as the leading corrupt sector. The 2005 Household Corruption Survey estimated that the average rate of unauthorized payment for registering a General Diary (GD) with the police was 939 taka, that for FIR taka 2430, and for police clearance certificates taka 880 on an average. It was further estimated that the amount of bribe paid to the police by the households in a year was Taka 15,300 million.

Perception of corruption in Police is nothing new, nor is it TIB alone that have found corruption in police to be high. The World Bank concluded already in 1999 that the Bangladesh Police was "most corrupt". A local non-government organization called Democracy Watch found that 97 percent of the people in Bangladesh considered police to be corrupt. The High Court, while delivering a verdict in a case made a statement that "people's trust in police is gone".⁴⁵

A Diagnostic Study on Police conducted by TIB showed that 91 percent of the people visiting the metropolitan police station to lodge complains of various types could not do so without paying

⁴¹ *The Daily Star*, 29 March 2005.

⁴² See for instance, *The Daily Jugantor*, 1 June, 2005, *The Daily Prothom Alo*, 20 May, 2005, *The News Today*, 22 December, 2004 *The News Today*, 22 December, 2004.

⁴³ Ain O Shalish Kendra, *RAB: Shontrash Nirmul, Na Rashtreer Shontrash* (ASK, Dhaka May 2005)

⁴⁴ Transparency International Bangladesh, *Corruption Database Report* (6 reports released during 2000-4).

⁴⁵ Quoted in S.I. Laskar, "Corruption in Police Department: Issues and Policy Recommendations", Paper presented at the seminar on "Corruption: Nature, Consequences and Remedies" organized by the Anti-Corruption Commission" Dhaka 20 May 2005.

bribe, while 97 percent of those visiting the detainees in the police station had to make unauthorized payments.⁴⁶

Table 3: Victims of police corruption: Distribution by daily income category

Figures in percentages

#	Type of corruption	Respondents living on daily income of			
		Less than \$1	+\$1 to <\$2	+\$2	Total
1	Unofficial payment for FIR/GD or any other complain	41.1	33.3	25.6	100.0
2	Unofficial payment for police clearance certificate	36.5	39.7	23.8	100.0
3	Bribe to avoid arrest	35.8	37.0	27.2	100.00

Source: Secondary analysis of data from: TIB, *National Household Survey 2005*.

Again, on a closer look, poorer sections of the citizens are more severely affected by police corruption. Table 3 shows that 36 percent of those forced to make unofficial payments for police clearance certificates belonged to the income category of less than \$1 daily income, whereas 41 percent of those forced to pay bribes for First Information Report (FIR)/General Diary (GD), and 35.8 percent to avoid arrest were in the same daily income category. The percentage of victims of corruption in the daily income group of upto \$2 was 76, 74 and 72.8 percent respectively.

No less striking is the level of corruption in the lower judiciary which has been a subject of growing debate. Successive TIB analyses based on its Corruption Database have indicated considerable citizens concern about corruption in the lower judiciary. According to the 2005 household survey, 66 percent of the surveyed people who went to the courts had to pay bribes to the lower judiciary at an average rate of 6,135 taka. On the other hand, 64.58% of the accused had to make unauthorized payments at an average rate of 7,728 taka.

Again, implications of corruption is much more severe for the people in the lower income strata. Table 4 below shows that 42.7 percent of the respondents who had to make unauthorized payments to judiciary were in the income range of below one dollar a day, 32.4 in the income category between one dollar and less than two dollars, and 24.9 belonged to daily income group of 3 plus dollars.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *ibid*.

Table 4: Victims of unauthorized payments to the judiciary: Distribution by daily income category

Figures in percentages

#	Type of corruption	Respondents living on daily income of			
		Less than \$1	+\$1 to \$2	+\$2	Total
1	Unofficial payment for a court case	42.7	32.4	24.9	100.0

Source: Secondary analysis of data from: TIB, *National Household Survey 2005*.

A diagnostic study on the implications of Speedy Trial Tribunal Act 2002 found that one-fourth of the cases (25.3) lodged under this law were politically motivated, and political intervention takes place in more than one-third of cases filed under this law. Behind such intervention were reported to be the concerned Ministries and the ruling party. Political motivations behind legal cases are nothing exceptional, but intervention in the judicial process is unacceptable. Failure of successive governments to separate the judiciary from the executive is contributing to the lack of independence and effectiveness of the judiciary as well as erosion of public trust in this vital institution.

