We want elections on time

There is no alternative to holding elections to the 9th parliament as per the declared time-line – before the end of the year, and transfer power to elected representatives. Many important initiatives have been taken by the present Government since it came to power on January 11, 2007. Elaborate institutional and legal reforms have been introduced including reform and reconstitution of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission and the Public Service Commission. The judiciary has been separated from the executive branch – a significant milestone in ensuring independence of the judiciary.

The list is long, and not yet closed, with the establishment of the Human Rights Commission and enactment of the Right to Information Ordinance in the offing. All these, aimed at creating conditions for establishing good governance and democratic institutionalization have been widely acclaimed. Especially, the anti-corruption drive of the government has generated high expectation among the people.

Much remains to be seen though, in terms of end result of the initiatives. With regard to the high-profile cases of corruption and their outcome, we have always held the position that these must go through due judicial process with fullest scope of law taking its own course. No anticorruption drive, however well-meaning and powerful it may be, can succeed nor can be sustainable unless it is absolutely neutral, objective and impartial. One abuse of power cannot justify another.

The key underlying objective of the Government in our understanding is to create the context in which politics and elections in Bangladesh will be gradually free from corruption and black money. This cannot be achieved in haste. Where Bangladesh stood before January 11, 2007 took long years of misrule, governance failure, pervasive corruption, criminalization of politics, creeping culture of impunity, and above all designed ineffectiveness of key institutions of democracy and national integrity system. We wanted these to change, and to change through political process, and by political leaderships. That was not to be, for which in a rather surrealist way, we have seen a historical turnaround that brought about those legal and institutional reforms.

It is time now – sooner than later – to turn to the political process and political leaders to carry forward the good work, own the reforms, and lead the nation to the cherished goal of democratic institutionalization and efficient, transparent and accountable governance. This can only be done by holding a free, fair, neutral and credible election which was the principal objective for assumption of office by the present Government. Reform and reconstitution of the Election Commission was not an end itself. It has to deliver the end product – credible, free and fair elections. Happily for us, except for the controversy over handing the two factions of one of the leading political parties, the Commission has done well so far, especially in terms of elaborate reform proposals for the RPO and preparation of the electronic voter list and voter ID cards.

The nation now looks forward to the long awaited day for exercising people’s right to go to the polling stations once again. We call upon the Government to make all arrangements for holding the elections in accordance with the committed roadmap, so that the country can return to the democratic path through transfer of power to the elected representatives.

All stakeholders, especially the political parties and leaders will have to play a constructive and responsible role. We trust that they can live up to people’s expectations by reforming themselves which they are hopefully capable of. All they need to do is to refrain from allowing corruption and black money to determine the list of their candidates for elections, and leave the rest to the people of this country who have never failed to take the correct decision.

We also call upon them to assume the key role in the process leading to what could easily be the most important election in post-independence Bangladesh – an election that has to be not only credible, free and fair devoid of influence of black money and corruption, but must also result in a government that will steer the process for fruition of all the vital reforms undertaken by the present Government. People of this country want no deviation from holding the elections well before the end of the year 2008, nor any retreat to the circumstances that led to 1/11.
December 9 is the International Anti-Corruption Day. The United Nations declared December 9 as the International Anti-Corruption Day for strengthening the worldwide movement against corruption. Bangladesh has been observing the day alongside other countries of the world since 2004. This year, the day was observed with the slogan, “Jago Manush Durnity Protirodhe Jago” (Wake up people, resist corruption). The Anti-Corruption Commission and Transparency International Bangladesh took up various programmes for observing the day across the country.

TIB and ACC organized a seminar titled “UN Convention against Corruption: Implications for Bangladesh - What Next” on this occasion. The seminar was jointly organized at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Dhaka on 9 December in collaboration with UNDP. Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission Lt. General (retd.) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury was present as Chief Guest. Presided over by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, the keynote paper at the seminar was presented by TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman. Those who participated in the discussion included Establishment Secretary Md. Abdus Salam Khan and the UNDP Country Director Monoj Basnyat.

In his speech, the ACC Chairman said, prevention of corruption is a complex task; corruption cannot be eradicated overnight. “We have started our work, a result will certainly be forthcoming someday. The changes are becoming visible. We have crossed a big hurdle by signing the Anti-Corruption Convention; we shall only move forward from now on”.

In his keynote paper, the Executive Director of TIB explained various aspects of the Convention. He said, the main task now is proper implementation of this Convention. He also said, “the main force of the anti-corruption movement is the people. Corruption will gradually diminish in the country when people become conscious, speak out against corruption, abhor corruption and participate in anti-corruption programmes”.

The Establishment Secretary said, “the honest officials should be rewarded along with punishing the corrupt if corruption is to be curbed; the facilities of public servants including salaries and allowances should also be raised. He also called for attaching due importance of corruption in the private sector. Mr. Monoj Basnyat lauded various reforms undertaken by the present government and said, “Establishment of good governance in Bangladesh is not far off if the reformed institutions can function properly”. Others who took part in the discussion included former MP Col. (retd.) Faruque Khan, former Member of ACC Professor Moniruzzaman Miah, Feroz Ahmed of ADB, Professor Abul Kashem Majumdar of the Public Administration Department of Jahangirnagar University, teacher of a private university Abdullah Mohammad Taher and Md. Abu Taleb. Prizes were distributed among the winners of the anti-corruption cartoon competition organized by TIB and photography competition organized by UNDP in the concluding session of the programme.

A campaign titled “Jago Manush, Durnity Protirodhe Jago” (Wake up people, resist corruption) under the aegis of ACC and TIB was launched on 9 December 2007; it will continue up to 9 December 2008. The main objective of this programme is to motivate all segments of citizens to play vocal and active roles against corruption through generation of awareness.

On the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, anti-corruption rallies, seminars, discussion meetings, people’s theatre shows, satellite AI Desk programme, human chains, cycle rallies, cultural programmes and numerous competitions were organized by 36 Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs). Outside the CCC areas, some like-minded organizations arranged cultural programmes including discussion meetings, rallies, debate contests and drama performances at Sirajganj, Panchagarh and Gaibandha. Besides, brochures, stickers, posters and T-shirts were distributed on the occasion of the day.
As in previous years, International Anti-Corruption Day was observed by TIB on 9 December 2007 at both national and local levels on a massive scale. Numerous programmes were held at 36 CCC areas of the country with the slogan “Wake up people, resist corruption”. Programmes undertaken by the CCCs are described below:

Khulna Division: Imbibed with the anti-corruption spirit, CCC Kustia observed the International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December. A rally was brought out in Kustia town with the participation of representatives from 9 social and non-government organizations as well as Assistant Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission. A discussion meeting and cultural programme were arranged at the municipal compound. CCC Sathkhira organized two-day long programme for observing the day. Rhyme and essay competitions, rally, and discussion meeting were held on 8 December. The day was observed by bringing out a newspaper supplement from the daily ‘Patradut’ on 9 December. CCC Bagerhat arranged a discussion meeting on the theme ‘Role of citizens for curbing corruption’ for observing the day; other programmes like rally, human-chain and anti-corruption campaign were also held. Apart from district CEO, the Civil Surgeon and Field Inspector of NSI, representatives from various local NGOs were also present on the occasion. CCC Khulna arranged a rally and seminar for observing the day. Attended by ACC officials, journalists and NGO representatives, the Director of Khulna divisional ACC was present on the occasion as chief guest. CCC Jhenaidah organized a patriotic song contest for children, a discussion meeting on ‘role of civil society in curbing corruption’, rally and human chain with display of placards. University teachers, CCC members, representatives of various social and non-government organizations and people belonging to various classes and professions were present on the occasion. CCC Khulna observed the day by holding rally, discussion meeting, inter-college debate competition, essay competition, cultural programme and awarded three honest individuals.

Dhaka Division: CCC My Jensing organized a discussion meeting on healthcare services on 7 December for observing International Anti-Corruption Day. A rally, staging of people’s theatre and a human chain programme attended by the students of various schools and colleges were held in the morning on 9 December. Representatives of various organizations and an ACC inspector were present. The CCC-Savar organized rally, human chain, street-gathering and people’s theatre with the participation of NGO representatives, CCC and YES members, cultural workers and people belonging to various classes and professions with the slogan ‘bring an end to corruption right now for upholding national interest’. Processions and gatherings were arranged by the CCC Madaripur on the occasion. Later, an essay competition was organized for the students of schools and colleges; the activists of people’s theatre group rendered chorus songs at six spots of the town from a motorcade of trucks. CCC Rajbari brought out a rally in the morning for observing the day. Later, open discussion, cultural programme and people’s theatre were staged. CCC Kishoreganj brought out an anti-corruption rally in the afternoon and arranged an open discussion meeting alongside anti-corruption cultural programme with the participation of 10 organizations. CCC Nalitabari observed the day by organizing inter-college debate competition at local Shaheed Muktijoddha Mancha, people’s theatre show, Palagan, and rally.

Barisal Division: CCC Jhalakathi organized the rally, staging of people’s theatre and discussion meeting for observing the International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December 2007. CCC-Barisal observed the day by forming human chain, anti-corruption signature campaign and by holding a seminar on ‘Corruption and Bangladesh’. Loathing for the corrupt was vented in the concluding part.
of the seminar. CCC Pirojpur organized a rally in ‘Sidr’ affected areas and discussion meeting at CCC office for observing the day.

**Sylhet Division:** CCC Sylhet arranged a rally, anti-corruption oath-taking, sticker campaign and discussion meeting for observing the International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December. Over 2000 stickers were distributed among owners and drivers of motor vehicles; T-shirts were distributed among physically handicapped people for generating anti-corruption awareness. CCC Sreemangal launched an anti-corruption campaign ‘Wake up people, resist corruption’ through a cycle rally on 7 December, which was participated by around 50 YES members. A rally, discussion meeting and presentation of folk songs were organized on 9 December with the slogan ‘We shall not be defeated’. CCC-Sunamganj brought out a procession and later held a discussion meeting on the occasion of the day. Later, a sticker campaign was conducted at various government and private offices.

