Stand Up - for Women’s Rights...

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Control of corruption was one of the key commitments of the ruling grand alliance, particularly Bangladesh Awami League (AL) for which the people voted them to power with unprecedented majority in the Parliament. The AL built its election campaign on the basis of its own as well as public concern in general over pervasive corruption that has been deeply rooted and widely spread over the years.

The election manifesto of the AL was also very specific about some fundamental institutional and policy measures aimed at creating conditions necessary for controlling corruption and establishing a transparent and accountable system of governance. Among many of these institutional and policy factors that would be indispensable for any real progress towards effectively controlling corruption is the Government’s delivery in terms of its specific commitment to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

There is no denying that in Bangladesh a watchdog body like ACC will be as effective and credible as it is supported by top-level and unbiased political and Government commitment. In order to function with operational independence free from political or any other influence the Commission will have to depend on the legal and institutional structure created for it by the Government.

The experience of ACC in this regard has not been too encouraging. It is well-known that the Commission was made ineffective at birth in 2004 by the BNP-led Government both by restricting its operational independence and by appointing Commissioners on partisan consideration. The reconstitution of the Commission in 2007 by then Caretaker Government and amendments made to the Anti-Corruption Act enabled it to challenge the culture of impunity in a manner that the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appreciated in her statement in the Parliament on February 5 as a necessary shake-up. She also underlined very pertinently on independence, effectiveness, accountability and transparency of the Commission.

The Prime Minister’s emphasis on accountability and transparency of the Commission is particularly important. We indeed demand that as an institution created in public interest and by public resource the Commission should be reportable to the Parliament through a special all-party parliamentary committee on anti-corruption which will in turn function independently, objectively and without conflict of interest.

An institution mandated to fight corruption cannot also establish credibility and public trust unless within the institution there are in-built, well-designed policies, tools and processes to ensure transparency and accountability of its own work.

Debate on accountability of ACC, however, must be fully objective, non-partisan and dispassionate, without being influenced by preconceived notions. One cannot wish away the fact that there were more than one power centre that shaped the policies and actions during the period of Caretaker Government, more so with respect to the anti-corruption drive itself.

Question may be raised whether the Commission had the full operational independence under the Caretaker Government, or whether all that happened in the name of the then anti-corruption drive can be attributed to the ACC. To say the least, the way the high-profile individuals were taken to custody and denied bails, and then subsequently awarded the same in a record-speed did not leave positive commentary about a government that took the most important step towards separation of the Judiciary, nor did it send the proper signal for the then Government’s commitment to the rule of law or even to the cause of anti-corruption.

Therefore, reforming the Commission, which indeed should be a continuing process, should not be meant to chop off the head because of a headache. If the Government is serious about investigating into the allegations of targeting of politicians in the name of anti-corruption drive, it will need to go deeper than looking at ACC as the scapegoat and thereby do anything that would curtail the independence and effectiveness of the Commission.

We trust that the Government wouldn’t do anything that could undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the ACC as an institution, which would be interpreted as a failure to be respectful to a highly important commitment made to the people.
An anti-corruption cultural programme was held at the Rabindra Sarovar Open Stage of capital Dhaka on 23 March under the aegis of TIB, on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2009. Embracing the slogan: ‘Stand up – for Women’s Rights’, eminent citizens expressed their solidarity alongside renowned artistes of the country during the programme.

Organised with a pledge to establish women’s rights, the programme started at 4 pm in the afternoon and concluded at 8 pm in the evening. It commenced with a presentation by ‘Pancham Shur’, an organization for the victims of acid terrorism. This was followed, one by one, by the members of TIB-inspired Youth Engagement and Support (YES) groups formed at various educational institutions of Dhaka. They included the YES members from the Institute of Social Welfare and Research, and Rokeya Hall of University of Dhaka, IBAIS University Bangladesh, and Rajuk Uttara Model College. The Awaz Foundation – an organization of garments workers – expressed their solidarity during the programme by presenting songs. Tribal dance presented by the members of Bangladesh Adibashi (indigenous people) Forum added a different dimension to the programme. Popular singer Bipul Bhattacharya rendered songs of the liberation war in presence of a huge audience. He reminded the spectators about the days of 1971 through these renderings. Besides, artistes Chandana Majumdar, Sumi and Sharmin Murshid also presented songs. The artistes demanded establishment of equal rights for women through their presentations.

In his welcome address, TIB Executive Director said, as an organization dedicated to gender sensitive social movement against corruption, “TIB believes that the movement for women’s rights and the anti-corruption movement are bound by the same chord. Just as corruption is a hindrance to build a good-governed country, similarly it is a major obstacle to women’s rights. The slogan, ‘Stand up - for Women’s Rights’ is being uttered today. Without such a slogan, and if the women fail to wake up for their rights and lag behind, then many big achievements would not be possible. So, we have to move forward by assembling both males and females. Women’s rights entail that males will also have to work for upholding these rights. Women’s rights will have to be ensured through the combined efforts of men and women.

I believe it is not possible to achieve women’s rights by merely observing 8 March every year. For this to happen, empathy of men is required alongside women. If we are to witness a prosperous Bangladesh, then women’s rights must be ensured.

Kanakchampa Chakma

I demand the trial of war-criminals from this platform. All males and females of Bangladesh will have to be vocal and active for materialisation of this demand.

Mili Rahman, Chairperson
Bir Shreshtha Motiur Rahman Foundation

Selina Hossain,

We shall remain pledge-bound to ourselves from today to wake up for the rights of all humans, a large segment of them being females. I am hoping that the society will elicit resolve from all of us so that we are respectful toward the rights of all, especially of women, who have historically remained dispossessed of their rights. Come, let us all return home today with the slogan, “Stand Up - for Women’s Rights.”

Advocate Sultana Kamal
Former Adviser to the Caretaker Government
Women’s development should be articulated repeatedly. Men and women will have to work together against corruption. I would like to request those present here today to continue speaking about women’s rights until men and women are able to work with equal rights.

Rokeya Afzal Rahman
Former Adviser to the Caretaker Government

We shall have to advance on the path of progress. We, men have not been able to advance as much as women on the path of progress. So, I would like to urge everybody to walk on the path of progress. Only then we can play a proper role for women’s rights.

Supriyo Chakrabarti,

Come, let us forge a just - social system collectively, where men and women will enjoy equal rights and together build a Golden Bangladesh free from corruption.

Shirin Banu Mitil
Freedom Fighter and Women Leader

to establish women’s rights. In the same way, women’s empowerment is the key to success in curbing corruption. It is not possible to achieve one by ignoring the other.” Eminent and vocal citizens against corruption who spoke during the programme for extending their support included Advocate Sultana Kamal, Rokeya Afzal Rahman, Selina Hossain, Kanakchampa Chakma, Mili Rahman, Supriyo Chakrabarti and Shirin Banu Mitil. The programme was broadcast live through the web-link www.metronetbd.com

International Women’s Day Observed in CCC Areas

Dhaka Division
Mymensingh, Muktachachha, Kishoreganj and Madhupur: In the CCC-Mymensingh quiz and essay contests for female students, anti-corruption talk-show, discussion meeting, prize-giving ceremony and cultural programme were organized through the initiative of YES group. A rally and human chain were organised in Muktachachha with the participation of CCC members, Mohila Parishad, Shojan and YES group. The day was observed by bringing out rally and holding discussion meeting in Kishoreganj with the participation of CCC, CARE-Bangladesh, Poppy, Bandhan Society, Nari Udoy Kendra, Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Manobadhikar Natya Parishad, ORA, SAD-Bangladesh and Konya Shishu Advocacy Forum. Besides, an information fair and cultural programme were also held through the initiative of various organizations. A rally and discussion meeting were organised in Madhupur through the joint initiative of CCC, Women’s Affairs Department and the Hunger Project.

