Research shows that at present 58% members of the parliament are engaged in business. The main opposition party was absent for 94.4% of the total working-days. The number of audit objections against the Ministry of Communications were the highest, involving an amount Taka 12 thousand 77 crore and 51 lakh. The research report of 'Parliament Watch 2005' released on 27 June at the National Press Club where Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, Chairman of TIB Board of Trustees, its Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Director Research S I Laskar, key researcher Mr. Tanvir Mahmud were among others present.

In 2005 the fifteenth to nineteenth sessions of the Parliament 2005 were most criticized for crises in quorum. There were, in total 62 working days in these five sessions. A total of 32 hours and 23 minutes were lost for want of quorum which is 17.44% of the total time. It may be mentioned that Taka 15 thousand per minute is spent in carrying out the business of parliamentary sessions. By this calculation, the total amount of money wasted as a result of quorum shortage is Taka 2 crore 91 lakh and 45 thousand. Analysis of the professions of the member shows that at present 58% members of the parliament are engaged in business. Most of the businessmen members both from Government and the main opposition party, who were 100% absent during the fifteenth to eighteenth sessions, were from the business community. The main opposition party, Bangladesh Awami League, was absent 61 days out of the total 62 working days. Besides, on an average, 6.9% of the members from the government party and 14.28% members from the other opposition parties did not attend the fifteenth to the eighteenth sessions at all. Members remained engaged in eulogizing their own leaders for 202 times. Treasury bench members did it more (93.07%). Besides, on 128 occasions, members tried to gain kudos from their own party-members by criticizing the leaders of the opposition. This was done more by the government-party members, which is 67.1% of total such incidents.

Research shows that of the 37 Standing Committees on Ministries 27 failed to hold meetings as per regulations. Concerned Minister/Ministers of state were absent in 14% meetings. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) sat once in each month according to regulations. Though the total numbers of Audit Report placed to the National Assembly from independence to April 2004 were 799, the PA Committee could only discuss 166 (20.78%) of those Reports. 633 Reports are yet to be discussed by the PA Committee. The present committee discussed 149 audit objections relating to 15 ministries during its total 25 meetings. The money involved in the audit objections of these 15 ministries and divisions is Taka 13,154 crore and 54 lakh. It may be mentioned that of the 15 ministries the Ministry of Communications has the highest number of audit objections involving an amount of Taka 12,775 crore and 51 lakh. Only Taka 12 crore and 10 lakh has so far been recovered and the rest of Taka 12,535 crore and 78 lakh remains unrecovered in spite of the PA Committee decisions.

28 bills were accepted by the Parliament in its five sessions. Among them the ‘Tax Ombudsman Bill’ passed in the seventeenth session was the most important. Analyses of the amendment proposals on the bill show that 54.2% amendment proposals were rejected by voice-votes, 8.3% were partly accepted and 37.5% amendment proposals were not raised at all. 100% amendment proposals from government party members were accepted by the Parliament. Altogether 19 main questions were made to the Prime Minister during the five sessions of last year. 89.5% of those were raised by government party members. Only 10.5% questions were asked by other opposition parties. Main questions to the ministers other than those placed on the table numbered 282 in total. 221 of them (78.37%) were by the members of the government-party. Only 61 questions (21.63%) were asked by the members of the other opposition parties. In the press conference Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, in reply to various questions from journalists said that the National Assembly was created to see the welfare of the people of the country. But unfortunately, many of the members did not fulfill their responsibility, but kept on enjoying all kind of perquisites. Though an Ethics Committee exists but they never take any step against such irregularities. It is the duty of the people, said Prof. Muzaffer, to protest against such behaviour, so that the members become aware of their responsibilities. His remarks about the presence of businessmen in the parliament: Businessmen are not to be blamed. It is the political parties who send honest and bright people away from politics by nominating persons from business community many of whom happens to be dishonest.