**Rajshahi Division:** CCC Rangpur conducted an anti-corruption campaign with a motorcade of trucks through participation of YES members in order to ensure active participation of the people in curbing corruption. At the same time, signature campaign and satellite advice and information desk were organized at the largest educational institute of North Bengal ‘Carmichael College’. In addition, rally, open discussion and people’s theatre show were held. CCC Lalmonirhat brought out a rally from station road which went round main thoroughfares of the town. Besides, International Anti-Corruption Day was observed through holding discussion meeting and inter-college debate competition. In Kurigram, anti-corruption rally, discussion meeting, anti-corruption signature campaign, people’s theatre and display of posters, stickers, festoons were organized by the YES members. A rally was organized at Natore with the participation of 10 local socio-cultural organizations and NGO representatives. Later, the day was observed through an anti-corruption signature campaign attended by the Deputy Commissioner and civil society members of Natore; discussion meeting and cultural programme were also held. The Rajshahi CCC observed the day by jointly holding rally, discussion meeting and daylong cultural programme with 15 local NGOs. CCC-Chapainawabganj organized rally, discussion meeting, 4-day long anti-corruption campaign and cultural programme in collaboration with over 20 social organizations.

**Chittagong Division:** CCC Chakaria observed the International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December with the participation of Divisional Director of ACC. CCC-Comilla observed the day through handwriting and debate competitions, human chain and discussion meeting. The Deputy Commissioner, Upazila Executive Officer and the Deputy Director of Comilla district ACC were present at these programmes. CCC-Chandpur organized rally and discussion meeting for observing the day. Similarly, Brahmanbaria CCC observed the day through painting competition, human chain, discussion meeting and rendering of Baul songs.

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**Essays on corruption in text-books**

Although corruption is a chronic problem in Bangladesh, there was previously no text on this subject in the curriculum of schools and colleges. This was despite the fact that the students got the opportunity to study other problems prevailing in Bangladesh such as poverty, unemployment, population, terrorism, etc. in their text-books. It is for the first time that an essay on ‘Corruption: main hindrance to development and ways of overcoming’ has been incorporated in the Bangla text-book for classes nine and ten. Another essay titled ‘Corruption: hindrance to development and ways of overcoming’ has also been added to the Bangla text-book for classes eleven and twelve.

The essays describe in detail the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of corruption; causes of corruption; economic, social and political influence of corruption; possible means of tackling it, etc. Besides, broad outline has been provided on themes like democracy, good governance, transparency, accountability, free flow of information, public administration, fundamental rights, civil society, consumerism, syndicate, etc. It is expected that the essays will be helpful in informing the students about corruption and good governance.
The 7th Inter-University Anti-Corruption Debate Competition was held at Dhaka University during 9-12 December 27 with a resolve, “The invincible youths shall resist corruption with defiance, determination and logic”. The Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) jointly organized this programme with TIB and ACC. Debating teams from various universities throughout the country participated in this competition with the objective of involving the youths in anti-corruption programmes.

The Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission Lt. General (retd.) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury was present on the inaugural day of the competition on 9 December morning as chief guest. It was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Professor Dr. SMA Faiz, while the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Chief Adviser of DUDS Professor Dr. AFM Yusuf Haider was present as special guest. TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, litterateur and Chief Moderator of DUDS Dr. Syed Manzurul Islam were also present. Conducted in a lively manner by the DUDS General Secretary Ziaul Haque Sheikh, the programme was presided over by DUDS President Tahmid Alam Amit.

In his address as chief guest, Lt. General (retd.) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury said, the country will take time to come out of the vicious grip of corruption. Not only ACC, the general masses, especially the youths would have to come forward for the purpose. He termed his anti-corruption campaign as a ‘Jihad’. Professor SMA Faiz lauded the roles of ACC and TIB in conducting anti-corruption programmes. Professor AFM Yusuf Haider said, the students of Dhaka University were meritorious sons of the soil; and among them, those who were debaters were even more meritorious. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman termed corruption as a universal phenomenon. He urged the general masses, especially the youth community, to come forward for curbing corruption in developing countries like Bangladesh. Dr. Syed Manzurul Islam thanked TIB for conducting the anti-corruption campaign despite numerous threats.

After the inauguration, a procession went out from TSC and returned after parading around the campus in presence of the chief guest and special guests. After that, the keynote paper of the seminar captioned ‘Resisting corruption and views of the youth community’ was presented at the TSC auditorium by the DUDS General Secretary Ziaul Haque Sheikh. Moderated by the chair Amit, Dr. Syed Manzurul Islam was the main discussant. The other discussants were Professor of the department of philosophy and acting Dean of the Arts Faculty of Dhaka University Dr. Aminul Islam, Professor of the law department Dr. Asif Nazrul and the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.

The competition was held simultaneously at the TSC auditorium, Munee Chowdhury Conference Room, TSC cafeteria, teachers’ lounge and Shamusnahr Hall auditorium of Dhaka University on 10 and 11 December afternoon. The final of the debate competition was held on 12 December afternoon on the topic ‘Corruption is the principal hindrance to development of third-world countries’. ‘Aparajeyo Bangla’ team of Dhaka University emerged as the champion. It may be mentioned that teachers and former debaters of various universities played the role of judges in the competition.

The Treasurer of Dhaka University Professor Dr. Syed Abul Kalam Azad was the chief guest at the concluding programme following the final. The guest of honour was the editor of the Daily Star Mahfuz Anam while Dr. Syed Manzurul Islam and Dr. Iftekharuzzaman were the special guests. The chief guest thanked the TIB and DUDS for organizing this competition with a timely theme with the objective of involving the youths in the anti-corruption movement. He said in his speech, debates teach the people to apply logic, makes them conscious about their rights and inspires them to build up a social movement. The cover of ‘Pratyush’, a publication brought out on the occasion of this competition was opened during the programme and the website of DUDS was inaugurated. The competition came to an end with the staging of a colourful cultural programme after the prize-giving ceremony.
Anti-Corruption Cartoon Competition and Exhibition

"C"orruption-free Bangladesh would be like a paradise", "Needed our sincerity for uprooting corruption", or "We all have to work together against corruption" – these dreams, expectations and determinations are nurtured by the general masses and conscious youths of the country. Their articulations have found expression in the 'Anti-corruption cartoon' exhibition. TIB organized this cartoon exhibition for the second time on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day.

Cartoon is an exceptional and creative medium for exposing the anomalies and inconsistencies of society and state. TIB had previously arranged an anti-corruption cartoon competition on the theme 'Cartoon and the general people' on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day 2007. The creative and young cartoonists who had participated in that competition depicted various inconsistencies and corruption in society through their paints and brushes in a satirical style. All cartoons seemed to represent a pledge, which sought to eradicate the assassin of present times called 'corruption' in order to develop a well-governed society.

The competition was divided into two groups; one (group A) for 13 to 18 year olds and the other (group B) for 18 to 35 year olds. A total of 747 cartoons drawn by 368 young cartoonists were submitted. Six top-ranked contestants from each group were awarded prizes. Maisha Malika Ela, Syed Kamrul Hasan and Asim Chandra Ray occupied first, second and third positions respectively in group A. Sadatuddin Ahmed Amil, Swapan Charushi and Md. Amirul Islam (Rana) occupied first, second and third positions respectively in group B. The panel of judges included renowned cartoonists of the country Shishir, Ahsan Habib and Sharier Khan.

Later, an exhibition titled 'Cartoons against corruption' was held at Dhanmondi, Dhaka’s Drik Gallery between 7 and 11 December comprising of selected cartoons from the competition. Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission Lt. General (ret’d.) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury inaugurated this exhibition on 7 December. British Deputy High Commissioner Duncan Norman and Professor Rafiquunabi of Dhaka University's Institute of Fine Arts were present as special guests. The 5-day exhibition generated lot of interest among the general public. A huge number of spectators thronged the exhibition venue. Their comments in the exhibition book/canvas once more proved that the general masses want to get rid of corruption; they seek a normal, stable and secure life.

Wake up people, resist corruption

The present caretaker government is attaching highest priority to curbing corruption in the backdrop of changes since 11 January 2007. On the one hand, there has been an effort from the highest level of the government to establish corruption as a punishable offence; on the other hand, newer possibilities have emerged for checking corruption and establishing good governance due to specific institutional reforms in a number of areas. The Anti-Corruption Commission and TIB has started a joint anti-corruption campaign with the goal of ensuring active participation of the people in anti-corruption initiatives of the government and to create a conducive environment for curbing corruption in the country. This campaign was launched on International Anti-Corruption Day of 2007 and it will continue up to 9 December 2008. Holding aloft the slogan “Jago Manush, Durnity Protirodhe Jago”(Wake up people, resist corruption), the main objective of this programme is to motivate people to play an active role in curbing corruption through generation of mass awareness against corruption.

The Anti-Corruption Commission accorded recognition to the contribution of TIB in curbing corruption and ensuring good governance since the launching of reforms by the present government. At the same time, ACC showed interest to work jointly with TIB in the anti-corruption movement. As a follow-up, this countrywide publicity campaign has been undertaken through the joint initiative of TIB and ACC with involvement of citizens throughout the country.

Although the campaign speaks about involvement of citizenry, its main target is the youth community. They will be engaged in the campaign in two ways. On one hand, direct involvement in execution of the campaign. On the other hand, they will participate in the motivation programme for generating anti-corruption awareness and in playing active role in resisting corruption. Apart from YES members, the country’s youth community, youth organizations, professionals, NGO and government officials, local representatives of the people, politicians, religious leaders, cultural activists and housewives will be involved in the campaign. In addition to 36 CCC areas, this campaign will be run in 4 more districts throughout the year. Divided into three phases, the campaign will be concluded at the national level in Dhaka after starting from the local level. It is expected that the YES members will be able to carry forward the social movement against corruption farther based on collaboration between TIB and ACC through this campaign.
Participants at the South-Asia regional workshop on transparency and integrity in the water resource sector demanded availability of safe water in this region. The workshop was held in Dhaka from 3 to 5 November under the joint auspices of TIB and Water Integrity Network (WIN). Forty representatives from various South Asian countries participated in it.

Held with assistance from the Royal Dutch Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh Water Partnership, International Water and Sanitation Centre of the Netherlands, UNICEF’s Dhaka office, TI-India, TI-Pakistan, TI-Nepal, TI-Maldives and TI’s Berlin-based secretariat played important roles in the workshop. TI Chairperson Dr. Huguette Labelle formally inaugurated the workshop on 3 November. Adviser to the caretaker government Md. Anwarul Iqbal was present as chief guest in the concluding session of the workshop. Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh Mrs. Bea Ten Tusscher was present as special guest on the occasion.