More importantly, allegations were reported of enforcing unauthorized payments, especially from the defenders (67.6), while one-third of the complainants were also victims of corruption (especially if the complaint came from outside the Government). Magistrates, lawyers and bench officers are the key persons collecting bribes promising bails and/or favourable verdicts. There is a growing impression in the public that with both police and lower judiciary affected by corruption the more people have to interact with them more is their possibility of being victims of corruption.

e) *Human Insecurity: corruption in relief*

Human insecurity of the poorest is particularly striking in case of distribution of relief goods, where corruption takes place with a complex network of the local government officials, public representatives, political leaders and their agents, police and local elites. TIB household survey has found that 15 percent of the respondents were enlisted beneficiaries of any form of relief distributed by the government. Nearly 55 percent of them complained that they received less than the allocated amount. More than 44 percent of victims of corruption in relief distribution were in the category of daily income less than a dollar, while another 28.3 percent were between a dollar and less than two dollars daily income. In other words more than 72 percent of those victimised by corruption in the relief disbursement process are in the category of daily income of less than \$2.

f) *Human Insecurity: Political Rivalry and Confrontation*

Overriding all the factors outlined above is the growing concern of the members of the public about physical safety of the individual and growing threats to life irrespective of socio-economic and political status, age, sex, identity or any other marker. Insecurity of the individual of the present Bangladesh has not happened overnight. Agitational politics, street violence and related deaths and injuries have been part of Bangladesh's political history. However, never before did Bangladesh experience the kind of religion-based and indoctrinated violence, bombings and killings that have been happening recently. It goes without saying that the phenomenon is essentially a fall-out of unprecedented growth of religion-based political parties and their front institutions. This growth has had its own dynamics, but has been to a considerable extent assisted by the process through which bitter rivalry and confrontational politics between the two major political parties have become hallmarks of the political culture in contemporary Bangladesh. The confrontation has created the space where militancy has grown⁴⁷ allegedly with the connivance of the major political parties and Government of the day.⁴⁸ Not only that, to a great extent because of the confrontational politics and bitter rivalry, the key institutions of the national integrity system have been rendered ineffective, in many cases politicized. The effectiveness of the parliament, specially the Standing Committees, in ensuring the accountability of the Government has been a subject of major concern for many years.⁴⁹ Other vital institutions like the election commission, public service commission, bureaucracy, law enforcement institutions, judiciary have become victims of politicization, losing their due effectiveness and independence.

Use of religion in politics is also not new to Bangladesh, nor is its over politicization. What is new is the kind of militancy, particularly the way they have been allowed to spread, including the unprecedented phenomena of simultaneous bombings and suicide attacks. Ironically, inspite of the bitter experience of the use of religion in politics as a cover up to political and economic exploitation by Pakistan, coupled with deep-rooted values of pluralism and multiculturalism that catalyzed the assertion of national identity leading to independence of Bangladesh, religion has been used in politics also in post-independence period by successive regimes. The two main political parties in or outside the Government as well as military rulers courted the religious parties directly or indirectly

⁴⁷ Not without external inputs, especially the post 9/11 international context in which the US and its allies in war against terrorism have managed to aggressively propagate the message of dividing nations along religious and cultural values and practices.

⁴⁸ Allegations of connivance of a section of the government with militancy are coming from within the ruling party. See for instance statements of the ruling party Member of Parliament Abu Hena, quoted in *Prothom Alo*, November 23, and 25, *Inquilab*, 25 November; Col Oli Ahmed, BB, MP, quoted in *Shangbad*, 7 December, 2005, and *Ajker Kagoz*, 27 November, 2005.

and themselves had no hesitation to using religion for political mileage when convenient. Eventually, not only has the space for militancy been allowed, but also nothing was done to prevent the recruitment and training activities of the so-called jihadi cadres and other terrorist groups whose links with, or patronage of, the Government including protection by the law enforcement agencies is an open secret by now.⁵⁰

The political patronage of militancy and its reported linkage of the sections of the government have left the police and administration initially inactive and now ineffective, in taking any measures against growing insecurity ranging from petty crimes and violence, repression against women, children and minorities including minorities within Islam. Indiscriminate killings of citizens have now created a widespread sense of human insecurity and despair.

Credible evidences are now emerging that tens of militant organisations have been expanding their network across the country since late nineties. Intelligence reports about their activities were not reportedly properly heeded to, leading to a situation that nobody seems to be in control at this stage, not to speak of any strategic plan on how to cope with the situation.⁵¹ With the crisis looming large, and people left in a deep sense of insecurity and confusion, the only discernible signals coming out of political leaders are the blame game which, if anything, only helps the militants. Negligence of duty for political consideration being a form of political corruption, and politicization of key institutions being one of the most difficult impediments against good governance, failure to control the situation at the roots could turn out to be an example of worst implications of political corruption including social, political and economic instability, disorder and anarchy.