TIB is closely observing the activities of the Eighth Parliament right from its first session to assess how effectively the National Assembly is performing to ensure good governance in the country. Four reports have already been published covering its first fourteen sessions. TIB has made a quite a number of recommendations in them to make the parliament more effective and to ensure good governance. Those were: to frame rules to ensure the attendance of members; to declare one day in every fifteen-days as opposition-day; to see that the Prime Minister attends in the sessions regularly and motivates other members to attend also; to see that all committees are duly constituted during the first session of the parliament and give a guideline about actions to be taken if the committee’s recommendation are not followed; to see that at least 50 per cent of the posts of Chairman of the various committees are distributed among the opposition parties in proportion to their strength in the Parliament and ensure that each committee sits once in a month and the like.
Diagnostic Study on Land Ports
Corruption involving Tk. 142 crore in two years: Quick modernization required

TIB’s Diagnostic Study on the two Land Ports shows that bribes are required to be paid at 30 points at least in order to export or import goods through those two ports. Exporters and importers had to pay an amount of Tk. 142 crore and 8 lakkhe as bribe or speedmoney during the fiscal years 2003-04 and 2004-05. Corrupt customs and port-authority officials were mainly involved. This research was mainly aimed at finding the nature and extent of irregular payments that take place during exports and imports and to pinpoint the main problems of these two land ports so that those could be taken care of. On 16 April the report of this research was released formally at a press conference in the VIP Lounge of the National Press Club, Dhaka. Chairman of the Trustee Board of TIB, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, Trustee, M. Hafizuddin Khan, Executive Director of TIB and officials connected with the research were present.

The research shows that bribes are needed to be paid, at least at 30 points, to release any goods imported via Benapole and at 7 points for goods imported via Teknaf. On an average, an amount of Tk. 17 thousand 2 hundred and 3 is paid for each consignment of goods imported through Benapole and Tk. 4 thousand 9 hundred and 27 is paid at Teknaf to corrupt customs and port officials. For exporting goods through Benapole land port the average payment rate of bribe is Tk. 2 thousand and 4 hundred. To release a ton of imported goods at Benapole the average rate of bribe is Tk. 253 while the same at Teknaf is Tk. 325 only. At Benapole, 71 per cent of bribe paid to release goods is collected by customs officials while the rest 29 per cent is collected by port officials. At Teknaf, however, 96 per cent of bribe money is collected by customs officials leaving only 6 per cent to be collected by port officials.

During the two fiscal years 2003-2005, an amount of Tk. 17 thousand 2 hundred and 3 was collected as bribe for each consignment of imported goods thorough Benapole. The total amount thus collected was Tk. 139 crore of which Taka 99 crore went to customs officials and the remaining Tk. 40 crore went to port officials. At Teknaf, however, the total amount of bribe was Tk. 142 crore and 8 lakh. Customs officials collected Tk. 2 crore and 90 lakkhe and let the port officials collect the rest of Tk. 18 lakkhe. Businessmen at both the ports appeared to be inclined to evade payment of taxes. A syndicate was observed to be active in evading crores of taka as tax by bringing goods without any manifesto and giving false declaration. One customs officer informed that taxes worth an amount of 100 crore taka were not paid during the last four years.

The Executive Director TIB, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “to stop corruption and mismanagement and to make these two land ports efficient and fully active immediate measures to modernize them.” TIB has made quite a number of recommendations in these regards. The following are some of them: convert Benapole as full-fledged land port and shift its Head-Quarter at Benapole; identify the corrupt officials and take severe action against them; reduce the steps required for releasing goods to the minimum of 5 or 6 steps; increase pay and other benefits of labour staff; make more than one private organizations responsible for supplying equipment and labour; install close-circuit TV at important places for better vigilance; introduce better co-ordination among various divisions; reform and modernize the rules and regulations of customs and port authority relating to import and export trade; declare Teknaf as a river port as important places for better vigilance; introduce more than one private organizations responsible for supplying food violently and in rouggish ways …”

“…You shall not take each others’ money illicitly, nor shall you bribe the officials to deprive others of some of their rights illicitly, while you know.”

Source: Qur’an, Surah 2 Ayat 188

“He became corrupt immediately after asking for bribe and loses respect and identify.”

Source: Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2

“You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.”