The keynote paper on transparency and integrity in the water sector of South Asia was presented at the workshop by the President of Bangladesh Water Partnership and former Secretary Quamrul Islam Siddiqui. The Vice-President of Nepal Hydro-Power Association Dr. Janak Lal Karnacharya presented a paper on enhancing transparency and accountability in hydropower. Besides, Donal T O’Leary of WIN, Rajindra de S Araluyabandu of Sri Lanka, Professor of BUET Dr. M Firoz Ahmad, Kathleen Shardt of IRC, Professor Prem S Vashishta of India, Poul-Erik-Fredriksen of DANIDA and Paul Edwards of UNICEF presented papers on various topics. Discussions were held on over 10 research and project proposals during the workshop.

The workshop was concluded on 5 November through adoption of the ‘Dhaka Declaration’. It said that access to safe water was a fundamental human right which should be ensured and protected by the state. The discussants opined that corruption was rampant in the water resource sector because of monopolistic control and decision making process. Corrupt activities like illegal connections, false meter reading and billing and unsatisfactory bill collection seriously harmed the financial capacity of water-related services sector; it hampered adequate water supply, sanitation and other consumer services. Mainly women, poor and underprivileged sections of the population became victims of corruption as a result. In addition, corruption was a major hindrance in achieving millennium development goals for the water and sanitation sectors. The participants expressed the view that political goodwill was a major prerequisite for combating corruption. For this, tripartite involvement of the government, the private sector and the civil society was crucial.

Participants in the workshop made special mention of the right to information as a key tool for curbing corruption in the water and other sectors. They made recommendations for effecting proper policies and structures in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in order to effectively control corruption. Other recommendations included: undertaking research in each country for formulating water resource policy, adoption of anti-corruption plans, strengthening the monitoring mechanism through involvement of civil society in the procurement process and implementation of various projects, and generating mass awareness.

Members’ Day Held

TIB Members’ Day was held at the conference room of TIB’s Gulshan office on 17 November. Attended by members, it was chaired by the Executive Director of TIB. Sympathy was expressed for the ‘Sidr’ victims at the outset of the programme after exchange of greetings. While shedding light on the ongoing programmes of TIB, the Executive Director said, the members have always assisted and inspired TIB by standing beside the organization. He urged the members to participate in the anti-corruption movement more intensely. The members participated in the open discussion on research, advocacy, people’s involvement and other programmes of TIB. Besides, they gave advice on joint efforts by ACC and TIB, transparency of the judiciary, new research on some institutions important for the public, widening of the anti-corruption campaign, etc. Four television advertisements produced through joint initiative of TIB and ACC were screened during the meeting.
“It is possible to eradicate poverty from the world by eliminating corruption”
TI Chairperson Dr. Huguette Labelle

Corruption is not merely a problem of Bangladesh, it is a global problem. It is possible to eradicate poverty from the world through eliminating corruption. Therefore the concerned organizations will have to play a leading role side by side with generating social awareness on curbing corruption locally and internationally. Chairperson of Transparency International Dr. Huguette Labelle expressed the view that there was no alternative to transparency and accountability of the government and relevant institutions side by side with institutional reforms and strengthening of bodies like ACC, PSC, EC and C&AG. She said this at a seminar titled ‘Corruption: global roots, global solution’ organized by TIB on 2 November at BRAC Centre Inn of Mohakhali, Dhaka.

As the main speaker in the meeting, TI Chairperson spoke about the nature, influence and remedies of corruption. She said, massive corruptions took place during investments by multinational companies in extraction of oil, gas, coal and forestry sector. Widespread irregularities took place centring on tenders for construction of large buildings, bridges or dams. Besides, huge sums of corruption occurred in defence-related contracts. Transparency should be upheld in these matters. Transparent initiatives should be taken for informing the people about these.

According to Dr. Huguette Labelle, sending stolen money abroad was a global characteristic of corruption. High government officials, ministers and political leaders smuggled out this money. Corruption in the health and education sectors had maximum impact on the poorer segments of society. She said, huge quantities of assets belonging to the people had been plundered in Bangladesh. The poor people were dying of want. The people were deprived of their wealth. She said, smuggling out money was a big problem in this country. This money makes a comeback during elections. The poor people of this country suffered most due to small-scale corruption like bribery. Again, some multinational companies also resorted to bribery for expansion of business. Complaints should be lodged against the foreign companies in their own countries for corruption. Side by side, investigations should also be carried out in respective countries.

According to Huguette Labelle, it was possible to bring back stolen money if the Attorney Generals, lawyers, banks, business establishments and IT Experts of concerned countries acted together. Mentioning about the importance of international organizations in tackling corruption, she said that the United Nations could play a more effective role in this matter. If needed, assistance from the Interpol might also be sought, she opined. She said, separation of the judiciary from the executive had been the biggest step against corruption in Bangladesh. She congratulated the Government of Bangladesh for separation of the judiciary from the executive branch.

Dr. Labelle said, corruption took place in many forms in the service providing organizations of the government including education, health and banking sectors. As a consequence, the people faced obstacles at every step in getting services. Lauding the measures taken by Bangladesh in this area, TI chairperson said that good results could be obtained by working properly. In this connection, she said that it was not possible to curb corruption unless people’s mentality changed and an anti-corruption culture was built up. TIB has been doing and excellent job in curbing corruption in Bangladesh. Corruption cannot sustain in this country if this effort continues.

Regarding the means of combating corruption, Dr. Labelle said, corruption should be identified at the very outset. Then proper investigation and justice system should be in place. An independent judicial system, transparency and accountability in all actions of the government and free and fair election reduced corruption. She also said, the mass media played a big role in reducing corruption and raising mass awareness. Stressing on the relative understanding of political parties for checking corruption, she urged the Government of Bangladesh to conduct the anti-corruption campaign more vigorously.

Chairperson of the programme and chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said that TIB had wielded a good influence on opinions and policy levels. This had been a success. It was no good blaming the international organizations without raising one’s own efficiency. The programme was moderated by the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman. Others who spoke included former ambassadorWaliur Rahman, Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr. Mohammad Farashuddin, Colonel (retd.) Faruque Khan, former Awami League MP Dr. Abdur Razzaq, former adviser of the caretaker government ASM Shahjahan, TIB Trustee M Hafizuddin Khan, presidium member of Jatiya Party GM Quader, former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and ex-commissioner of Anti-Corruption Commission Dr. Moniruzzaman Mia, NGO representative Tajul Islam and economist Atiur Rahman.
Chairperson of Transparency International (TI) Dr. Huguette Labelle came to Bangladesh in a three-day short visit on 1st November 2007. This is her first visit to Bangladesh after being elected as the chief of TI in last year. Holding a Ph. D degree in education Dr. Labelle has worked in important positions of different government and international organizations. President of CIDA, Assistant Chief of World Health Organization Working Group on Health and Development Policy, deputy minister of Ministry of Communication of Canada, Chairperson of Public Service Commission of Canada, are some them. Before being selected as the chief of TI she was working as the Chancellor of Ottawa University of Canada and was member of various Canadian and International Organizations. Inspite of her short stay and demanding schedule she was able to give an interview for TIB. In this interview she has talked openly about her experience in this country, our responsibilities in fighting corruption, and various activities of TIB along with her opinion on corruption and its prevention. This interview was taken by Senior Advocacy Officer of TIB Md. Sajjad Hussein...

TIB: During your visit in Bangladesh you have talked about some important issues in the last two days. Among them your opinion reformations of different parts of National Integrity System, political situation and the anti-corruption drive of the present government have been highlighted significantly by media. You have given special emphasis on the independent judicial system and the integrity of the magistrates and you also talked about the transparency in tax and budget.

Your comments have been considered with due importance in different levels of the government.

Dr. Huguette Labelle (HL): And if there is room for it you might also add the importance of paying new attention to local government. I am hoping that we can start working on the development of a new local government integrity system very soon.

TIB: Could you please explain the local government integrity system a bit?

HL: Bringing together those chapters who have started to do some work in this regard. Doing the best to build these together. And then testing it and making it available to chapters and local governments around the world. So that they can adapt it. To me I see it as one of the priorities over to do this year. And hear the comments that have been made available by the chief advisor on the importance of local government. I mean he said many other things but that is one thing he raised as well as being very important. So that they have the right kind of governance system, the right kind of accountability to the people and as it does require training and appropriate system.

TIB: How do you evaluate TIB’s contribution to anti-corruption movement and what other chapters of TI might learn from the experience of TIB?

HL: What I observed is that TIB has a tremendously important role in influencing some of the reforms that have been taking place. That TIB had done its own work on the right to information, on the electoral commission’s performance, on anti-corruption commission’s work, for example. So when the new administration came in to place and the timing was right – TIB was able to make their move and make the suggestions. And the timeliness, that is so important. So it meant that you did your home work ahead of time. So you did not wait until you discovered that may be you should pick the right time and you should do something. In that respect TIB gained credibility. Vis-à-vis the authorities, vis-à-vis the intelligence in this country, the media and the people. To me it is a very important aspect.

A second one that I have found just very interesting is your work with youth. And because of the work with youth is really seeding a future hopefully greater integrity. And the third area is your CCCs. And this is fascinating. Because through now you have over four hundred people that are working directly on your agenda - to mobilize the people, to create a demand, to work with people in communities. Especially what I have seen is that they have selected what is most important to the people, which is health, education, local government which are consistently used by all. You have been able to multiply your capacity through these CCC groups around the country.

And the fourth area is the advocacy role generally in all other aspects of dealing with corruption with the media. It’s obvious that the media listens to TI Bangladesh as they are here. What I have also found that you have access to the authorities without being captured, and that too is most important and respect you have been able to continue to influence. So you have been able to work in your advocacy in away that has been constructive and strong.

You have been able also to create various coalitions and partnerships with other groups and other NGOs when it is necessary to improve the impacts of what you do. And you obviously been able to demonstrate to donors that you can achieve and that you can deliver results you have wide spread donor support. DFID, Netherlands, Norway are here and supporting the work of TIB.