Jamalpur, Munshiganj, Gazipur, Rajbari, Savar and Faridpur: A discussion meeting was held under the aegis of Jamalpur municipality, the local CCC and district administration on the occasion of International Women’s Day. A rally went round important thoroughfares of the town following the meeting, which was participated by around 4 thousand men and women. Besides, the YES members set up a satellite AI Desk at the municipality premises. A rally and discussion meeting were organised jointly by CCC Munshiganj and the district Mohila Parishad on the occasion of the day. The CCC Gazipur and Concerned Women for Family Development jointly brought out a rally in the town with the slogan ‘Let us men and women fight repression of girls and women together’. A discussion meeting styled ‘Bitter and sweet experiences in professional lives’ was held at Faridpur. The International Women’s Day was observed in Rajbari through rally, debate competition and discussion meeting. The MP of Rajbari-1 constituency Keramat Ali and the Principal of Rajbari Women’s College Professor Mohammad Shahjahan Ali were present as guests at the debate competition. A rally, discussion meeting and cultural programme...
were jointly organised by Savar Upazila Administration, Women’s Affairs Department, NGO Coordination Council and CCC Savar. A discussion meeting chaired by the President of NGO Coordination Council Sheikh Abdul Halim was held at the upazila auditorium after the rally. Kangalini Sufia presented songs on women’s rights during the cultural programme.

**Chittagong Division**

**Chittagong, Patiya and Chakaria:** A discussion meeting was held through the joint initiative of CCC Chittagong and the local voluntary organization Ilma. Local elites were present in the discussion titled ‘Role of the family in women’s empowerment’. An inter-college debate competition, discussion meeting and satellite information and advice desk were organised by CCC-Patiya on 7 and 8 March. The Premier University of Chittagong emerged champion in the competition while BGC Trust University became runner-up. The CCC Chakaria organised rally, quiz cum debate competition and discussion meeting on the occasion.

Comilla, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria: A rally and discussion meeting were held in Comilla on the occasion of International Women’s Day. Presided over by the CCC convener, the Director General of Bangladesh Rural Development Academy was present in the discussion meeting as chief guest. A rally and discussion meeting also took place in Chandpur. Prizes were distributed among the winners of essay and art competition after the discussion meeting. In CCC Brahmanbaria, extempore debate and poetry recitation competition organised, which were participated by the female students of Brahmanbaria Government Women’s College. A brief discussion meeting and prize-giving ceremony took place later on.

**Rajshahi Division**

**Rajshahi, Natore, Capai Nawabganj:** A mothers’ gathering was organised on the compound of Mohammadpur Tikapara School under the aegis of CCC Rajshahi. Alongside awarding prizes to some meritorious students, a cultural programme participated by the students was staged. In Natore, a rally was brought out from Kanaikhal ground which culminated at the old bus stand and was rounded off with a human chain and mass gathering. A discussion meeting was held on the Udichi stage of Shaheed Satu Hall in Capai Nawabganj following a rally. Representatives of various classes and professions urged reduction of discrimination against women and launching of the movement for establishing women’s rights from the family itself.

**Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat:** A rally, discussion meeting and people’s theatre were jointly organised by various government and non-government organizations on the occasion of International Women’s Day in CCC Rangpur. Besides a discussion meeting and a cultural programme were arranged respectively at Rangpur Town Hall and Shaheed Minar premises. A rally was brought out in Kurigram with the participation of YES members and students of various schools and colleges. It went round main thoroughfares of the town and culminated at the compound of Khalliganj School and College. Later, a discussion meeting took place in the college which was organised jointly by various development organizations. In Lalmonirhat, a rally was brought out from in front of the district council auditorium, which concluded at the same place after travelling round the town. Later, a discussion meeting was held in the district council auditorium under the auspices of district administration.

**Sylhet Division**

**Sreemangal and Sunamganj:** At a opinion-sharing meeting in Sreemangal, the speakers demanded complete implementation of the CEDAW in Bangladesh. A colourful rally went round the town on the occasion of the day. In the discussion meeting held at Sunamganj, the speakers strongly pleaded for stopping repression against women, taking all necessary measures for proper flourishing of women community and establishing equal rights for women at all levels.

**Khulna Division**

**Khulna, Jessore and Kushtia:** The CCC Khulna organised various competitions, rally, prize-giving ceremony and discussion meeting on the same occasion. The rally was inaugurated by the Mayor of Khulna City Corporation Talukdar Abdul Khaleque. The
Women’s Day was observed jointly by CCC Jessore, Institute of Environment and Development (IDE) - Jessore and the district branch of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad. A discussion meeting, ceremony to honour struggling women and a cultural programme were organised at the Satyen Sen Stage of Udichi to highlight the significance of the day. A discussion meeting was held on the ground of Jagati Primary School after a rally in Kushtia, which was participated by women and children. Women at the grassroots level spoke about their rights and repression during the discussion.

Satkhira, Bagerhat and Jhenaidah: The CCC Satkhira brought out a rally jointly with the NGOs Swadesh, World Vision, Agragati Sangstha, Bangladesh Vision and Mohila Parishad, which commenced from the municipality compound and culminated at Shahid Abdur Razzaque Park. On the same day, a discussion meeting was attended by eminent personalities of the town. A mothers’ gathering was organised at Paschimbag Government Primary School ground under the aegis of CCC Bagerhat on the occasion of Women’s Day. Accomplished students were awarded prizes on the occasion. At a discussion meeting held in Jhenaidah, the speakers demanded full implementation of Women’s Development Policy. Besides, the district office of Women’s Affairs Department brought out a rally, which went round main thoroughfares of the town and was participated by various organizations.

Barisal Division

Barisal, Jhalakati and Pirojpur: A discussion meeting and cultural programme was organised on 7 March at Begum Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia Women’s College under the auspices of CCC Barisal. The speakers demanded full implementation of the CEDAW in order to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women and build a country free of corruption. The CCC Jhalakati organised a discussion meeting jointly with the Mohila Parishad with the slogan ‘democracy and good governance are ensured women participation in the decision-making process.’ A rally, distribution of leaflets and discussion meeting were organised at Pirojpur. The main theme of the discussion was ‘Stand up - for women’s rights.’

TIB Participated in Health-related Workshop

A two daylong workshop titled ‘ensuring rights and accountability in the health sector’ was organised at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on 23 and 24 February. The workshop was held under the joint auspices of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Equity and Voice Task Group, CIDA and the Population Council. TIB also participated in it.