Source: Bible, Chapter 23.8

“…Does not take bribes, cheat or do insincere things. Does not cut kill or bind and does not collect morsel food violently and in rouggish ways …”

Source: Tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/4Anguttara-Nikaya/ Anguttara 2/4

Training and workshops on Report Card Survey

Training: A three-day training course was organized at the TARC of BRAC in Savar from 7 to 9 May for the Field Assistants of Report Card Survey in Barisal, Jhalakati, Pirojpur, Sylhet, Sreemangal and Sunamganj Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) areas. Similarly training for the Field Assistants of Report Card Survey of Khulna area was arranged for three days from 6th to 8th June. This training course, held at Proshika Training Centre in Manikganj, were attended by field-inspectors and field-assistants engaged in survey of report cards in Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Jessore, Jhenaidah, and Kushtia CCC areas.

Workshop: A day-long workshop was organized at Kushtha for discussing the process of report card survey. A total of 27 members, including the convenors from CCC Kushtha, Jhenaidah and Jessore areas took part in the workshop. A similar day-long workshop was arranged in Khulna on 28 April. 27 members from CCC Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira attended the workshop. In this workshop five group works held on government health-care systems, primary schools, Mongla Port, khas land, City Corporation, Municipalities and Union Parishads of Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira areas.
Darkness Beneath the Candle: Focus on Kansat Tragedy

M. Zakir Hossain Khan

“The laws which oppress and suppress us, have to be changed. The loss or profit of PBS does not matter to me, all I want is the exact amount of electricity for which I Pay in cash”.

This was the statement of Ms. Rahiman Bibi, an aggrieved woman of Kansat which she expressed with deep grief and anger. Under Rural Electrification Board (REB), Polli Bidyut Samity1 (PBS) is an agency which distributes electricity to rural consumers. REB was established in 1976 aiming to reach electricity available to rural people, to ensure reliable and quality supply of electricity, to provide electricity at a reasonable price, and to enhance poverty alleviation by bringing rural areas under electrification and to minimize disparity between rural and urban areas in terms of access to electricity. However, it is evident that in reality REB’s performance to a large extent is lacking behind from its goal. Kansat tragedy is one of the ‘stark example’ of failure from its objective.

‘Movement for right’, is universal and this type of movements had organized people at different epoch of social advancement of Bangladesh and Kansat upheaval is perhaps a milestone in the history of right based movement, where people sacrificed their valuable lives for ensuring equal distribution of electricity and their right to receive electricity at reasonable price.

Under REB, 70 PBSs are now engaged for the distribution of electricity among rural people, including Nawabganj PBS-2. Kansat, one of the populous areas, belongs to the head office of Nawabganj PBS which consists of five Upazillas (sub-district) including Shibganj. Moreover, Nawabganj PBS, established in 1995, had provided 57,500 connections with the coverage of around 300,000 people against the huge demand. These five Upazillas have 1584 villages where 1500,000 people live, where only 5.14 percent people have access to the electricity.

To investigate into the root cause of the Kansat incidence, we interviewed deprived electricity subscribers of Kansat, reviewed commercial manuals of REB and allegations from other PBSs. Besides, due to several irregularities, instantaneous harassment and oppressions, the people of Kansat became outburst and desperate to establish their rights under the dynamic and sturdy leadership of Mr. Golam Rabbani, who was the former president of Nawabganj PBS-2 during 2003-05. For his remarkable leadership against PBS irregularities, Mr. Rabbani was expelled from PBS executive committee in December 2005. After this irrational action of REB against Mr. Rabbani, aggrieved people of Kansat had been agitated for several years and local administration wanted to suppress the agitation and they were not eager to discuss the logical rights of the people. In addition, administration did not consider the appeal of local people and failed to address the issue properly. This situation pushed into a drastic consequences resulting invaluable losses of 23 lives and damaging of asset about Tk.50 crore for the consequences of unavoidable ‘Strike’ and ‘Obarodhi’ in Sona Majid. “Steps of REB, local administration and local MP are responsible for this drastic consequences for their irresponsible and inhuman role of ignoring the local demand” was alleged by Kansat inhabitants. Primarily the causes of Kansat Movement have been identified as follows -

Irregularities in supply side

“Unplanned expansion of distribution lines for political gain is the main reason of excess demand and they violated the yearly plan”2, this key irregularity of PBS was identified by Mr. Asadul Biswas, President of Chuadanga-Meharpur PBS. Besides, the reasons are -

- Main obstacle to implement Master plan is political intervention in establishing new distribution lines and in this regard, President of Shariatpur PBS said, “Around 130 km distribution line was constructed violating Master Plan, distribution lines are found but there is no electric supply, besides, people have to pay bribe to GM or DGM for distribution lines”.