Some of your work on the anticorruption commission, election commission, PSC, and so on. I am sure you have prepared some documents. These should be available to
other chapters of TI and that would be very interesting. I think that a case study on the CCC, I would put that at the top of my list. Tell them the story of CCC in a way that people can understand and share it with other chapters. Both youth and CCC are to me two aspects that I have not seen the equivalent around the world. There might be more but right now these two are to me is fascinating.

TIB: The youth programme that you referred to, are you aware that these youths are working in voluntary basis just like our CCC members?

HL: Yes, that’s why I mentioned about the youths.

TIB: You must have seen the anti corruption concert which is on the TI brochure.

HL: Yes, but if you can make a CD or a short video so the representatives of TIB will be able to demonstrate this through a short video wherever they go. This is one of your best works.

TIB: May be you are aware that we have taken lots of unique programmes for the youths, anti corruption concert is one of them. How do you evaluate this single event?

HL: What I think is interesting in here is that you are using a mechanism which makes youth vibrate, like a concert. And peer education, this is really the way getting young, you are not lecturing to young people. This is why I think the concert is a very fascinating idea.

TIB: Since you are talking about these impacts of TIB on other chapters we have seen there hasn’t been much communication among the South-Asian chapters. So do you think the regional TI chapters can work together and how they can do it?

HL: There are some regional cooperation groups in South Asia, like ASIAN, APEC, and SAARC etc. I think that the chapters here might want to come together and see how they can influence positively. But before that they should come up with their agenda and priorities.

TIB: I am again going back to the youth issue. Do you think that the TI secretariat can have a youth cell through which they can conduct this awareness in the whole world? Because after last year’s concert we are actually thinking of doing it globally but it involves lots of money and other things.

HL: Yes, I know. And you need to include very big names. Bono and Geldor are some of the people that are still interested to...

TIB: But can we hope for TI’s cooperation?

HL: Well, what I would be interested, because of the energy that needs to go into it, is to get a sense from you of the impact that it has had. So that we can measure and see is there something that can be taken globally. Because it is harder to do globally than it is than it is to do in a country. I think for us internationally to look at what we do with youth is vital. What is the approach, the formula, I don’t know. But the other TI chapters can try to use this tool experimentally. To me, youth has to be part of a plan of our future and we got to learn what different chapters are doing now and what is most appropriate for TI. But we can’t leave it to the side. It’s too important.

TIB: Thank you for your time.

HL: Thank you

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**Powerful and Effective Human Rights Commission Needed:**
**Joint Demand of TIB, ASK and BLAST**

Terming the proposed National Human Rights Commission as disappointing, TIB, Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) has demanded that the Human Rights Commission Ordinance-2007 should be made more effective. They placed a number of recommendations to the government at a joint press conference for amending the ordinance. They congratulated the government for finalising the draft of the Human Rights Commission ordinance but said attention should be paid so that it does not become just another organization of the government. There was no room for optimism on the basis of the draft ordinance.

Some limitations of the ordinance were pointed out. These included, inclusion of just one judge in the search committee for selecting members of the Commission; the rest were from the executive branch. No public representatives were kept in the committee. Consequently, it may become a subservient body of the government. Besides, the Commission would not be able to take any decision on under-trial cases. These would result in excessive narrowing of the Commission’s jurisdiction and transform it into an ineffective body; in contrast, the Commission functioned as a complementary organ of judicial courts in other countries of the world.

The recommendations put forward included inclusion of an acceptable person who had been working for long as a lawyer, journalist, educationist and human rights activist as well as a woman member. The jurisdiction of the Commission should also cover complaints of negligence in deterring violation of human rights by government organizations. Besides, publication of annual reports on the status of human rights across the country was an important task of the Human Rights Commission. But the transparency of the proposed Commission would be curtailed as numerous preconditions have been attached to the publication of report. Advocate Sultana Kamal said, although a workshop was supposed to be held on the subject, that was not done before approval of the ordinance.

Those who spoke at the press conference included Executive Director of ASK Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of BLAST Taslimur Rahman and TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman. A demand was put forward to make necessary amendments to the Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2007 through consultations and discussions with the civil society.
The NGOs play an important role in the national development of Bangladesh. The sector has achieved huge success in human and social development through diverse programmes on poverty alleviation, non-formal education, health, women’s empowerment and environmental conservation. But this sector has been facing various problems including undue intervention by the government in some cases, delays in releasing funds, political pressure and unrest, threats by terrorists, misappropriation of funds, administrative non-cooperation, discrepancy in salary, taxation on donors’ grants and natural disaster. TIB conducted a diagnostic study for exploring prevalent mismanagement and nature of corruption and put forward recommendations for making this sector transparent and accountable.

TIB arranged a discussion meeting on ‘Problems of Governance in the NGO Sector: The Way Out’ at the CIRDAP auditorium, Dhaka on 4 October 2007 on the occasion of releasing this report. Chaired by the chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and moderated by the Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, the report was presented by TIB Research Officer Shadhan Kumar Das. Those who participated in the discussion included Professor Dr. Salahuddin Aminuzzaman of the public administration department of Dhaka University, Professor Dr. Mohammad Samad of the Institute of Social Welfare, former parliamentarian Asaduzzaman Noor, Dr. Shahdeen Malik, Executive Director of CAMPE Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Director of NGO Affairs Bureau Md. Alauddin, Deputy Director Shah Md. Nasim, Director of FNB Tajul Islam, Treasurer of ADAB Abdul Matin, Director of the Department of Social Welfare Md. Amjad Hossain Khan and Advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh Women Lawyers’ Association.

Describing the NGOs as donor-dependent, Dr. Salahuddin Aminuzzaman said, local governments in the country are becoming weaker with increase in the number of NGOs. There is no similarity between the development plans of the country and those of the NGOs. But the NGOs have succeeded in involving 25 million citizens of the country’s population, he pointed out. Professor Samad said that political goodwill and transparency of the state can ensure good governance amongst NGOs. Emphasizing the need for involvement of NGO representatives in the formation of a Commission, Rasheda K Chowdhury called for the independence of any such entity. Praising the TIB research, Amjad Hossain Khan said that this report could serve as a guideline for all relevant quarters. Tajul Islam said, if the NGOs were controlled in the name of regulation that would not be beneficial. A Director of the NGO Affairs Bureau Md. Alauddin said, it should be determined in advance what tasks the NGOs would perform; in that case, monitoring and evaluation of performance would be easier. Preparation of a comprehensive law under the aegis of the Bureau is now under process, he informed. In his presidential speech, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said, many NGOs in our country lack transparency and have problems of access to information and accountability to service-recipients. He emphasized on the constitution of a commission for supervising NGO activities and proper policy for registration of NGOs.

It is seen from the findings of TIB research that the NGO sector is playing a complementary role to that of the government. This sector is also getting recognition from both the government and the people. But most of the laws related to the formation and control of NGOs are old. There is no well-organized and effective arrangement for monitoring whether laws are being implemented properly. Institutional arrangement of the NGO Affairs Bureau is very weak. Although the number of NGOs is rising day by day, there is a dearth of sufficient and skilled officers for looking after large-scale project proposals. Corruption is also resorted to in the registration process of NGOs. Registration is done in exchange for money even when no programme existed. The concerned government officials abet this process.

The research showed that in many cases governing bodies are formed in accordance with the wishes of founder heads of various NGOs. Meetings are not held regularly. Meetings of some organizations are held only as a formality. There are many instances where NGOs were founded by inducting like-minded people into the governing body in order to serve political interests. Various problems exist in the internal good governance of many NGOs. The chief executive exercises dictatorial power in the decision making process. The ordinary workers have no scope for expressing opinions. Exaggerated or wrong information are often given in the audit and financial reports. The executive members get financial and other facilities, but the workers are often deprived of regular salaries and benefits. Communication with the donors, preparation of project budget, sanctions by donors, general fund of the organization, etc. remain the sole purview of the chief executive. Salaries and other benefits of the employees are not given according to the project proposal and approved budget.

It appears from investigation that financial management of many NGOs is weak. Workers are not employed in
accordance with project proposals. An employee gets salary from only one project even when he works in two or three projects. The chief executive feels free to spend as much money as he likes from the general fund. Assets purchased for the organization, such as motor vehicle, computer, furniture etc. are used as personal properties. Corruption is resorted to in procurement-related matters. The NGO authorities give bribes/buckshish to NGO Affairs Bureau and government offices for releasing funds. Gifts are given to government officials of the locality for getting tasks done.

Organizational management of many NGOs is weak. The workers have to work overtime. But no financial benefit is given for the purpose. Many NGOs lack competent fund. Workers lack job security. Female workers cannot say anything even when they are subjected to various kinds of harassment. Government officers are recruited to NGOs after their retirement. They help the NGOs obtain benefits by using their old networks.

According to the findings of the study, there exist multifarious problems in internal direction and management of NGOs. Many NGOs do not remain accountable to the service-recipients or the ordinary people. Required supervision or evaluations are not undertaken for implementation of programmes. Prior to sanctioning of funds, the donors do not hold discussion with the NGO Affairs Bureau as per rule. The officials of donor agencies assist their known NGOs in getting funds. There are instances where an NGO obtained funds from different donors for the same task. Corruption is resorted to in various stages of sanctioning government projects. There are examples where project proposals were invited through advertisements in unknown or unpopular periodicals. Many bureaucrats arrange government funding through influence peddling after opening NGOs in the name of their relatives. The donors do not want to confront them even when there are evidences of corruption. There are sometimes widespread irregularities in the implementation of awareness programmes. Many NGOs maintain excessive secrecy in matters such as project proposals, budgets, financial statements, evaluation reports, general fund, accounts of the organization, etc.

TIB has put forward a number of recommendations for installing good governance in the NGO sector. For example, an independent NGO Commission may be formed for overall supervision of the sector. A comprehensive legal structure need to be put in place for updating the legal framework for formation and control of NGOs. Provisions may be made for controlling different activities of NGOs through different stipulations. The members of the governing body need to play an active role in enhancing the accountability NGO heads. A balanced relationship needs to be effected between the governing body and the chief executive. The chief executive may be changed after a fixed tenure in line with the decision of the governing body. Openness should be maintained regarding the salary and benefits of employees and related information; discriminations should be done away with on an urgent basis. Legal proceedings should be drawn against people against whom allegations of financial irregularity are proved. If needed, these NGOs should be black-listed.