During one of the sessions, TIB Executive Director shared his experiences of various programmes undertaken at local and national levels for improving the quality of healthcare. The title of his paper was ‘Voice, demands and accountability in the health sector: Is it possible?’ Opinions of participants were sought on various issues through a group-based approach during the two daylong workshop. These included: effectiveness of the advisory committee of health services; role of various national forums in framing an effective policy; role of local plans; application and implementation of citizens’ rights in the health sector; and strategies for ensuring accountability at the local level. Chairmen and Female Vice-Chairmen of various localities took part in the group-work as local level people’s representatives on the second day of the workshop. The Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali was present as chief guest and the Canadian High Commissioner in Bangladesh was present as special guest in the concluding session of the workshop.
Round-table Discussion

Transparency and Accountability is Essential in the Water Resources Sector

Although Bangladesh has a huge reservoir of water resources, it is facing serious threats mainly because of mismanagement. Establishment of transparency and accountability in this sector is essential for ensuring the rights of all in water resources. This opinion was expressed by the speakers at the round-table discussion organised by TIB on ‘Good governance in water resources sector: wanted transparency and accountability’. Held at the conference lounge of National Press Club on 23 March, the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman moderated the event. It was presided over by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, while the working paper was presented by Program Officer Md. Rafiqul Islam.

Participating in the discussion, the Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi Engineering University Professor M. Fazlul Bari welcomed the initiative by TIB and said that although policy and law exists for proper utilisation and conservation of water resource, these are not implemented properly. Former Secretary S M Al-Hussainy said, inadequate supply gives rise to corruption. The water resource sector has always been neglected. We shall have to ensure availability of water through short, medium and long-term plans. Director General of Bangladesh Water Development Board Abul Kalam Md. Azad said, BWDB is making concerted efforts for ensuring balanced distribution and management of water. A powerful task force has been formed by the concerned ministry for ensuring transparency in the board's workings. The chairman of Soil, Water and Environment department of Dhaka University Professor S M Imamul Haque said, corruption and other problems arise because of improper discharge of assigned responsibilities by concerned persons. If we all become conscious, then it is possible to curb corruption in the sector and check wastage of water resource. Professor Muzaffer Ahmad called upon all to ensure availability of water, proper coordination by the Ministry dealing with water resource and uphold transparency in the sector.

In his welcome address, the TIB Executive Director said, water resource had infinite potentials. The present initiative is taken to identify how good governance could be established in this sector of huge national importance. In his keynote paper, Rafiqul Islam said, access to safe water is a fundamental right of all human beings. TIB held the view that water was a human right and establishing right over water was a precondition for all other human rights. Effective initiative is needed by all quarters including the government, administration, political leadership as well as businessmen and private organizations working in the sector. Others who spoke at the programme included the Managing Director of BETS Professor Shahjahan Kabir Chowdhury, Dhaka University teacher Dr. A Q M Mahbub, Chief Engineer of Dhaka City Corporation Ashraful Islam and social researcher Alicia Barthuz.

A number of recommendations were made in the TIB working paper including measures for ensuring safe and quality water for all. Notable among these were: establishing rights of all citizens over water resource; initiatives by relevant authorities for development of water resource and ensuring its effective use for raising the quality of people’s lives; easy availability of adequate and quality water for all citizens; swift implementation of National Water Policy (1999) for ensuring proper utilisation of water resource; putting a stop to various irregularities and corruption in this sector, especially negligence of duty, misappropriation of assets, misuse of power, bribery, fraud, extortion and influence-peddling; ensuring exemplary punishment for those involved in irregularities in order to stop illegal occupation of rivers, marshes-swamps, canals, lakes, water-bodies and jal-mahals through collusion between powerful people, businessmen and officials of concerned organizations at various spots of the country; take effective remedial measures for ending victimisation of marginalised population including women and children through irregularities, corruption and mismanagement; finalising the proposed National Water Policy through participation of all stakeholders; and ensuring safe and pure drinking water for all, especially in the urban areas including Dhaka, through effective initiatives, transparency and accountability, on the basis of long-term planning.
World Water Day Observed

The CCCs observed World Water Day for the first time in different regions of the country

Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur and Madhupur: A human chain followed by a discussion meeting was held at Shaheed Firoz Jahangir compound of Mymensingh. In the opinion-sharing meeting organised at Kishoreganj, the speakers called for saving the Narasunda river – a local heritage. A human chain was formed in Jamalpur at the initiative of CCC and SUPRO followed by a colourful rally which went round the town. A rally brought out under the aegis of CCC Madhupur went round Madhupur town. Later, the speakers at a discussion meeting noted that various harmful effects like decrease in agricultural production, environmental disaster and loss of bio-diversity were being observed due to irregularities and corruption in the water sector.

Savar, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Faridpur and Madaripur: A human chain and open discussion participated by people of different classes and professions were organised at Savar thana bus stand of Dhaka-Aricha highway on the occasion of water day. The speakers called for establishing transparency and accountability in water management in order to save the country from desertification and to ensure good governance. They also called for taking initiative to obtain rightful share of the Ganges water. The CCC Gazipur and World Health Organization jointly organised a discussion meeting on ‘Shared waters, shared opportunities’ at Gazipur municipal auditorium. The CCC Munshiganj arranged a discussion meeting at the local Shilpakala Academy auditorium titled ‘Human rights in water resources: Integrity, transparency and accountability’. A discussion meeting took place at the CCC premises of Faridpur on the occasion of water day. A discussion meeting was organised by CCC Madaripur at the conference room of sadar hospital. The speakers emphasised on collective efforts for ensuring safe water.

Barisal, Pirojpur, Jhalakati: The CCC Barisal formed a human chain on the banks of Kirtankhola river adjacent to Hamzaghat of BIWTA marine workshop on 21 March afternoon. Festoons painted with various slogans like ‘Wanted pollution-free Kirtankhola’, ‘Ensure safe water’, ‘Stop filling up of river, pond and water-bodies’, ‘We seek water security’, etc. were displayed. In Pirojpur, rally, human chain and discussion meeting were organised on the occasion of world water day. The day was observed by the CCC in the company of grassroots people on Tejdaskathi Secondary School premises in a rural setting. A human chain and discussion meeting were arranged in front of the Tejdaskathi Secondary School and College after the rally. In the discussion meeting held at Jhalakati, the speakers urged all countries of the world and relevant quarters to stop corruption in the water sector.

Khulna, Jessore, Bagerhat, Kushtia, Jhenaidah: The speakers observed at a discussion meeting held inside a hotel in Khulna that it was possible to prevent wastage of water through proper management. A seminar was organised by CCC Jessore at Bangladesh Medical Association auditorium on 23 March on the occasion of water day. The speakers put forward some recommendations for development of the water sector. These included: conservation of rain water; introduction of recycling mechanism; use of surface water; technological innovation for utilising saline water; formulation of regional water policy in concert with neighbouring country; excavation and renovation of rivers; stopping unwarranted use of marshes and swamps; eviction of illegal occupiers of water-bodies, etc. At a seminar held in Bagerhat on 22 March, recommendations were made for continuous dredging of rivers for restoring their navigability, freeing canals and rivers from illegal occupations, stopping unplanned shrimp cultivation, formulation and implementation of a master plan and ensuring access of general masses to water-bodies. A rally and seminar were organised in Kushtia on the occasion of World Water Day under the aegis of 8 voluntary organizations (Nikushimaj, Disha, Durbar Network, Padakkhep Consortium, BPDC, Mukti, SAF and CDL). The CCC Jhenaidah and Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation Committee jointly organised a rally which started from the CCC office and culminated at the post office compound after going round major thoroughfares of the town. A human chain was formed at the venue, where demands were made
for freeing the traditional Nabaganga river of Jhenaidah from grabbing and pollution.

Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Chandpur, Patiya, Chakaria: A rally and discussion meeting were organised in Brahmanbaria on the occasion of World Water Day. People belonging to various classes and professions as well as students participated in the rally. A round-table discussion was organised in Comilla at the local Rotary Club, which was chaired by the CCC convener. Eminent persons belonging to various classes and professions including CCC and YES members participated in it. A human chain was also formed in front of the CCC office to highlight various messages of the water day. A seminar was held at the Rotary Bhaban auditorium of Chandpur, which was chaired by the CCC convener. The speakers sought proper attention of all for curbing various irregularities and corruption, negligence of duty, misappropriation of resources, misuse of power, bribery, fraud, extortion and influence-peddling in the water resources sector. The CCC Patiya organised a round-table discussion at Patiya Community Centre on 22 March. A discussion meeting was organised by CCC Chakaria on ‘Problems and prospects of water resources in Chakaria upazila and what should be done in future.’ A rally brought out by the YES group went round important roads of Chakaria municipality.

Rajshahi, Natore, Capai Nawabganj, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur: A discussion meeting was held at a local hotel under the aegis of CCC Rajshahi. The speakers observed that salinity in the Rajshahi region has increased because of some corrupt businessmen. Implementation of Northern Rajshahi Irrigation Project was urgent for utilisation of water from the river Padma in Rajshahi region. A round-table discussion titled ‘Water problem in Natore and means of overcoming it’ was held at the conference room of Deputy Commissioner on 25 March under the aegis of CCC Natore. While dwelling on the water problem of Natore, the speakers shed light on various issues including construction of illegal and unplanned embankments on rivers, drying up of Narad river due to construction of embankment at Bagha-Charghat, illegal occupations, closure of water treatment plant of the municipality and illegal award of lease for large water-bodies. They emphasised on conservation of Chalan-Beel and ensuring natural habitat for fisheries by cancelling illegal leases. Besides, a rally brought out through the joint initiative of CCC and SUPRO culminated at old bus-stand after going out from Kanaikhali ground. At the opinion-sharing meeting organised by CCC Capai Nawabganj, the speakers underscored the need for proper planning in utilisation of water and for ensuring availability of water for all irrespective of religion, caste and class. A human chain was formed in Lalmonirhat which was participated by over one hundred students and teachers of Poet Sheikh Fazlul Karim Girls' School as well as by CCC and YES members. A discussion meeting was held at the CCC premises following this event. The speakers placed emphasis on implementation of the water policy on an urgent basis. At a discussion meeting in Kurigram titled ‘Urgent steps for solving local problems of water resource’, the speakers observed that the local lifestyle has evolved centring around water resources; but the livelihood of people is being threatened due to construction of unplanned embankments and failure to ensure just share of water. Before this meeting, a colourful rally went round Kurigram town. The CCC Rangpur organised a human chain at Rangpur Press Club compound with the slogan ‘Human rights in water resources: wanted honesty, transparency and accountability’. The speakers claimed that the poor people were being harmed most due to environmental disaster resulting from absence of a proper policy at the national level for saving rivers. They requested effective steps for redressing the situation.

Sylhet, Sunamganj and Sreemangal: An open discussion was organised in Sylhet by the local CCC and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA). The speakers highlighted various problems facing the water sector and presented recommendations for solving those. In Sreemangal, the CCC, Mac-Bangladesh and Emsidar jointly organised a discussion meeting at the CCC office. The speakers suggested various measures for solving the water problem. These included: installation of tube-wells, conservation of marshes, storing rain-water, stopping wastage of water, recovery of hilly land, ensuring access to water of workers engaged in tree plantation, increasing water supply for irrigation, etc. A discussion meeting was held in Sunamganj on conclusion of a rally.
Good Governance Needed in the Water Resources Sector

Rafiqul Islam

Water is an outstanding and fundamental ingredient in people’s lives. Right over water is also a human right. All basic elements of living including production, education, health and housing are directly related to it. The pattern of living in riverine Bangladesh has been largely shaped by water. Fifty-four international rivers flow through Bangladesh, which lie below the Himalayas. Numerous small and big rivers, water-bodies, canals, marshes and swamps, ponds and lakes dot the country’s landscape. The living standard of the country’s citizens can be improved through proper utilisation of these resources.

Like many other countries of the world, the water resources sector in Bangladesh is also infested with corruption. Proper utilisation of this resource has not been possible due to lack of integrity, transparency and accountability in relevant organizations and personnel, dearth of awareness among the people and their non-participation. TIB research has identified water resource as one of the most corrupt sectors in Bangladesh due to prevalence of centralised authority, monopoly power and absence of transparency and accountability. The causes responsible for this corruption, as identified by TIB research are: negligence of duty, misappropriation of assets, misuse of power, bribery, fraud, extortion and influence-peddling. The Anti-Corruption Commission is currently investigating allegations of corruption amounting to Taka 444 crore in various projects undertaken by the Ministry of Water Resource between 2001 and 2006.

Negative linkages or syndicates have been formed in various regions of the country by locally influential people, politicians and government officials. They are forcibly occupying parts of different rivers, lakes, swamps, marshes and other water-bodies and using those for their own interest. Multifarious problems are arising due to lease award of water-bodies, which were historically run on the basis of collective ownership of people, through political and administrative anomalies and corruption. People are falling prey to environmental pollution, health hazard, eviction from work and home, etc. This is having serious and negative socio-economic repercussions for the marginalised population including fishermen and peasants. As right over water has been shifted to a handful of people coupled with erosion of rivers, fishermen of various regions are leaving their profession and joining the floating classes in major towns including capital Dhaka.

Although surrounded by water-bodies on four sides, the people of Dhaka are suffering from drinking water crisis due to dearth of proper planning and initiative. Excessive dependence on underground water rather than on surface water and discriminations in area-wise allocation of water is largely responsible for this water crisis in Dhaka city. In some areas, people are consuming 400 litres of water per head, whereas in other places an individual is not getting even 20 litres of water.

It is seen from the social history of water management in Bangladesh that when the state takes decision based on people’s participation, then that proves to be most fruitful. For example, an influential quarter in Lalpur upazila of Natore took possession of the river Chandana by changing its classification in collusion with the local land office. They obstructed the day to day use of water by the local people for farming and rearing of livestock. In protest, the local people organised themselves in 2007. They submitted memos to the relevant authorities including the district administration with the help of TIB-inspired Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Natore, and called for restoration of people’s rights over the Chandana river. Because of people’s participation and initiative by CCC-Natore, the people got back their right over part of the river; however, their full right over the river could not yet be restored due to legal complexities.

The Kaptai hydro-electric project (1957-63) was implemented in the backdrop of the devastating floods of 1954 and 1955 and in the light of Krug Mission set up by the United Nations. As a consequence, 40% of the agricultural land in the hill tracts went under water and over 40 thousand Chakma families lost their dwellings and took refuge in India as refugees. This problem later became one of the major ingredients in the ethnic conflict that emerged in Chittagong Hill Tracts, which gradually became violent. It is therefore necessary to ensure the rights and participation of local population in the planning and implementation of all development projects, especially those related to water resource.