- Though 35-36 % of total electricity generated is consumed by REB; the load shedding is high in all PBSs (Figure), “electricity is available at only 3-4 hours per day”, alleged by the electricity subscribers of Kansat and this comment is also supported by local MP - “Main reason of this occurrence is huge load shedding” (1 February 2005). Electricity supply is not available around 10-15 hours per day; generally, it comes after 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. regularly. Even more, people of power outraged areas did not get electricity at ‘Sehri’ during Ramadan, said by an aggrieved person. These sufferings or rate of load shedding are addressed in figure 1.

- According to the President of Manikganj PBS, “GM and Treasurers are found to be involved in corruption, for example sometimes President/Director of PBS is asked to sign the cheque in back date”.

Irrational charges and harassment to subscribers

Illegal Meter Rent

There was no charge for electric meter during the establishment of Nawabganj PBS. In 1995, around 1/4th of 57,500 subscribers, sheddding is high, the rural subscribers can consume electricity maximum 20-25 units per month worth of maximum Tk 60-70. But subscribers had to pay the excess amount i.e. Tk.35 -50 higher than the actual consumption rate which became a burden for the marginalized and poor rural people.

Delay in new connection

Delaying of connection for new subscriber is very usual case in the PBS area and around Tk. 500-5000 is charged as bribe for new connection. Subscribers face tremendous harassments for getting new connection. It has been found that Mr. Ainul of Kansat also paid Tk.300 as security charge for new meter on 4 July of 2005, though he paid Tk. 100 as

INVESTIGATION

The laws which oppress and suppress us, have to be changed. The loss or profit of PBS does not matter to me, all I want is the exact amount of electricity for which I Pay in cash -


Source: REB, June 2006

Rate of Load Shedding in PBSs (%)
bribe for new connection, but his new meter has yet not been provided.

**Bribe for electric line for agriculture pump**

Around 3 thousand electric pumps are right now used by the farmers under the management of Barandra Multi-purpose Development Authority (BMADA) and the local PBS provides the electricity to run these pumps. It has been reported that the subscribers have to pay additional Tk.10 to 20 thousand for getting the connection of new power pump.

**Illegal punishment fee for the theft of Transformer**

Transformer provided by BMADA, is used for only 4-5 months, but the transformer remains unsafe during the rest of 8-7 months in the farming field. In this situation, if the transformer is stolen, the farmer is to pay around Tk.50,000-1,00,000 (50% - 50% share between BMADA and farmer) for getting new transformer. Mr. Rezaul of Shihnagar of Kansat Union paid Tk. 60,000 as fine without any inquiry on the theft/stealing of transformer from the Sheaner Chak (paddy field) and it was an unbearable burden for farmer. Kansat movement has established that, from now on ward, the authority should take the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the pumps.

**Late Fee**

If anyone was failed to pay monthly rent for meter within the submission or due date, then he had to pay Tk. 50 per month as late fee and in case of this type of failure, sometimes staffs of REB pull out the meter from the subscribers and they ask the charge again for re-connection.

**Damage of Meter**

In case of damage of meter, it was regulated that REB and subscribers would share the cost of further installation of new meter at fifty-fifty rate, but in case of accidental damage that act worked as twisted. If the meter is damaged due to natural disaster or being theft away, the staffs of PBS sometimes charge Tk. 5000-10000 as bribe. Ms. Aklima Begum, UP member of Kansat Union claimed, ‘electric meter was burnt two years back and she was charged Tk.4500 for a new meter and this amount is almost double of the exact charges’. Consequently, she denied paying that amount and as a result, she is still without electric connection since then. Besides, there was also claim that even if any cable connection is somehow being damaged, the subscribers are also charged fine. Sahtnaajal of Rani Nagar Village of Dharnagar Union reported, ‘once a rat disconnect the cable of meter, as a result, PBS charged primarily Tk.8000 as fine, but after the intervention of Mr. Rabbani, earlier Director of PBS, the subscriber finally paid reduced amount i.e. Tk. 2000:’

**Irregularities in collection of polls**

Though REB/PBS has the price of new polls but, accurate structure of charge is not followed and sometimes charges become more than the exact fee what ranges Tk.3000 -30000. REB also charges extra money for the subscribers who want to relocate the polls in different position; the land owner has to pay unlimited amount of money; even the relocation may be pro-people.