In order to establish good governance, the NGOs should have policies on human resource, gender, recruitment, finance etc. These need to be implemented as well. A specific procedure for addressing grievances should be put in place for receipt of employee complaints by an umbrella body as well as their resolution. All officials and employees would remain accountable to this cell. There should be a specific policy on appointment of high level retired government officers in NGO jobs. The donors need to play appropriate role for ensuring accountability of NGOs. All information related to the NGOs should be kept open for the stakeholders. Arrangements should be there so that information is supplied even during absence of chief executive or high officials. Side by side, documentation procedure should be developed so that information can be passed on to anyone when required.

### TIB’s Report Card Surveys with a Pledge to Bring Changes

The Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) conduct research and advocacy programmes with the help of local stakeholders with the goal of improving quality of services and satisfy people at the field level. Between October and December 2007, the CCCs published 18 reports on healthcare services, secondary education, municipality, land administration, central jail, passport office and WASA with assistance from the TIB.

**Presence of authorities and topics of discussion during publication of reports:** After the preparation of report card survey reports, the CCCs share the information with the service providing organizations regarding its findings and also seek their written opinion. During the period under review, Chakaria health complex, secondary education authorities at Mymensingh, Nalitabari, Jamalpur and Muktagachha, land administration at Jhenidah and

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Jessore and Comilla central jail authorities gave their written opinion about the reports. On the other hand, Barisal land administration stated their views orally. After this, the relevant authorities were invited to the formal launching ceremonies of the reports and asked to express their opinion. The health offices of Brahmanbaria, Sylhet, Pirojpur and Jhalakati, Chittagong WASA and Comilla passport office did not provide any written or oral opinion; neither were they present during the publication ceremony of reports.

Pledges made by the authority: Local and policy level officials of concerned organizations play a crucial role in the implementation of recommendations made in the report card surveys. The local people wanted to know from the authorities their standpoint from respective positions regarding solutions to problems as well as their pledges and views on what should be done. The CCC members also made forceful demands on the basis of consensus with various professionals. In this backdrop, the authorities explained their position about implementation of recommendations made by the report and made a commitment to execute those.

Changes in quality of service: The service providers take initiative to improve the quality of services as the CCC members and the YES group maintain contact with relevant authorities during the survey prior to publication of the report. The draft reports are sent to the concerned authorities for eliciting their valuable opinions. They can appreciate their weaknesses from the report and take various remedial measures.

Healthcare: The health authorities took a number of steps for implementing the recommendations made by the CCC and TIB with the objective of removing the healthcare-related problems depicted in the reports. These helped in raising the quality of services provided. Notable among these steps were: separate class-based identity cards for officers and employees; placement of complaint box and information board in hospitals; arrangement for drinking water and wash-room; depositing extra amount of ticket fee in social welfare fund etc.

Secondary Education: Irregularities, mismanagement and corruption in the secondary education sector have been depicted in these reports. The infrastructural aspect of upazila secondary education offices has now been strengthened alongside appointment of one research officer for all areas in Mymensingh, Muktaganjha, Nalitabari, Madhupur, Kishoreganj and Jamalpur in order to improve and better monitor the quality of secondary education. On the job training of teachers has been increased and supervision has been enhanced for strengthening the school managing committees.

Municipality: The Chandpur municipality agreed with the information and data provided in the report. Various steps have already been taken on the basis of the report for improving sewerage in the area, increase water supply, and bring back discipline among various markets which have sprung up in an isolated manner. Besides, a list of services provided and rate of fees for those services has been hung in a notice board.

Land Administration: The land administration authorities in Jessore and Jhenaidah took a number of steps for reducing corruption and mismanagement and raising awareness in the land offices after the publication of report on land administration by the CCCs. Notable among these were: hanging on the notice board a list of services offered and applicable government fees at the office of Assistant Commissioner (Land); increasing monitoring so that additional money is not taken for issuing title deed; accepting any complaint against the land office and then taking necessary action etc.

Comilla Central Jail: The authorities of Comilla central jail took numerous measures for improving the quality of services there. Notable among these were: giving rice to the prisoners in place of bread twice a day; fixing permanent work procedure for officers and employees; introducing various correction programmes for prisoners; improving security; setting up an information and enquiry centre. The authorities have informed CCC-Comilla through a written communication that they were trying to transform the jail into a correction and service institute.

Chittagong WASA: Although the WASA authorities did not give any reaction during the releasing programme of the report, there have been some noticeable changes in their services. Scope for access to information has now increased, illegal transactions have declined and corrupt employees are being arrested or sacked.

Comilla Passport Office: The authorities took a number of important steps for raising the quality of services after the publication of the report. At present, passports are being delivered in accordance with serial numbers; supervision has been increased to finish the day’s work on time; an information and advice box has been installed; a shed has been set up as waiting room for women. These changes are quite noticeable.

Journalists role in attracting attention of authorities: During the press conferences, the CCCs and TIB researchers presented the research findings in a positive manner. The intention was to exert pressure on the concerned authorities for taking effective steps to raise the quality of services. The journalists published the reports in their newspapers in a positive light. They also tried to attract the attention of the concerned authorities through the newspapers in order to make them accountable for raising the quality of services. In this way, they expressed solidarity with the objectives of TIB and CCCs.

Conclusion: No changes are possible without the direct intervention of concerned authorities at local or policy level. Report card surveys are conducted as part of a joint effort to achieve this objective through mutual understanding. With the cooperation of government organizations, the CCCs and TIB hopes that all service-providing organizations will raise their service quality while remaining on the path of becoming corruption-free. The service-recipient general masses will then derive maximum benefit out of it.

Dipu Roy and Shadhan Kumar Das; the writers are Research Officers of TIB.
Loss of almost Tk. 23 thousand crore has been incurred during the past ten years due to corruption in the power sector of Bangladesh. Of this amount, loss due to technical and distribution anomalies has been around 18,930 crore taka. And during this period, Taka 4007 crore has been misappropriated during purchase of 6 power plants and appointment of foreign companies for the purpose of maintenance. Besides, loss of Taka 8,355 crore per year is incurred due to damages to production facilities and equipment owing to the power crisis. Loss owing to non-existence of gas-based plant is Taka 1,824 crore each. This information was released at a discussion meeting arranged on the occasion of releasing of a research report on the power sector by TIB. Recommendations were made for reforming the electricity law, swift disposal of cases and establishment of an independent commission for implementation of a ‘Vision-2025’ plan for the sector.

A Round table discussion meeting titled ‘Problems in Power Sector: Way to Remedies’ was arranged at the VIP lounge of National Press Club on the occasion of releasing of this research report. Presided over by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, Research Officer Md. Zakir Hossain Khan presented the report in the programme.

The research was carried out to investigate the nature and magnitude of corruption in the power sector and to identify the causes of problems. Its findings show that there are various limitations in the law and litigation system related to electricity. Institutional and administrative irregularities, financial weaknesses and other problems also exist. Besides, there was inefficiency in power generation at government level and widespread corruption in transmission, purchase and distribution of electricity. Power crisis, and weaknesses in commercial and day to day services were increasing the suffering of consumers. The contribution of power sector to GDP was diminishing gradually due to political influences, poor time management, lack of transparency and accountability. As a result, the level of customer satisfaction was also waning side by side with huge losses in industrial and commercial arenas.

The research showed that the previous governments failed to attach due importance and priority to the power sector. Presently, only 42 percent people of the country are consuming 140 units of electricity per head on an average. If distribution loss in this sector could be brought down to 12 percent, then it would be possible to collect Taka 1,853 crore of additional revenue income. Presently, arrear subscriber bills in the power sector stand at Taka 4,390 crore in case of PDB, Taka 88 crore in case of DESA and Taka 464 crore in case of REB.

As part of this research, the quality of services was examined by conducting a cross-sectional survey on 1,027 electricity subscribers. It showed that 27 percent of the subscribers faced harassment in case of new connections. Generally, an applicant got new connection after his file went round 36 to 38 tables. Lineman, CBA leaders, storekeeper, engineers (assistant/ executive/ superintendent) and electricity inspectors were involved in this corruption. The subscribers also faced corruption in meter reading and billing process. Maximum harassment had to be faced in making corrections to the bill. 54.4 percent subscribers spoke of bribing DESA officials for changing damaged transformer; 35 percent residential subscribers spoke of damage caused to their electrical appliances due to frequent outages. 90 percent of the subscribers were victims of at least 45 hours of load-shedding during 2005-06. During the period, the subscribers had to spend Taka 447 crore as bribes for new connections.

TIB put forward a number of recommendations for enhancing transparency and solving the problems of good governance in power sector. These included formation of an independent commission for implementation of the ‘Vision-2025’ plan, formulation of right to information law; opening up all documents related to purchases and financial transactions to public view; appointment of Ombudsman; amending the electricity law; swift resolution of pending cases in speedy trial courts; appointment of honest, efficient and promised workers in the sector; introduction of one-stop service centres for providing day to day service; taking punitive measures against those who defaulted in payment of bills; installation of pre-paid meters; introduction of underground distribution lines; formulation of financial and human resource policies.
Three Journalists Awarded for Investigative Journalism

Staff Reporter of the weekly Bichitra Sukdeb Sana, Staff Reporter of Daily Purbanchal H M Alauddin and joint news editor Sujan Kabir of the TV channel ‘Bangladvision’ have been awarded for Investigative Journalism on corruption by TIB for the year 2007.

A seminar titled ‘Role of media in fighting corruption’ was arranged at Mohakhali’s BRAC Centre Inn of Dhaka on 2 November on the occasion of distributing prizes. The Chairperson of Transparency International Dr. Huguette Labelle was present on the occasion as the guest speaker. The prize-winning journalists were awarded in the concluding part of the programme.

Staff Reporter of Weekly Bichitra Sukdeb Sana was awarded in the national category for his investigative report on ‘cheating in the name of diagnostic service’. His report was published in the 7 April 2006 issue of weekly Bichitra. The report depicted pictures of various irregularities and corruption in diagnostic centres including extraction of excessive fees, submission of wrong reports, testing and report writing by inexperienced technicians, inciting physicians to carry out unnecessary tests, lack of official sanctions, etc.

H M Alauddin was awarded in the regional category for his investigative report on ‘Status of healthcare in Khulna city’. It was serialised by the daily Purbanchal published from Khulna from 22 November to 23 December 2006. The report highlighted diversion of patients to private clinics, negligence of duty and setting up of clinics and diagnostic centres by government physicians, issuance of false medical certificates and corruption, irregularity and mismanagement in different government hospitals.