The workings of institutions directly concerned with water resource need to be more transparent and accountable.
These include National Water Resource Council and its Secretariat, National Water Resource Planning Organization (WARPO), Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) Dhaka and Chittagong, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Ministry of Shipping and Barendra Multipurpose Development Authority. If good governance is established in this sector by reducing corruption and wastage, then the quality of services will improve, which will aid in improving the living standard of our people.

The election manifesto of the present government also attached due importance to the problems in the water resource sector. Pledges have been made for adopting ‘coordinated policy and plan’ for solving those. The pledges in the manifesto included excavation of rivers, conservation of water, flood control, checking river erosion, preserving woodlands and bio-diversity, expanding irrigation facilities, stopping desertification, implementing Ganges barrage project, effective cooperation at the regional and international levels, curbing pollution, putting in place modern and scientific waste-management and ensuring rational use of surface water.

The National Water Policy (1999) should be implemented quickly in order to ensure easy availability of sufficient and quality water for all citizens as well as to ensure proper utilisation of water resource. It will be possible to establish good governance in the water resource sector by stopping various kinds of anomalies and corruption, especially negligence of duty, misappropriation of assets, misuse of power, bribery, fraud, extortion and influence-peddling. All citizens of the country sincerely wish that good governance will be established in all organizations related to water management, and right over water as well as water security will be ensured through proper coordination and participation of the people in the light of government’s election manifesto.

Rafiqul Islam, Programme Officer, TIB

Making Waves Project Concluded

The ‘Making Waves’ project of TIB came to an end on 31 March this year. It started its journey back in January 2003. The objective of the project was to make people conscious about corruption and generate anti-corruption demand among them so that accountable and transparent government was established at the national and local levels.

Different programmes executed under this project played an important role in various institutional reforms at the national level. Notable among the positive changes that took place as a result were: reforms of the Anti-Corruption Commission; reforms of the electoral process and Election Commission; reforms in Public Service Commission; Development of Chittagong Port; ratification of UN Convention against Corruption by Bangladesh; recognition of corruption as the main challenge to development in SAARC region; and inclusion of anti-corruption essay in the curriculum of classes 9 and 11 at secondary and higher secondary level. As a component of National Integrity Programme, TIB worked for good governance in the NGO sector, humanitarian assistance for people and raising transparency and accountability in government procurement system under the purview of this project.

The people have started to raise their voice against corruption because of platforms like CCC built by TIB at local level under the ‘Making Waves’ project. The CCCs have been able to bring about some visible changes in the delivery of services by service-providing organizations with the assistance of YES members, especially by institutions working in education, health and local government sectors. Besides, TIB has been able to attract the youth community to the anti-corruption movement more than ever before under the purview of this project.

Right to information is a principal pre-condition for a just society. A majority of our population, who are citizens of this country, are unaware of the services and rights they deserve from the state; as a result they face harassment and corruption in numerous ways. Satellite AI-Desks are therefore being run in CCC areas in order to reach the information and advisory services to the doorsteps of the people. Till now, satellite AI-Desk is being set up 900 times in 36 CCC areas, where services have been received directly by around 1 lakh 1 thousand 719 citizens.

TIB has travelled a long way under the ‘Making Waves’ project for around seven years. Building a democratic, transparent and accountable social system has become urgent for establishing good governance in Bangladesh. TIB holds the view that it is possible to tackle poverty, injustice and insecurity of people by reducing corruption and ensuring good governance. In order to sustain this anti-corruption movement, TIB has launched a new 5-year project titled ‘ - Driving Change’, which will continue up to the year 2014.

Shamim Aktar Jahan, Senior Programme Officer, TIB
Modernisation of Road Transport System Recommended

There is widespread corruption and irregularities in the road transport system of Bangladesh. The performances of various stakeholders in the sector, including Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), are also debatable. Due to political influence and absence of accountability, trade unions in the transport sector as well as committees for transport terminals remain completely outside BRTA’s control. There is inadequate arrangement for ensuring transparency and accountability in the functioning of road transport organisations. These corruption and anomalies in the road transport system and BRTA were revealed in a Diagnostic Study conducted by TIB. TIB has also made a number of recommendations in the report for building a modern and accountable road transport system in the country.

TIB organised a discussion meeting titled ‘Role of BRTA and stakeholders in the road transport system of Bangladesh: Problems and remedies’ at the VIP lounge of National Press Club on 22 March, on the occasion of releasing this research report. Chaired by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and moderated by the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain was present in the discussion as chief guest. The Secretary of Communications Ministry A S M Ali Kabir and the BRTA Chairman Kamrul Hasan ndc were present as special guests. Research Officer of TIB Md. Rezaul Karim presented the report before the audience during the programme. TIB had conducted this research to identify the problems as well as their remedies in the road transport system.

In his address as chief guest, the communication minister welcomed the initiative by TIB and said that the information presented by the research were correct and objective. He disclosed that a high-powered committee would be formed within a week to remove the existing anomalies and corruption in the road transport system and said that all-out efforts would be made to reach the services of BRTA to the doorsteps of the people and erect a management structure for safer roads. He expressed his desire to involve TIB in the initiative for redressing the identified irregularities and corruption in the road sector and establish good governance in the field. The Communication Secretary claimed that like TIB they also sought a corruption-free Bangladesh, where transparency, accountability and rule of law would prevail. Agreeing with the report, BRTA Chairman Kamrul Hasan mentioned about various steps already taken by the authority and expressed the hope that positive changes would occur very soon. Professor Muzaffer Ahmad welcomed the announcement of the Minister on involving TIB in his new initiative. Member of Parliament Shahjahan Khan welcomed the research initiative and discussion based on it and called for continuation of joint and active initiatives for establishing good governance by eliminating irregularities and corruption from the sector. Others who were present on the occasion included the Acting Chairman of Dhaka Road Transport Association Major General (retd.) A M S A Amin, former BRTA Director A A Bhuiyan, senior officials of BRTA, leaders of the transport sector and representatives of labour bodies.

The research showed that up to 50 thousand taka has to be paid as bribe for registration of a motor vehicle, depending on its category and price. For inclusion in a bus company in Dhaka metropolitan area, the general owners have to pay bribes ranging from 1 to 3 lakh taka per vehicle depending on the type and price of vehicle. Up to 20 thousand taka bribe has to be paid for collecting route permit certificate and change of ownership document. Ninety-six percent drivers did not get any appointment letter from the owner. On the other hand, 84% of the transport workers did not earn anything even when they could not drive a vehicle for genuine reasons. Sixty-one percent of the drivers could collect their driving licences without appearing in any test. Up to 7 thousand taka bribe was required for obtaining driving licence depending on its type. Fifty-four percent drivers were driving vehicles with licences whose validity have expired.

According to findings of the research, BRTA does not play any effective role in controlling vehicles. In most of the routes, the passenger vehicles incorporated in Dhaka metropolitan area extract up to 75% excess fare from the passengers. There is no auditing mechanism for examining how and where the tolls collected by trade unions are spent. Between 10 to 100 taka per trip are collected as toll at 5 to 20 places on an average from the short and long distance commercial vehicles travelling through district towns, road intersections and entrances to district and divisional towns, by keeping the terminals and routes under control. Besides, the
owners’ associations have to pay up to Taka 2 thousand monthly fees, depending on the category of commercial vehicles. Between 10 to 50 thousand taka has to be paid to road transport organisations as toll for setting up route counter.