Mr. Golam Kabir Fakir, inhabitant of Dharnagar Union mentioned about “the harassment related to set the polls across his land at primary stage and PBS assured him about the future relocation at feasible place, but after certain period when he demanded PBS for relocation of polls to crate space for building new road then the PBS staffs demanded Tk 30000 as charge + bribe; and since then it is unresolved:”

Facing this sort of harassment and injustice of REB, the movement for quality service of electricity service came into action and finally, huge crackdown was committed by the administration on 4 January, 23 January, 6 April and lastly in 12 April. 23 innocent people sacrificed their lives and hundreds of people were injured for establishing their rights. As a result, strike for an indefinite period started from 7 April 2006 and at last Govt. accepted the 14 demands of “Polli Bidyut Sangram Committee” and made consensus in both sides on the following issues:

Withdrawal of meter rent, to fix the minimum charge at Tk.78 (against 25 unit), no punishment fee for providing side connection to the religious institution or any occasion purpose, no punishment fee for tampering meter without checking in the presence of the accused customer of PBS, in case of lost or theft of any transformer or cable, not imposing any penalty fee on farmer by PBS, compensation of Tk. 200,000 to each family who has already lost their member during movement, Tk. 100,000 to one seriously injured in eye, Tk. 50,000 for each of 10 seriously injured, Tk. 25,000 for each of 100 highly injured, Tk. 3000 for each of 600 injured people, a monument will be constructed to honor the people who sacrificed their lives during the movement, no fine will be imposed on the subscribers of Nawabganj PBS for their due amount, ‘Doa Dibash’ will be held on 4 or 23 January in each coming year.

**Lessons Learned from Kansat**

Each utility service provider has to be concern about how the service delivery mechanism can be pro-people, illegal intervention of political leader for the expansion of distribution lines has to be stopped, REB/PBS have to concentrate more on the quality of service rather than the import-collection ratio; authority of Board of PBS have to be increased for the approval of new lines, fixing tariff rates, other fees and services, punishment process, existing disparity between rural and urban in terms of tariff rate, load shedding and quality of other services as well, have to be removed as constitutionally, Govt./REB is bound to provide electricity to rural people; persuasion and nepotism especially in new connection process must be stopped with replacing transparent system, for ensuring the regular strict monitoring and accountable management system and the performance of PBS or REB staffs. Concerned citizens hope that REB or PBS will take the responsibility - “taking measures for effective use of electricity to foster rural development and establishment of rural industries”, mentioned in the guideline of REB, will be ensured.

M. Zakir Hossain Khan, Research Officer, TIB

**Sources:**

- REB
- Interview of the PBS Consumers of Kansat
- The Daily Prothom Alo and The Daily Samakal, and
- The Daily Naya Diganta

**Waves : TIB Newsletter 5**

According to Mr. Rabbani, “People of Kansat were very disturbed and oppressed since the establishment of Nawabganj PBS and I came to know about all these allegations during my campaign for the post of President of PBS. I committed to the people during my campaign that I would work for reducing meter charge and other demands. After being elected as the President, I demanded to the local PBS for three times to withdraw the provision of meter charge and for minimum bills to the higher officials of REB. However, REB authority denied every time, and in last time the highest authority of REB accused me for raising this type of proposal. Finally, I also raised these issues in the meeting of Performance Target Agreement of REB which was held in Head Office, but they denied again, and finally I became upset and this movement against REB started on August '05 to fulfill the following demand:

- To withdraw minimum charge i.e. Tk.105 - Tk. 121
- To withdraw meter charge i.e. Tk. 10 per month
- To ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity
- To stop the harassment of the staff of PBS
- Other facilities for PBS customers**

1 Organisation of rural level consumers, creates under the regulation of “Rural Electrification Board of Bangladesh”
2 Mentioned in the meeting of all presidents of PBSs was held in REB office on 26 April 2006
The Country that I want to see

Marufa Akter

Bangladesh! My Bangladesh! I want to see a Bangladesh, where the dream of a happy, prosperous and confident Bangladesh will become a reality.