Sujan Kabir was awarded for his report on corruption in Pabna Mental Hospital. It was serialised in five parts in the TV channel Bangladvision from 4 to 8 July 2006. In his report, Sujan Kabir depicted various anomalies, mismanagement and corruption in providing medical services in the hospital including inadequacies in treatments, staying of patients at the hospital year after year, food-related corruption, formation of illegal coteries centring on the hospital and plundering of government properties.

TIB has been awarding this since 1999 for professional improvement of corruption-related investigative journalism in Bangladesh. A report published in the regional newspaper has been awarded as a separate category for the first time this year. 24 contestants participated in this category. Besides, a total of 88 contestants participated in the competition, including 55 contestants in the national category and 9 in the electronic media. The 4-member panel of judges comprised of Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam of Dhaka University’s English Department, Professor Gitiara Nasreen of the Journalism Department of Dhaka University, and the Director General of Bangla Academy Dr. Syed Mohammad Shahed.

A big incident in the journalistic career: Sujan Kabir
The TIB award has been the first recognition in my life as a journalist. Naturally, it is a big event in my life. And needless to say, the TIB Award has already attained a position of honour in the mass media and journalistic arena of Bangladesh. Enthusiastic and inquisitive journalists keep an eye on this award each year. I will say, this prize has also given birth to a silent competition among the journalists; which is positive for this profession. All in all, this achievement will inspire me to undertake investigative journalism in an even bigger way in the future.

Best prize in my life: H M Alauddin
Journalists outside Dhaka are always neglected. Just as they are undervalued as mofussil journalists, similarly most owners of regional newspapers are reluctant to give them salary. Because of these reasons, the mofussil journalists cannot flourish their latent talents. I thank the TIB as this has been the biggest prize in my life. It would not have been possible for me to get this prize if there was no separate category for regional newspapers. This would raise enthusiasm among the journalists of regional newspapers; scope for flourishing their talent would also be widened.

Notable recognition in my life: Sukdeb Sana
The TIB award is a notable recognition in my life. I thank the TIB for encouraging investigative journalism on corruption. I hold the view that corruption begins from the individual and it swiftly infects the society. Individual corruption assumes the shape of institutional corruption and it gradually swallows the society and the state. Therefore, all-out efforts should be made to eliminate corruption at the individual level.
Political Parties and Parliaments are The Most Corrupt Institutions

Global Corruption Barometer: 2007

Poor families are hit hardest by demands for bribes in developed as well as developing countries. Political parties and parliaments – the very institutions entrusted to represent the public interest in political decision-making – are seen as most affected by corruption. This information was published on 6 December in TIB Global Corruption Barometer 2007. This year 63,199 people in 60 countries and territories were interviewed for the survey between June and September 2007. Political parties and parliaments were identified as the most corrupted institutions by the people included in the survey according to the data published in Global Corruption Barometer ahead of the international Anti-Corruption day on 9 December.

Executive Director of TIB Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said that though Bangladesh was not included in the survey there is strong similarity with the findings of GCB and the situation of Bangladesh. The credibility of democracy has greatly reduced at present and especially the parliament and political parties has lost their acceptability. Both of the organizations has failed to ensure the accountability of the government.

People included in the survey asked their government to take necessary steps against corruption. “This year’s Global Corruption Barometer has made it clear that too often, people must part with their hard-earned money to pay for services that should be free”, said Transparency International Chair Huguette Labelle. “And they do not see enough commitment when they look to their governments and leaders. We are heartened though, that the public is increasingly demanding the accountability of the very institutions that most affect their lives, as this is a powerful driver of change.” “The Global Corruption Barometer 2007 is a wake-up call” – she added “a reminder that people around the world are increasingly demanding an end to corruption and its terrible cost.”

Although globally the police are the institution most frequently reported to demand bribes, there are important differences across regions. In the countries of the greater EU region, medical services stand out as the most common source of bribe demands. In Latin America, Asia-Pacific and North America, petty bribery in the judiciary is a serious problem. In Africa and the Newly Independent States (Russia, Moldova and Ukraine), however, bribery was most prevalent in the education and health sectors. The institutions which fared best in the eyes of ordinary citizens were religious bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Notably, some of the African countries surveyed showed evidence of far greater optimism than that seen in the countries of North America and Europe, which means that wealthy countries in particular need to listen to what their citizens are saying and adopt the kind of comprehensive approaches to anti-corruption at home that they have demanded from aid recipient countries for years. The findings of the 2007 Global Corruption Barometer show a strong correlation (0.66) between the experience of bribery among ordinary citizens and the perceptions of corruption by experts, which are the basis for the Corruption Perceptions Index, TIB’s flagship measurement tool.

Annual Members’ Meeting of TI held

Annual Members Meeting of TI was held this year in Bali of Indonesia. Around 200 representatives from 90 national chapters of TI took part in this 5-day long meeting held from 25 to 29 October. Organized by TI-Indonesia, the meeting discussed poverty and development, political corruption, transparency in the revenue sector, role of the civil society, corruption in the military and judiciary as well as internal good governance of TI.

A meeting of experts was held on 25 October on progress in recovery of siphoned off assets and implementation of the International Convention against Corruption. Then plenary discussions were held on 27 October. This annual meeting provided opportunities for sharing experiences on exemplary works in the TI movement, various activities during the past year and adoption of future plan. executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman participated in it on behalf of TIB.
The difference between today’s Bangladesh and the 19th Century Bangladesh of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, the pioneer of women’s awakening and beacon of women’s education, cannot be gauged by any means. Things have changed so much that the situation is nowhere near Rokeya’s dreams. Rokeya had dreamt that her country and society would be run on the basis of equal rights for men and women, would be progressive, modern and free of superstition. What was in vogue at that time was religious fanaticism, lack of education and a superstitious society immersed in parochialism. What is known as corruption might also have existed then. But it did not assume such an all-pervasive character. It should be conceded that religious fanaticism, ignorance and superstition are key ingredients for fuelling corruption. Consequently, it can be said that Begum Rokeya could realize through her pragmatism that the future of the nation would be dark and pessimistic if these ingredients could not be eliminated from society. Consequently, Rokeya had relentlessly fought against ignorance, fanaticism and superstition through her writings in order to establish a developed and progressive society based on cooperation between men and women.

Corruption is not merely limited to exchange of bribery; misuse or misapplication of power are also corruption. Cheating in examinations or helping others to cheat, leakage of question papers by the teacher, involvement of college or university teachers with political parties, some becoming supporters and others activists, using soft-hearted students for political interest, deducting marks in examinations if one does not work for a particular party – aren’t these corruption? In addition, raising the market price of commodities by creating an artificial crisis through hoarding, adulteration of food and medicine, anomaly in treatment, sending national assets abroad, smuggling, nepotism and using women as commodity – aren’t these corruption as well? All these are different colours of corruption. If these vices cannot be uprooted through strict measures, then the ideals and dreams of Begum Rokeya would never materialise.

As I said earlier, the vices against which Begum Rokeya stood firm were superstition and lack of education. But at the same time, her life-long struggle was against suppression of women’s rights through religious decrees and stifling her voice through means like the purdah system. In real sense, Begum Rokeya’s dream was to become a progressive democratic nation by doing away with prevailing discriminations between men and women. All in all, this was the intense desire modernist Begum Rokeya nurtured in her thoughts and consciousness.

The great leader Mao Tse Tung had said, ‘the rotting of fish starts from the head’. If we look at the list of corruption in our country, it would be seen that the topmost individual in administration, the administrator himself is distributing the spoils of corruption (starting from extortion) up to the lowest level. We see that people with higher education resorts to higher types of corruption. It is not found in Begum Rokeya’s definition whether their education was bad education.

Education means light and lack of education is darkness. This was what Begum Rokeya had said. We believe in that. But what do we see in reality? It is the educated people who wear the attire of religion and withdraw themselves into the shell of a snail; they pull back the science-based progress of society with the string of religion. They nurture terrorism and militancy by getting lost in the dream of establishing the law of Allah and the rule of Quran. They increase dishonest activities and corruption in the name of honest people’s rule.

Although the proportion of educated people has increased compared to Begum Rokeya’s days, but the society should also have progressed commensurately. Why has not the expected progress been achieved? Today, our community has become much more educated compared to the past. In most houses of towns, we see girls and housewives with BA, MA degrees. They are bringing affluence to families by getting involved in various professions alongside performing filial duties. The top echelons of educated women are showing their efficiency by occupying important positions of society and state. Just as this makes me glad, similarly I am astonished and dismayed when I find that discriminations and violence against women have not diminished compared to any time in the past. What is its cause? Who will take responsibility?

If we analyze its cause, we see that although we had liberated the country on the basis of a secular nationalist spirit and through huge sacrifices in an armed liberation war, we could not yet build the governance structure of the state in a democratic mould after trying the anti-independence war criminals. As a result, like the rotting of the fish’s head, that spirit of sacrifice has evaporated from the mind of our political leadership. Whether consciously or not, in its place has been groomed the vision of a capitalist society based on consumerism. And it is in the capitalist societies that corruption is born. And a corrupt society can never move forward.

Begum Rokeya had launched a struggle of awakening in the beginning of the 19th century while standing in a backward society of colonial dispersion. She is relevant even 37 years after our independence. So I will say, we should join a new war by juxtaposing that struggle for women’s or human emancipation with the movement against corruption.

Begum Mushtari Shafi, Convener, CCC: Chittagong City
Participation of men and women in all spheres of society, state, economy and politics can help build a gender sensitive world. Presently, women are a large segment of the world’s population. And therefore, it can be said that they carry the talents and strengths of a large part of the world. But if the history and perspective of the world are reviewed, it can be seen that women have always remained in a marginalised condition. The main considerations in this area are democratic practices, equality, citizens’ rights or human rights and above all good governance.

Presently, a major portion or 60 percent of Bangladesh’s population are youths, whose age is 25 years or below. These youths will give future leadership to the world. Naturally, involvement of youths in development philosophy is very important. TIB believes in this. Consequently, TIB has been working with the youths from its very inception. At present, the magnitude of this work has increased. Presently, around 1240 youth volunteers are working directly at the local level throughout Bangladesh under the YES programme of TIB. Of them, 939 are male and 301 female. That is, 75% are male and 25% female. Another 50 thousand youths have been involved in the YES programme at the national level through various competitions like cartoon contests, cultural festivals of various universities and concerts. Besides, many more youths were involved in the anti-corruption movement at different times through various programmes under YES at the local level.