The buses, trucks and long-distance covered vans in metropolitan areas have to pay up to Taka 3 thousand as ‘bit’ money. A section of the traffic police extract ‘bit’ at the rate of Taka 3 to 4 hundred per trip from the luxury buses leaving Dhaka city. In case of road accidents, settlements are made inside police stations through bribes paid to a section of police at the rate of up to 50 thousand taka, depending on the extent of loss and type of vehicle. Law enforcement by traffic police is hindered due to exertion of political and other influences. Due to various limitations of prevailing laws, the task of controlling motor vehicles is hindered. There is no arrangement for proper supervision, monitoring and accountability. The BRTA staffs spend around 90% of their working hours on providing services to clients. As a result, important tasks like control of motor vehicles, policy functions and coordination with the stake-holders are neglected. Although ‘National Road Safety Strategic Action Plan’ has set a target of reducing road accidents by 10 percent each year, sufficient funds, manpower and logistics have not been allocated to BRTA for the purpose.

TIB has put forward a number of recommendations for erecting a modern and accountable road transport system. Notable among these are: identifying the challenges faced by BRTA by forming a neutral and high-powered enquiry committee; empowering BRTA to register and supervise motor vehicles in metropolitan areas; making provisions in the motor vehicles act stricter with regard to fixing and executing fares for passenger vehicles; framing a code of conduct for all officers and employees of BRTA and ensuring its proper application; institutional strengthening of BRTA for effective coordination among stakeholders in the road transport sector; modernisation of monitoring, evaluation and information management structure; introduction of one-stop and online-based service programmes; taking steps for awarding digital driving licence within the shortest possible time; and bringing the road transport organizations under an umbrella of accountability. It may be mentioned that the communication Ministry and the BRTA have already taken a number of steps for raising the quality of customer services and curbing irregularities on the basis of the first draft of TIB research report.

Report Card Survey

A total of 5 report card survey reports were released between January and March 2009. These included 3 on medical college hospitals, 1 on district sadar hospital and 1 on a municipality. These reports were published by CCCs formed at the local level.

Municipal Services: The report on the services of Bagerhat municipality was released on 7 March. The report was released in the presence of Mayor of the municipality, commissioners, officers and employees, officials of local administration, journalists and elites of the town. The report pointed out irregularities and corruption, negligence of duty and various problems encountered in different programmes of the municipality. Acute crisis in drinking water supply was the most prominent among these multifarious problems. Other problems included partisan role in judicial arbitrations, anomalies and corruption in development programmes and irregularities in the market system. The report provided some direction for solving the identified problems.

Healthcare Services: Among the 4 healthcare services reports as the first one on Barisal Sher-E-bangla Medical College Hospital on 17 January, the second on Faridpur General Hospital on 20 January, the third on Faridpur Medical College Hospital on 9 March and the fourth on Chittagong Medical College Hospital on 14 March were released. Eminent personalities including CCC members, officials of relevant organizations and journalists were present at these publication ceremonies. Notable corruption and irregularities depicted in the survey reports were as follows: eliciting fees in excess of those fixed by the government; late arrival and early departure in hospitals by doctors and other staffs; absence of doctors and nurses during night time; menace of middlemen; encouraging patients to go to outside clinics or own chamber of doctors; problems related to water and other aspects. All the reports put forward some recommendations for solving existing problems.
Recommendation for Enhancing Transparency in CMC Hospital

Various anomalies and corruption exist in the service delivery systems in Chittagong Medical College (CMC) Hospital. This has been revealed by the report card survey on the hospital conducted by CCC Chittagong and TIB. The report was released through a round-table discussion on 14 March. The CCC Chittagong carried out this research with the objective of enhancing transparency and accountability of CMC Hospital and to groom it up as a more effective service-delivery organization.

Assistant Programme Officer of TIB Subinay Dutta presented the report at Engineer Abdul Khaleque Auditorium of Chittagong Press Club. Chaired by the CCC convener Advocate Akhtar Kabir Chowdhury, people belonging to various classes and professions including CCC Adviser Begum Mushtari Shafi, CCC members Advocate Salehuddin Haider Siddiqui, Jasmeen Sultana Paru and Md. Shahriar Khaled, convener of the Chittagong SHOJAN Professor Mohammad Sekandar Khan, vice-president of Chittagong Press Club Asif Siraj, TIB officials and YES members were present on the occasion.

It was found in the survey that the nurses and ward-boys demanded tips from 73% of patients who took indoor admission in the hospital and approached them for services. 53% of patients had to pay additional money in excess of normal fee for admission in the indoor department. Twenty-three percent of patients had to wait for around 1 hour for getting services in the emergency department. Eleven percent of the patients had to pay 75 taka as tips to concerned ward staff for allocation of a bed.

The survey showed that the doctors sent 33% of the patients to diagnostic centres of their choice outside the hospital. Although food for 89% of the patients was sanctioned in CMC Hospital, 27% of the patients did not take food from the hospital. Based on this estimate, the government incurred a financial loss of Taka 1 crore 3 lakh 54 thousand 867 during 2007-08 against the expenditure for food distributed among 378 patients per day. The main beneficiaries were the officers and employees working in the food department of the hospital. 96% of the outdoor patients and 91% of the indoor patients opined that the hospital toilets were dirty and unusable and water was not available at all.

The CCC and TIB put forward a number of recommendations for improving the quality of services and to groom CMC Hospital as a modern and good-quality service-delivery institution. These included: ensuring infrastructure facilities for the 1010 bed hospital; increasing medicine supply; open display of the updated list of available medicines; modernisation and computerisation of medicine distribution system; modernisation of diagnostic and pathology departments; raising the number of modern machines and equipment and keeping the testing centre open round the clock; increasing the number of ambulances and framing of simpler policy for the purpose; ensuring transparency in recruitment of class four employees through contractors; fixing the rates of various fees in taka denominations; application of government rules in transfer of doctors and officers; raising the number of beds for women and children; strengthening the monitoring mechanism including enhanced supervision of officers and employees; making arrangement for display of identity cards by officers and staffs as well as wearing of their uniforms; open display of the list of applicable government fees; improving monitoring mechanism and introducing ticket system in food allocation and distribution; modernisation and enrichment of information and enquiry centre; practice of regular coordination meetings between the authority and the employees; publication of annual report and opening of website on the services rendered by CMC Hospital; publication of citizens’ charter and its implementation.
Different Programmes in CCC Areas

Face the Public in Capai Nawabganj
A Face the Public programme was organised by CCC Capai Nanawabganj at the Sadar Hospital compound with the objective of enhancing coordination in healthcare services provided by the hospital. The Civil Surgeon Dr. Md. Rezaul Karim was present in the programme as chief guest. The Civil Surgeon, senior consultant and eye specialist Dr. Rabiu Alam and Dr. Shafiqul Islam gave answers to various questions raised during the session on subjects such as menace of middlemen and medical representatives in the hospital, transparency in transactions, supply of pure drinking water, cleanliness, shortage of manpower in the emergency and gynaecological departments, ambulance service, use of uniform by doctors, etc. The doctors pointed out various limitations of the hospital but pledged to provide better services in the future. The CCC convener NSM Mahbubur Rahman Mintoo chaired the session. The programme was conducted by the CCC member Advocate Saiful Islam Reza.