The state will ensure such fundamental rights as food, clothing, housing, education and health care and ensure their qualitative improvement. It will also guarantee the fundamental rights of people and will be accountable to people for all its actions.

Education, as the vital force, will help materialize all human potentials. One state, one people, so education will also be unified. Our curriculum will take care of compatibility with the science and technology in the world, keeping an eye on our traditions and culture. All the levels of our education should be self-completed, but will, of course, integrate with other levels. Anyone qualifying in one level should be able to find jobs commensurate to his or her level of education. Our curriculum should encourage us to complete education step by step at all levels. Quality of education should be ensured by the quality of teachers who should be able to manage real education with enough competence.

Education, in my beloved country, will be able to create conscientious citizens. Illiteracy shall disappear. Not a single child will be deprived of primary education. Girl-child, indigenous-children and children who are unfortunately engaged in some form of labour will get special education. Even illiterate older people will get to see the light of some kind of education. We will be known to the world community as an educated and civilized nation.

There shall be good governance everywhere. All levels of administration will be transparent, accountable and free of corruption. A separate free and impartial judiciary will be there. Each citizen of the country shall be assured of justice without delay. No crime would go unpunished nor will a single innocent man be punished.

Our politics shall be of development and prosperity. It will have nothing to do with religion and shall be rooted to the history and tradition of the country. Religion will be for individuals while politics will be the concern of the state. There will not be any oppression on the minorities and small minorities like the Ahmadiya’s. The Bangladesh of my dream will be secular, non-violent and liberal country.

We shall have friendly relations with all countries of the world. Interest of the country will be the prime objective. Besides, having internal discipline and peace our dear country will play an important role in achieving world peace. All security forces will be strong, impartial and be real friend to all people. They will symbolize our dependence on them.

The government will ensure social security for all citizens. People will receive health care at all crises periods (old and/or disable people, people having no job and without a guardian) in life. Industrial wastes will be disposed of in an environ-friendly manner. We want a country where greenery will prevail.

My Bangladesh will be economically self-sufficient. Dependence on donor organizations will be minimum. More foreigners will be interested in direct investment in Bangladesh. People should be able to know about all details regarding conditions on which foreign money is brought in. Government expenditure will be made transparently and with integrity and accountability.

Our economy is agro-based. So modern technology shall have to be used to increase production. Subsidies should continue. Khas land will be distributed among landless farmers. New laws have to be enacted to ensure that no loan defaulting takes place in case of bank loans. Idle fund at banks should be distributed as micro-credit among reliable small entrepreneurs. As a result all wheels of the national economy will start moving.

I want strong local governments in my Bangladesh. The representatives of local self governments would be honest, efficient and committed to development. Local governments will be entrusted with the responsibility of preservation and maintenance of all government assets. Quality service should be available at all local service centres. Unified policies will be there for all private educational institutions, hospital and clinics. Government servants will be public servants in the real sense of the term.

We need widespread changes in the transport sector. Security of life in land, river and in air traffic needs to be guaranteed. If the government transports ensure better service then dependence on private transport will be reduced. Corruption free transport sector would mean peaceful travel unlike what they are today - messenger of death.

News media should enjoy freedom in supplying news. But ways should also be there to punish those who disseminate false and confusing information. To compete with free sky-culture, we must connect to scientific foreign cultures that will enrich our own culture.

Above all, I want to see my beloved Bangladesh as a proud country with its head high in the map of the world. Our Bangladesh will be known in the planet as one of those countries that has successfully conquered poverty, illiteracy and corruption and has become a pioneer in the road to peace.

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30 Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) set up through the initiative of TIB all over the country have asked the government and all other concerned to take steps to ensure that the coming election takes place in a free, fair, transparent and impartial ambience. This demand was raised in a sharing of opinion meeting organized by all CCCs in Dhaka on April 22, 2006.

Stressing the weaknesses of the Election Commission, in regard to its transparency structure and impartiality, speakers in the meeting said that there was no alternative but to have a free and transparent election process. Such a Commission only can ensure a government that will be free from corruption and free of influence of black money. The meeting also stressed upon the review of the present parliament-member’s pre-election pledges and demanded release of all relevant personal information of all prospective candidates for next election.