One important thing is that there is lot of difference between the needs of men and women. Men are not that much conscious as women are regarding their problems or needs. Therefore, if women cannot participate actively in efforts to realize their rights, then those remain unarticulated. Issues related to women are repeatedly neglected in our country because there is scant participation of women in the governance system. Half of the country’s population are women. Consequently, half the country’s population remain outside the development paradigm when women-related issues are neglected. Based on this consideration, TIB is working to assist women in developing their leadership qualities through the YES programme. YES seeks to create such a platform for women where she can speak about her rights and take firm steps for realizing those rights. YES is the implementation of such a vision where all youths irrespective of gender enjoy equal rights. YES is such a platform where both men and women have decision making powers and the right to know, observe and speak.

It is seen from the gender analysis of YES that it has a number of justification and purpose. YES conducts various assignments with the objectives of establishing the just rights of men and women, women’s empowerment, identifying the influence of corruption on women, reflection of gender equality in all tasks and according recognition to women’s work. YES is continuing its work with a number of goals including realization of human potentials at all levels, gender equity, women’s empowerment and establishing a gender-sensitive institution.

If the rate of participation at the national level by young boys and girls in the YES programme during 2006 and 2007 is analysed, it is seen that the ratio of females in cartoon competition, various debate and essay competitions were 30%, 41% and 36% respectively. Again, the percentage of attendance by young males and females in concerts is found to be 91% and 9% respectively. One notable aspect of these anti-corruption programmes is that the participation of young females has increased in 2007 compared to 2006. The rate is expected to rise further. This rising trend generates optimism for a gender-sensitive Bangladesh, which would ensure good governance in the country.

The YES youths are advancing forward with a commitment to establish good governance by combating corruption. The themes on which the youths are justifiably attaching priority while working in this programme are health, education and local government. This is because, these are the areas where gender discrimination is maximum in Bangladesh. YES is working for ensuring health, education and empowerment of women. Above all, YES is striving tirelessly so that no citizen is deprived of his fundamental rights. Now, we wait for that day when the dreams of YES would be fulfilled. Human rights would be established in the country in all areas, not on the basis of a person’s gender, but on the basis of merit.

Shahanaz Momotaz Bithe, Assistant Advocacy Officer.

Shahanaz Momotaz Bithe, Assistant Advocacy Officer.
Seminar on healthcare at Mymensingh: The CCC Mymensingh organized a seminar on healthcare services at the auditorium of BNSB Eye Hospital on 7 December on the occasion of observing International Anti-Corruption Day. Chaired by the CCC convener Muhammad Mokarram Hussain, the seminar was inaugurated by former adviser of caretaker government and TIB Trustee M Hafiz Uddin Khan. The main discussant at the seminar was the chairman of the national committee for health rights movement and former president of Bangladesh Medical Association Dr. Rashid-e-Mahbub. The Deputy Civil Surgeon of Mymensingh Dr. Md. Atiqur Rahman spoke as a special discussant. CCC member Dr. Pradip Chandra Kar presented a paper titled ‘Our healthcare, prescription for the non-prescribed’. CCC member, eminent educationist and essayist Jatin Sarkar spoke about the essay. The welcome address was delivered by the convenor of health sub-committee of CCC AHM Khalequzzaman while CCC member Sharifuzzaman Parag acted as the moderator. M Hafiz Uddin Khan said, whatever budgetary allocations were made by the government for the health sector in spite of resource constraints, the general masses were deprived of many services due to corruption. As the main discussant, Dr. Rashid-e-Mahbub said, healthcare was a right of all citizens, yet the reality on the ground was different. Emphasizing on awakening of the anti-corruption spirit among all, TIB representatives as well as physicians, educationists, lawyers, journalists and representatives of civil society in Mymensingh participated in the seminar. An anti-corruption campaign was also conducted by the YES members of CCC through various publications of advice and information desk on the occasion of the seminar.

Opinion sharing meeting in Munshiganj: The CCC-Munshiganj organized a view exchange meeting on ‘Role of working women in the social movement against corruption’ on 15 December. Chaired by the convenor of the sub-committee on gender and a CCC member Hamida Khatun, working women from various government and private organizations of Munshiganj participated in this programme held at the CCC office. The participants narrated their experiences of corruption at respective workplaces and put forward various recommendations. In his inaugural address, the CCC convener Professor Anil Kumar Chakrabarti said, TIB is running an anti-corruption programme through 36 Committees of Concerned Citizens across the country. Those who narrated their experience in the meeting included Secretary of Mohila Parishad and APP Advocate Nasima Akhtar, Headmaster of VT Hogla General Primary School Mukul Rani Saha, Health Officer of Munshiganj municipality Leena Saha, Krishi Bank official Farida Parveen, member of Grameen Bank’s Board of Directors Rahima Begum, journalist of Sangbad Tamanna Sarkar, Director of Amena Molla Clinic Ferdousi Akhtar Runu, woman commissioner Jahanara Begum and office secretary of Mohila Parishad Jahanara Khanam. The speakers urged the womenfolk to play a leading role in launching anti-corruption movement from the family level. Besides, CCC member Advocate Giasuddin Pintu, Md. Lutfur Rahman Chowdhury, Khaleda Khanom, Tanvir Hasan and Shahid-e-Hasan also spoke on the occasion.

Workshop on gender at CCC Chapai Nawabganj: Half of the country’s population are women. Desired outcome in the social movement against corruption is also not possible without their involvement. If women become vocal against corruption in families and workplaces, then the society can be freed from the scourge of corruption. The speakers expressed this view at a workshop titled ‘Women in the social movement against corruption’ held under the auspices of CCC Chapai Nawabganj at its office on 23 November. Chaired by the convenor of gender sub-committee of the CCC Gouribarmon Shitu, Dr. Mahbuba Kaniz Keya of Rajshahi University and CCC member of CCC Rajshahi were present as the main speaker. Others who spoke on the occasion included CCC convenor Advocate Saiful Islam Reza, CCC member Dr. Jobeda Begum, Rahima Khatun, Monowara Khatun, Mahbuba Rahman Beauty, Tahera Yasmin, Senior Training Officer of TIB Riaz Uddin Khan and Assistant Program Officer Jesmin Akhtar Panna. Detailed discussions were held at the workshop on development of various service sectors like health and education, enhancing their transparency and accountability, participation and status of women in local governments, family and society, and what should be
done for realizing their rights and empowerment. Conducted by the CCC member Selina Begum, people belonging to various classes and professions including teachers, journalists, lawyers, public representatives, housewives and development workers participated in the workshop.

Reception for successful students at Jamalpur: Awareness and cooperative attitude of educational administration, school management committees, teachers, guardians and others were required for ensuring good quality of primary education. Besides, mothers play the most important role in proper flourishing of pupils’ intellect. Consequently, it is not possible to improve the quality of primary education without the alertness of mothers. The speakers dwelt on these themes at a mothers’ gathering organized by CCC-Jamalpur at Sharifpur Government Primary School on 18 November. Presided over by the chairman of school managing committee Md. Kamarul Hasan Selim, over one thousand mothers and students participated in this gathering. In her address as chief guest, Assistant Education Officer of sadar upazila Nazma Begum said, improvement of educational quality in a school can be ensured to a large extent through coordinated efforts of educational administration, managing committee, teachers and guardians. The Headmaster Md. Shamsul Alam said in his speech that attendance of students, their pass rate, stipends and awareness of mothers have risen with decrease in drop-out rate after the CCC started its work in this school. The programme was moderated by the team-leader of CCC’s YES group Mohammad Russel Mia.

‘Anti-Corruption Cultural Alliance’ formed at CCC Jhenaidah: An Anti-Corruption Cultural Alliance was formed at Jhenaidah CCC on 24 November by uniting various local cultural organizations. The front was established at a round-table meeting chaired by the CCC convener Advocate Sheikh Selim. Shanto Joardar and Syed Shafiq Akram were elected its convener and member-secretary respectively. The constituent organizations of the alliance are: People’s Theatre Group of TIB, Mohona Cultural Academy, Jhankar Shilpi Goshti, Ankur Natya Academy, Dipayan Sanskritik Academy, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshti, Bibartan Natya Goshti, Nabagbar Shishu Kishor Sangathan, Baul Sangha and Shimu Kishor Natya Dal. The main objective of this alliance is to inculcate an anti-corruption outlook among the local people, especially the youths.

CCC Pirojpur in aid of the calamity-stricken: The CCC Pirojpur organized a medical camp for providing healthcare services to the cyclone ‘Sidr’ hit people on 17 December. Set up at Chandipara and Bansbindia government primary school, around 750 men and women from far-flung places came to this medical camp. Clinical treatment and medicines were provided from this camp free of charge. Medical treatments were rendered by the CCC members Dr. M A Salam and Dr. Gajendranath Haldar. Blankets and other winter clothes were distributed among poor people of distant localities who were suffering from cold at Shankarpasha, Boudubi, Harina, Ranipur, Charlakhakathi, Kaibartakhali, Bhora, Khanakuniari, etc. of Pirojpur.

People’s representatives face to face with the citizens at Rajshahi: A ‘people’s representatives face to face with citizens’ programme was held on 31 October at Ghoramara Government Primary School under the auspices of CCC-Rajshahi City. Commissioner of ward no. 23 of Rajshahi City Corporation met the people in this programme. He replied to various questions from the citizens of ward no. 23 regarding the quality of services provided by the city corporation. Chaired by the CCC member Akbarul Hasan Millat, the welcome address was delivered by TIB officer Rafiqul Islam. He said, this kind of initiative was needed for ensuring city corporation’s services for the citizens. If the people’s representatives were brought face to face with the citizens through these programmes, then corrupt tendencies would diminish. The citizens would also strive to elicit their rights. In the question-answer session, the ward commissioner said, swift action would be taken if there was any allegation of negligence in approved services of city-corporation. He expressed his determination to complete the ongoing works in his area. The citizens mentioned various problems faced by them; for example, excessive incidence of drug addiction in the area, problems with sewerage disposal and cleanliness, and rise in mosquito menace. While delivering his presidential address, the CCC member Akbarul Hasan Millat said, if the citizens strove for their rights and succeeded in making people’s representatives accountable, only then can the concerned localities develop; that would also help check corruption. CCC member Qamar Ullah Sarkar also addressed the gathering.