Roundtable Discussion at Jamalpur
A roundtable discussion on ‘Ways of improving the service quality of Jamalpur railway station’ was held at the Public Library auditorium on 14 March under the aegis of CCC Jamalpur. The speakers expressed their disappointment at the quality of railway services and demanded changes in existing train schedules and introduction of 2 new inter-city trains for improving railway services. The discussants put forward a number of recommendations.

Round-table Discussion at Savar
A round-table discussion titled ‘Healthcare services at the grassroots: Citizens’ expectations and reality’ was organised by CCC Savar at VERC auditorium of Savar on 4 March with the objective of promoting transparency and accountability in the health sector. Presided over by the CCC convener Jainal Abedeen Khan, those who took part in the discussion included Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr. Md. Shafiuuddin Sarkar, Resident Health Officer Nazibur Rahman Khan, CCC member Khandakar Mohd. Hamid Ranju, Dr. Abdul Latif Biswas, Dr. Mohd. Rafiq, member-secretary of the Savar Upazila Corruption Prevention Committee Salauddin Khan Nayeem, Managing Director of Manorama Hospital and journalist Gobinda Acharya et al.

Workshop in Munshiganj
A workshop on investigative journalism was held in Munshiganj under the auspices of CCC Munshiganj. Held at the Monsur Ali Molla Auditorium of Munshiganj Girls’ High School on 30 January, local journalists participated in this workshop. The keynote paper on investigative journalism was presented by the Senior Advocacy Officer of TIB Mohammad Imam Uddin. Presided over by the CCC convener Professor Anil Kumar Chakraborti, those who took part in the discussion included CCC member Advocate Mizil Md. Shaheen, Khaleda Khanom, Press Club convener Manzoor Morshed and convener of the Munshiganj Reporters’ Unity Shahid-E-Hasan Tuhin.

Walkathon for Motivating Voters in Mymensingh
A two daylong walkathon for motivating voters was organised on 19 and 20 January under the auspices of CCC Mymensingh and SHOJAN. Over 2 hundred local people participated on the first day in the 10-mile walkathon programme under the supervision of CCC member and convener of the organising committee Neamu Kabir Sajal. The colourful walkathon motivated the voters to elect honest and qualified candidates in the upazila election by visiting different points of Mymensingh town.

Upazila Candidates Face the Public
The Face the Publicwith Upazila Candidates programme was organised at different places of the country under the aegis of various CCCs. These included Kishoreganj, Munshiganj, Jhalakati, Brahmanbaria, Jamalpur, Jessore, Madhupur, Lalmonirhat and Bagerhat. The candidates responded to various questions posed by the people and stated their electoral commitments to the people. The candidates jointly pledged to refrain
from using black money in election, ensure a free and fair election, humbly accept people’s verdict even if defeated, improve law and order situation in their area, ensure transparency and accountability in all undertakings, attach priority to women’s development and work in a concerted manner for developing the natural environment of respective upazilas.

General Knowledge Contest at Sreemangal
A general knowledge competition titled ‘Liberation War and Bangladesh’ was arranged by CCC Sreemangal on 24 March for the students of local schools and colleges on the occasion of Independence Day. A record 1,777 students of classes 8, 9 and 10 from 8 schools and 2 Madrasas of the town took part in the contest. Student of class 8 of The Buds Residential Model School and College Sourav Ray occupied first position in the competition. Debabrata Sen and Saroj Kumar Chakrabarti of the same institution occupied 2nd and 3rd positions. The institution which emerged champion was also awarded a prize. The chief guest and Principal of The Buds Residential Model School and College Mohiuddin Ahmed and the special guest Headmaster Abdun Noor of Victoria High School distributed prizes among the winners.

Advice and Information Desk at Jessore
A satellite AI-Desk was set up under the aegis of YES group of CCC Jessore at Bandabila UP office of Bagharpura thana with the cooperation of development organisation ‘Abha’. Advice and information was provided by the CCC member Advocate Syeda Masuma Begum on 10 February afternoon. Alongside providing advice, health-related leaflets and application forms for passport were distributed from the site.

Study Circle on Liberation War in Barisal
A study circle titled ‘Liberation war in Barisal’ was organised by the Barisal YES group on 14 January on the steps of the Martyred Freedom Fighters’ Memorial. Eminent freedom fighter Enayet Hossain Chowdhury and war-wounded freedom fighter AMG Kabir Bhulu narrated the history of liberation war in Barisal including their own experiences to the younger generation. CCC member Toufiq Maruf also spoke at the programme, while the coordinator of Barisal YES group Monwar Hossain acted as the moderator.

Cycle Rally at Patiya
Over 100 YES group members wearing T-shirts depicting various slogans took part in a cycle rally in Patiya on 19 January with the objective of motivating voters to vote for honest, qualified and patriotic candidates. The rally was inaugurated by the YES group convener of CCC Patiya Vice-Principal Md. Abu Tayab. The Patiya coordinator of Election Working Group Pankaj Chakrabarti, CCC convener Professor Avijeet Barua Manu and the secretary of Patiya Press Club Abdul Hakim Rana spoke briefly on the occasion.

Obituary

**Professor Asit Kumar Majumdar:** The convener of CCC Satkhira Professor Asit Kumar Majumdar passed away on 26 January. He fought against corruption and communalism throughout his life. He showed the path of social progress by involving himself with various social and cultural organizations. A citizens’ condolence meeting was held to mourn his death at the local municipal stadium on 28 February. A souvenir has also been published in memory of late Asit Kumar Majumdar.

**S M Noor-ul-Alam:** Member of CCC Patiya SM Noor-ul-Alam passed away on 19 March (Innaillahiya----Razeun). He was 57 years old at the time of death. Eminent versifier, writer and freedom fighter SM Noor-ul-Alam was a regular contributor to Chittagong Television Centre as a lyricist and artiste. Besides, he was involved with different literary and cultural organizations of Patiya. One of his outstanding books was ‘Chattagramer Kobial O Kobi’ (Poets and Versifiers of Chittagong), which was published by Bangla Academy.

Condolence by TIB
TIB has separately expressed its deep condolence at the sad demise of Professor Asit Kumar Majumdar and SM Noor-ul-Alam. In a condolence message, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, TIB has lost two of its active fellow-travellers in the anti-corruption movement through their deaths. TIB recalled with respect their farsighted counsel and sincere cooperation. Everybody in TIB including the trustees, members of the advisory council, employees and volunteers were pained by their death.
8 March is the International Women's Day. The Day has been observed since early 1900's, a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies. Every year on 8 March the world celebrates IWD to celebrate womanhood, to ensure women's all kinds of rights as well as to give proper recognition to their achievement and the honour they deserve. But this day did not establish its importance overnight. Like many other revolution, it has its own history which started a long time ago.

In 1869 British MP John Stuart Mill was the first person in Parliament to call for women's right to vote. On 19 September 1893 New Zealand became the first country in the world to give women the right to vote. Women in other countries did not enjoy this equality and campaigned for justice for many years.

In 1908 Great unrest and critical debate was occurring amongst women. Women's oppression and inequality was spurring women to become more vocal and active in campaigning for change. Then in 1908, around 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights.

In accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, in the year 1909 the first National Woman's Day (NWD) was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate NWD on the last Sunday of February until 1913.