The youth must stand up against corruption

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said that corruption was eating out the heart of the country and urged upon the youth of the country to stand up against this. He said this on the 3rd of April 2006 in the British Council auditorium at the concluding ceremony of Inter-University Debate Competition on Corruption and Law. The competition was organized jointly by the Law Department of the University of Dhaka and TIB. In his address Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, told that people in general incurred loss because of corruption but they themselves were not corrupt. That's why it is absolutely necessary in the interest of the development of the country. Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Professor S M A Faiz was the chief guest in the function. Present in the meeting, among others, were TIB Executive Director, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Chairperson, Department of Law, University of Dhaka, Dr. Taslima Monsoor, Dean of Law Faculty, Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan and Professor Asif Nazrul. The programme was conducted by lecturer of the Law Department, Nazmuzzaman Bhuian.

Law Department of eight universities of the country took part in thes competition. The responsibility of judges in the final session of the debate was given to Justice Golam Rabbani, former IGP Dr. Enamul Huq and Joint Editor of the Daily Prothom Alo Abdul Quayum. Law Department of Dhaka University became the champion defeating the Law and Justice Department of Rajshahi University.

Opinion Sharing between TIB and RAC (Reporters Against Corruption)

TIB and RAC (Reporters Against Corruption) met at a discussion-meeting where they exchanged opinions as to how the Anti-Corruption Commission could play its role in a free and impartial ambience. The discussion took place on 30 April 2006 in the office of TIB at Gulshan. Mr. Shahiduzzaman, President of RAC, its General Secretary Mr. Mizan Malik and other members were present. On the TIB side besides its Executive Director, directors and other concern officials were present.

TV Talk Show

The subject for discussion in a Talk-show ‘GrameenPhone Tele-Shomoy’ broadcast by Channel-i on the last 23 June was, ‘Government Control on the Anti-Corruption Commission’. The discussants while discussing the various aspects of the subject, were unanimous that though the Commission was set up a year and a half ago it failed to play any active role. Government has decided on its staff structure recently but it clearly shows the control of the Government on it. The Commission has not yet decided on its work-plan. It is, therefore, not understood how it will start work after sorting out the thousands of complaints of corruption already reached there. Although they were supposed to examine some cases of political corruption it now appears that they have not been given such authority. These issues were raised in the discussion on Anti-Corruption Commission by a member of the Commission Professor Md. Moniruzzaman Mia, Chairman of TIB Board of Trustees, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and the treasurer, M Hafizuddin Khan. Besides, the same TV channel broadcast talk show, entitled The Youth against Corruption on June 2, 2006. Broadcast live in GrameenPhone Tele-Shomoy, Fahima Tasnim Tania, a student of fourth year from the Finance Department of Dhaka University, TIB volunteer Md. Ibnu1 Hasan and TIB official, M.Sajjad Hussein said, while discussing their role in preventing corruption, that the youth want to take the country forward. But they need a real leadership who guides them to tackle these social irregularities and bring positive changes in the society. The youth can use all their might only when they find proper guidance in bringing all these separate ideas in to focus.
The Women of Kansat against corruption
Syeda Amirun Nuzhat

People of Bangladesh, who are used to see such inequalities between men and women as frequent burning of housewives alive, throwing acid at school girls, i.e.-teasing by young hoodlums to the point of some girls committing suicide - saw a new dimension of women’s awakening in Kansat. All about this new role and experience of women can be learnt from talking to some ladies of Kansat.

The village of Chakkirti is a few kilometers away from Kansat. Although the men from this village took part at all stages of the movement, women were not involved at the early stage. A boy from this village, Nayan Karmakar was killed in police firing in January. When the boy’s mother, Chanchala Karmakar (45), came to know about this she joined a procession from Chakkirti. From then onwards she took a leading role in all processions. Nayan’s dead body was brought to his house 3 days after his death. That, too, after a great deal of efforts by his relatives. The police tried to burn Nayan’s deadbody without letting his to parent see it.