CCC Barisal beside the ‘Sidr’ affected people: The Barisal CCC extended a helping hand for the ‘Sidr’ hit people of Alimabad and Selimabad shools in Mehendiganj of Barisal district. They distributed over Taka 50 thousand worth of relief materials among the ‘Sidr’ affected people. Each packet contained 4 kg of rice, 1 kg of lentil, 1 kg iodised salt, 2 candles, 2 packets of match-sticks, 2 packs of oral saline and some dried chillies. Besides, 20 packets of milk-powder for children and 23 bags of old clothes collected by the CCC and YES members were also distributed.

▲ CCC Barisal distributing relief among Sidr victims

waves : TIB Newsletter 21
Walkathon by Patiya YES Group with the Slogan 'Wanted Corruption-free Bangladesh': A walkathon was organized by the YES group of CCC Patiya in Patiya town on 12 November with the slogan ‘Wanted Corruption-free Bangladesh’. Eighty YES members participated in the walkathon. The walkathon inspired the townspeople belonging to various classes and professions to become imbued with an anti-corruption spirit. The walkathon was formally inaugurated by convener of CCC-Patiya Professor Avhijit Barua Manu. Others who took part in the walkathon included co-convener of CCC Patiya journalist Abdur Razzak, CCC member Advocate Kabi Shekher Nath, Gourab Das, et al.

National Inter-Medical College Debate Competition: An inter-medical college debate competition was held under the joint auspices of TIB, CCC Chittagong Metropaliton City and Chittagong Medical College (CMC). Held at the Chittagong Medical College venue on 24 November, the slogan of the competition was ‘Wanted good governance in the health sector’. Nine Govt. medical colleges of the country took part in this competition.

This debate competition was organized to imbibe the youths with an anti-corruption outlook and to generate views from students regarding what should be done to ensure good governance in the health sector. It was presided over by the Principal of CMC Professor M A Wahab Chowdhury. The CMC Director Brigadier General Abedur Rahman NDC and CCC Convener Begum Mushtari Shafi were present as guests of honour. In his speech, Brigadier General Abedur Rahman NDC expressed optimism that the new generation would take up this challenge of building a golden Bangladesh. The CMC Principal said that there was no alternative to parliamentary debates for carrying the anti-corruption movement forward. The topic of the final was ‘Healthcare for the people cannot be ensured due to lack of transparency and accountability in the health sector’. The Rajshahi Medical College was in favour of the motion while Barisal Sherebangla Medical College opposed the motion. Ultimately, the latter emerged champion. A colourful rally went round the CMC campus with the participation of a huge number of students on the occasion of the debate competition.

A different day for the patients at Madaripur Hospital: The picture of Madaripur Sadar Hospital on 8 November was quite different from other days. All officers and employees of the hospital including physicians, nurses and office assistants were busy in discharging their duties. There were no irregularities. Everybody was very alert about the patients. The reason for this sudden change was the installation of Satellite Advice and Information Desk of Madaripur on the day in front of the hospital. A huge crowd who had arrived to receive treatment assembled at the centre. They collected various information related to healthcare services. The Satellite Advice and Information Desk is now being set up on the hospital premises at least once a month. A patient Hawa Begum said, “Today, I see everything in the hospital differently. I stood in the queue and then took treatment from the doctor. Previously, the doctor was not available at all times”.

Anti-Corruption Cycle Rally at Sreemangal: The YES group of CCC Sreemangal organized an anti-corruption cycle rally with the slogan ‘Wakeup people, resist corruption’. This 27 kilometre long rally finished at CCC office after going round Sreemangal town, Sindurkhan Bazar, Raghunathpur Bazar, Satgaon Bazar and Motiganj Bazar. The main objective of this rally was to generate and spread awareness against corruption.

YES group for Generating Awareness about National ID Cards: The YES group of CCC Jhalkathi undertook a rally and leaflet distribution programme on 29 October with the goal of generating interest among people of various classes and professions, especially the poorer segments of population and to encourage them to become voters. District representatives of local and national periodicals, district representatives of the electronic media, members of various cultural organizations, students of schools and colleges, CCC and YES group members participated in it.

Positive changes at Muktagachha Health Complex after inspection by CCC: The CCC and YES members inspected the Muktagachha Health Complex on 31 October. This inspection was undertaken following allegations of various irregularities by hospital doctors as well as the management. It was reported that no doctors arrived on time, a few left after signing the attendance book and some signed the next day even when they were
absent. The AHFPO Dr. Ruhul Amin conceded that the allegations were true. After these irregularities were reported in the media following this inspection, the doctors and nurses are now arriving on time and the patients are also getting more services than before. Those who were present during the inspection were convener of the CCC sub-committee on health Dr. Shahjahan Ali Khan, CCC member Professor Akhlasur Rahaman, Advocate Mahbubur Rahman Bulbul and Ferdousi Akter. When the YES team went there on another inspection on 11 November, they saw many positive changes.

Satkhira YES group initiative for improving service quality at maternity centre: The YES group of CCC Satkhira started working on 5 November to improve the quality of maternity services. They are primarily working to raise consciousness among patients and to identify prevailing problems. Following successes in raising the service quality at sadar hospital, the YES members drew up a plan to improve service quality at the maternity centre by responding to the requests of patients. A delegation accompanied by the convener of CCC YES group and PP of Judge court Advocate Tapan Kumar Chakrabarti went to the Deputy Commissioner with a proposal to work at the maternity centre. The YES group began to work on the issue after getting approval.

People's Theatre programme: A 7-day long production-oriented people’s theatre workshop was held during 19-25 November at Mymensingh. A drama was produced at the workshop based on corruption in healthcare, education and local administration. A total of 2 females and 14 males participated in the workshop. The name of the drama produced was ‘Durnity kortam na’ (Won’t engage in corruption). The post-workshop technical show of the drama was staged on 25 November at the Mymensingh Muslim Institute. The play was enjoyed by local drama personalities and people belonging to various classes and professions. They put forward their well-considered opinions on the show.

Representatives of the civil society have demanded that transparency should be maintained while pursuing relief activities in cyclone ‘Sidr’ affected areas. The speakers made this demand at a round-table discussion on ‘Integrity Humanitarian Assistance: Issues and Benchmarks’ organized by TIB. Chaired by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and member Ruhi Ghuznavi, the discussion was held at the BIAM Foundation auditorium of New Eskaton on 18 December. Officials of various government and non-government organizations including journalists, teachers and disaster management experts were present on the occasion.

The keynote paper was presented by the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman. He was assisted by TIB officials Shahzada M Akram and Tanvir Mahmud. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman asserted in his speech, relief was not assistance, it was a right. And the affected people should be informed about this right. The TIB Executive Director put forward various recommendations including proper coordination in relief work, opening up access to all information related to relief operation including receipt of grants and their distribution to all quarters including the mass media, framing a code of conduct for all government and non-government officials involved in the relief programme etc.

In his presidential speech, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said that many in the disaster-hit areas were still not getting due help. Accountability to the public has to be ensured, especially to the affected people. Only then could transparency be ensured in relief activities. Professor ATM Mahbub said, not only the poor, the well-off families had also been harmed this time by cyclone ‘Sidr’. He proposed formation of committees at local level for tackling future disasters with inclusion of representatives from various classes of people. Dr. Md Nizamuddin demanded formulation of plans and adoption of code of standards for disaster-prone areas with an eye for the future.

Those who spoke in the round-table included Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Maleka Parveen, Professor ATM Mahbub of Dhaka University’s geography and environmental science department, Professor of BUET Dr. Md. Nizamuddin, Shahidul Haque of LGED, Azhar Ali of Water Aid Bangladesh, Farid Hasan of Oxfam, Fatema Hasan of Canadian Development Agency and journalist Sisir.
TIB Publications in 2007

TIB published a book titled ‘Cartoons against Corruption’ by compiling cartoons by eminent cartoonists of the country as well as the winning cartoons of the anti-corruption cartoon competition-2006. Besides, a number of communication tools were published this year. Greeting card and stickers were published on the occasion of International Mother Language Day. A brochure titled ‘Women against corruption’ was published on the occasion of International Women’s Day. A brochure on theatre titled ‘Theatre against corruption’ was also published. An analytical brochure on ‘Corruption Perceptions Index 2007’ was also published. A catalogue was published on the occasion of ‘Anti-corruption cartoon competition-2007’. Separate brochures and stickers were published on the occasion of International Anti-corruption Day and Begum Rokeya Day on 9 December. A desk calendar was published carrying cartoons drawn by the winners of Anti-corruption Cartoon Competition-2007 as a new year’s souvenir. Beside the regular publications CCC Newsletter, ‘Nagorik Prottoy’ and the TIB newsletter ‘Waves’, the Annual Report 2006 of TIB were also published.

Yet we moved on with our dreams...
The YES members did not get approval even after repeatedly applying to the civil surgeon for undertaking a campaign against corruption, irregularities and mismanagement in Jamalpur General Hospital. But they garnered huge support of the patients. Now, one year later, the picture has changed. Various activities are continuing round the year including regular follow-up campaign by the YES members, meeting with Health Department officials, problem identification and aiding their solution and passing on patients’ comments to the Health Department. As a result, the picture in the hospital has changed a lot. The spontaneous presence of the doctors can now be seen within 9 a.m. in the morning. There are no disturbances by brokers or crowding by the representatives of medicine companies. Various kinds of mismanagement in the provision of healthcare including gossiping by doctors after evading duty are no more seen. We were resisted during the beginning our first campaign. But it did not stop us; because we did not dream for coming to a halt....

Ariful Islam Arman, YES member, CCC Jamalpur

Information for transparency

Information is needed for transparency; right to information is needed for tackling corruption. The efforts TIB is making for formulation and implementation of right to information law is undoubtedly praiseworthy. TIB is also pursuing various programmes including observance of International Right to Information Day. This has been nicely depicted in the July-September issue of the newsletter. We are hoping that the nation will soon get an effective right to information law.

Ankhi, Baitul Aman Housing Society, Adabar, Dhaka

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