In 1910 a second International Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen. A woman named Clara Zetkin (Leader of the 'Women's Office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany) tabled the idea of an IWD. She proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a Women's Day - to press for their demands. The conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs, and including the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament, greeted Zetkin's suggestion with unanimous approval and thus International Women's Day was the result.

The very first IWD was launched the following year by Clara Zetkin on 19 March (not 8 March). The date was chosen because on 19 March in the year of the 1848 revolution, the Prussian king recognized for the first time the strength of the armed people and gave way before the threat of a proletarian uprising. Among the many promises he made, which he later failed to keep, was the introduction of votes for women.

Plans for the first IWD demonstration were spread by word of mouth and in the press. During the week before International Women's Day two journals appeared: The Vote for Women in Germany and Women's Day in Austria. Various articles were devoted to International Women's Day: 'Women and Parliament', 'The Working Women and Municipal Affairs', 'What Has The Housewife Got To Do With Politics?', etc. The articles thoroughly analyzed the question of the equality of women in the government and in society. All articles emphasized the same point that it was absolutely necessary to make parliament more democratic by extending the franchise to women.

The first International Women's Day in 1911 was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on 19 March and its success exceeded all expectation. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination. Meetings were organized everywhere in small towns and even the villages halls were packed so full that male workers were asked to give up their places for women. Men stayed at home with their children for a change, and their wives, the captive housewives, went to meetings.

In 1913 International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since.

For decades, IWD has grown from strength to strength annually. For many years the United Nations has held an annual IWD conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes. 1975 was designated as 'International Women's Year' by the United Nations. The United States even designates the whole month of March as 'Women's History Month'.

IWD is now an official holiday in China, Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan,
I have read the TIB publication ‘Pranodan’. It is an artistic expression of the slogan 'Theatre against Corruption'. In my view, ‘Pranodan’ will provide direction for newer paths in the theoretical construction of the idea that it is possible to produce theatre on the day to day necessities of the people. The selection of this popular medium for application in the social movement against corruption being waged by TIB throughout the country is fully appropriate.

A reader can satisfy his curiosity by going through this 96-page publication. What has impressed me most is that the theatre-related ideas of various regions has succeeded in transcending regionalism and played a role in generating inspiration throughout the country. The effort made by this publication in implementing a motivation campaign through a modern and powerful artistic medium like theatre is praiseworthy. Theatre did not get spoiled because of the quality of editing and write-ups – which is often the case in the theatre programmes of many NGOs.

Many write-ups of ‘Pranodan’ have opened up the doors of new artistic possibilities in the light of applied theatrical concepts of the time. Especially in the essay titled “Why drama is an advocacy tool,” a chronological analysis has been made about the present shape of ‘development theatre’ in the perspective of history. We have seen that the needs of man were given importance even in primitive theatre. Proof of this is obtained from cave paintings of ancient era and the imitation tendency of primitive man. This essay succeeded in linking the theatrical ideas of ancient times with the ideology-based publicity media of modern days.

The publication ‘Pranodan’ has been published at such a juncture when except for a few books on motivational theatre in Bangladesh, no notable journal on theatre is published in the country. The whole publication carries a captivating visual brilliance and topical vicissitude. It has expanded the domain of a lively but essential field by going beyond the cliché concepts of ‘development theatre’. It should be realized that theatre is not meant to be meaningless mirth or essential words; theatre and the dramatic expression of development theory can be saved from degeneration only if the development workers realize this. I believe, the TIB publication ‘Pranodan’ will illuminate this area anew.

**Pranodan to Provide New Direction**

By Dr. Afsar Ahmad

The publication ‘Pranodan’ has been published at such a juncture when except for a few books on motivational theatre in Bangladesh, no notable journal on theatre is published in the country. The whole publication carries a captivating visual brilliance and topical vicissitude. It has expanded the domain of a lively but essential field by going beyond the cliché concepts of ‘development theatre’. It should be realized that theatre is not meant to be meaningless mirth or essential words; theatre and the dramatic expression of development theory can be saved from degeneration only if the development workers realize this. I believe, the TIB publication ‘Pranodan’ will illuminate this area anew.

Dr. Afsar Ahmad, Professor, Drama and Dramatics Department
Jahangirnagar University
TIB Hails Govt for Passing RTI Bill

TIB hailed the government for passing the bill on the right to information (RTI) in the Jatiya Sangsad on 29 March. Terming the passage of the bill a timely decision reflecting the popular demand, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said this law is a must for curbing corruption. Enacting the law government pledged one of its election manifestos for ensuring good governance.

In a statement, he also demanded that the government make Anti-Corruption Commission independent and stronger, uphold the independence of the judiciary, ensure honesty and neutrality of the administration and strengthen the local government to establish good governance.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman hoped that the government would form an independent and strong information commission and play a proactive role in implementing the law. If citizen can also be benefited from this law including media everyone have to play active role he expected.

TIB is also ready to contribute to any necessary steps for the implementation of the new law, Dr Zaman added.

Disclosed Information on Corruption and Human Rights

According to Section 32 of this law, the law is not applicable in case of certain organizations and institutions. These are: NSI, DGFI, defence intelligence units, CID, SSF, intelligence cell of National Board of Revenue, Special Branch, Bangladesh Police and intelligence cell of RAB. Information cannot be sought from these organizations/units. But although Sub-Section 1 of Section 32 stipulates that the law would not be applicable for the above organizations, Sub-Section 2 says that the stipulation would not be applicable in case of information related to corruption or violation of human rights by any of these organizations.

Information Provided to 7,818 Persons at DMC Hospital

A total of 7 satellite AI-Desk programmes were run at the outdoor department of Dhaka Medical College (DMC) Hospital between June 2008 and March 2009. This programme was conducted as a supportive measure for generating awareness among the people regarding healthcare services provided in the outdoor department of DMC Hospital and for ensuring responsible endeavour by the relevant institution in the area. Through this programme, 7,818 persons were provided with different kinds of information and advice. Of them, 58.18% were males and 41.81% were females. Side by side, 5,150 leaflets containing information on the hospital were also distributed.

Notable aspects of these Al-Desk Programmes were as follows:

- A draft report was prepared based on the observations and recommendations of the first three Al-Desk programmes conducted between June and August 2008. The opinion of the hospital authority on this draft was taken on 19 January 2009.
- An orientation workshop was organised at the conference room of DMC Hospital on 16 November 2008 for raising the efficiency of TIB’s YES members in distribution of service-related information. The representatives of hospital staff including the Director, Deputy Director and Assistant Director were present on the occasion.
- In 2008 about 6,109 service-recipients got advice and information from 5 of the 7 Al-Desk programmes and in 2009 the number during the later period was 1,709 in 2 Al - Desks. The number of leaflets distributed during the former period was 4,500, while leaflets distributed during the latter period totalled 650.
Imortal Ekushey Observed

The International Mother Language Day was observed on 21 February (Ekushey February). As in previous years, TIB observed the day this year as well by nurturing the theme ‘Corruption is an antithetical to the spirit of Ekushey’. TIB officials and YES members paid homage to the memory of language martyrs by placing floral wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar. The spontaneous participation by the members of newly formed YES Groups from various educational institutions of Dhaka added a new dimension to the Ekushey rally of TIB this year.

Send your opinion on TIB’s activities and corruption, and good governance issues to the following address

Immortal Ekushey Observed

Sohel

Waves: TIB Newsletter

Executive Editor: Mohammed Imam Uddin