IV. In Lieu of a Conclusion: Primacy of the Political

Corruption is nothing new, nor is it peculiar to any particular context. It exists in greater or lesser degree in all countries of the world, irrespective of political and economic system, big or small, developed or developing.

⁴⁹ TIB, Reports on *Parliament Watch* series.

⁵⁰ Detailed discussion on this subject is not in the scope of this paper. See for some useful documentation: Mahfuz R. Chowdhury, "Resurgence of Fundamentalism in Bangladesh", in www.eb2000.org; Zayatul Ahsan, *The Daily Star*, August 21, 2005; Amnesty International: "Bangladesh: Covering events from January-December 2004"; *The Daily Star*, January 29, 2005; Jane's Intelligence Review, "Is religious extremism on the rise in Bangladesh?" May 2002; *The Daily Star*, 11 October 2005; Amnesty International, *Report on Bangladesh 2004*; FIDES/CWNews.com; South Asia Program, "Economics of Fundamentalism in Bangladesh: Roots, Strengths, and Limits to Growth", Cornell University, USA, October 2005; and "Bangladesh treads fine terror line", in www.atimes.com.

⁵¹ Even high profile killings like former Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, Awami League MP Ahsanullah Master and professionals such as Professor Yunus of Rajshahi University, journalists Manik Saha and Shamsur Rahman, and equally high profile attempts to life of the British High Commissioner, poet Shamsur Rahman, Humayun Azad and Udichi bombing, series of attacks on cinema houses were never addressed because of politicization.

What is striking about Bangladesh is that it affects almost everyone in the society, and it is hardly ever that corruption is punished. On the contrary, corruption, especially political corruption is the fastest way to echelons of power. Given that politics is the other name of investment for making quick money, and in the absence of effective deterrence against corruption it has become so widespread that even the common citizens are affected by it, whether it is political corruption, or it is in the public service delivery sectors such as health, education, police, local government, land administration, etc. Corruption must be fought comprehensively and strategically.

Whatever way corruption is interpreted, it is a key obstacle to development and poverty reduction. It increases social injustice and human insecurity. Corruption is also a key impediment to the realization of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and PRSP, which cannot be achieved without effectively curbing corruption. Corruption undermines development efforts in key sectors identified within MDG such as economic growth, education, health, trade and the environment. As we have seen above, corruption deprives children of access to education (MDG 2 and 3, PRSP 5.E.1); it increases poverty and hunger (MDG 1, PRSP 7.A.); corruption prevents access of the poor to basic health services (MDG 4, 5 & 6, PRSP 5.E.2); corruption renders development unsustainable (MDG 7); and corruption distorts and impedes economic growth (MDG 1 and 8).

Corruption, when it is pervasive, does not take place overnight. It does take time to entrench, it takes connivance and participation of people in positions of power – people who are powerful politically, economically and socially - whether at the national or local levels, whether in the public sector or private. By the same token it can't also be addressed overnight without comprehensive efforts and without the fullest commitment of those in positions of power. Success of anti-corruption efforts is a function of the degree of the strength, independence and effectiveness of key institutions of the national integrity system like the parliament, the executive, the law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, the anti-corruption commission, and the media.

The opportunity created by the setting up of the Anti-corruption Commission must be seized by allowing it to function independently and effectively. A separate judicial bench is necessary for conducting cases of corruption. The Official Secrets Act 1923 must be abolished and the Freedom of Information law must be enacted to ensure transparency and free flow of information. Appointment of sector-wise Ombudsmen as per Article 77 of the Constitution can go a difference in ensuring accountability, especially in the key sectors of public service. Effective policy reforms and institutional infrastructure are vital to making the public service, and law enforcing agencies

independent and accountable. Nothing can explain the delay in enforcing the Supreme Court order for separation of the judiciary from the executive.

Fighting corruption is a highly challenging task because of the links of corruption with power, at whatever level it may take place. It is also widely believed that complete eradication of corruption is not a realistic proposition. What is beyond any doubt, however, is the need for a comprehensive policy following from a strategic vision. Replacing one corrupt individual with another, or enacting a new law replacing the old or setting up new institution in place of another may not necessarily be the answer.

Critical to any effective anti-corruption strategy is systemic transformation backed by the political will and risk-taking preparedness at the highest level down to the lowest without fear or favour. No anti-corruption initiative can succeed without such political determination and indeed role models at the highest level. But when the political will is absent or not strong enough and when the key institutions mentioned above are not independent and effective enough, the ultimate source of strength in anti-corruption movement is the people – their awareness and participation in the form of a social movement with active support of the media.

The main challenge is to create an environment in which corruption would be hated and rejected by everyone and pressures will come from below to generate the political will and strengthen the effectiveness and independence of the key institutions. The longer it takes to creating such conditions the farther will be the goals of reducing poverty and human insecurity.