Mansura Begum (65) was involved at all stages of the movement. Right from the beginning she thought the cause for the movement was a rightful one. She walked with almost all the processions at this age. Her daughters-in-law drew inspiration and courage from her to join the movement. When Mansura Begum’s son Adv. Gholam Rabbani was arrested, her daughter-in-law Shamima Akhter Parul (35) took leadership of the movement. At one stage when Parul went on hiding another woman of this family, Rokeya (32) came to the forefront. Police arrested Rokeya on April 11, 2006 from a procession. She was taken to the Rural Electrification Office after arrest. She was handcuffed and tied to a tree with a rope for an hour. She was taken to Shibganj police station and kept in the custody for two days. Law, however, doesn’t allow one to be kept in custody for more than 24 hours at a stretch. Subsequently, Rokeya was taken to Nawabganj Police Station from where she was released at 5 a.m. on April 16. Two other women, Mabera and Daibaki were also arrested with Rokeya on the same day and were released after two days.

The women of Kansat colony, played a very courageous role, in the Kansat movement. When police entered the houses in the village and were beating them, the women of Kansat stood in resistance with bamboo sticks, brickbats, meat chopper, kitchen knives and such other weapons. Leaders among the bold ladies were, Sabera Begum (40), Sahera (50) and Romena (35). Romena’s brother-in-law Anwar was killed in police firing on 23 January 2006. Anwar’s wife took part in the movement though she was at that time with child. Mohirun of Gopalpur village told that her husband was hit in his nose by a rubber-bullet at a corner of their village road. Her two daughters were in hiding in the Puthimari marsh, to save themselves from police torture. None of them were sure about their food in those days. They told that the police torture in this movement exceeded that of Pakistani Army during 1971.

From children to old women of the age of 60/65 got involved in that movement. A woman of Bagdipara joined processions with her two-month old child. Many other ladies faced death to mourn their dead ones and to get their demands fulfilled.

The history of the world shows that it is always the backward people who got exploited most, but women of such backward people are more exploited than men. They are always deprived of their rights. But in Kansat, at a distant rural corner of Bangladesh, the women who fought bravely to get their rights, created a new history, to be emulated not only in Bangladesh, but in the whole world.

Syeda Amirun Nuzhat, Assistant Advocacy Officer, TIB

Mothers’ Gathering

CCCs are regularly organizing Mothers’ Gathering in order to make sure and increase awareness about the mother’s appropriate role in raising their children. With this end in view, several ‘Mothers’ Gathering’ were arranged, one on 8 April 2006 by the CCC Kurigram at the Atyaram Biswesswar Government Primary School of Belgacha Union, another by the CCC Muktagachha at Kheruajani Govt. Primary School, on April 20, 2006, another by the CCC Chapai Nawabganj at the Sadar Upazila’s Shalimdolpara Govt. Primary School on May 20 and one also by the CCC Kishoreganj at the Kishoreganj Model Boys School auditorium on June 20, 2006.
**Face the Public**

CCCs organize ‘Face the Public’ to ensure the transparency, accountability and improved quality of services provided by the local government administrations. The following are a few such meetings: CCC Mymensingh met members of ward 3 of Dapunia Union Parishad on April 23; CCC Kishoreganj met Chairman, Kishoreganj Municipality on May 16; CCC Natore met members of ward 2 of Natore Municipality on May 26; CCC Modhupur met members of Modhupur Upazilla on June 17.

**Seminar**

Several seminars were organized by the CCCs. Following are some of them: CCC Jhalakati seminar on April 18 on ‘Conscious Citizens against Corruption’; seminar on ‘Role of teachers and guardians in ensuring standard and quality education at primary level’ organized by CCC Kishoreganj on April 27; seminar organized by the CCC Jhenaidah on May 8 about ‘TIB’s role on movement against corruption in Bangladesh’; seminar on ‘Immorality and mismanagement in the field of education’ arranged by CCC Satkhira at the Satkhira Sadar Upazilla auditorium on May 8; CCC Barisal’s seminar on ‘Role of Political Parties on Resisting Corruption’ held on June 16; and the seminar organized by CCC Khulna entitled ‘Anti-corruption movement in Bangladesh – the role of TIB’ at Khulna Press Club on 18 June.

**Sharing Meeting with Journalists**

The following ‘Sharing Meeting with Journalists’ sessions were organized by various CCCs: On April 8 CCC Bagerhat met the journalists at Press Club auditorium; on April 12 at Office of CCC Pirojpur; on 18 May the meeting arranged by CCC Jessore was entitled, ‘Role of Journalist in Fighting Corruption’; on 18 May, at CCC Chakaria office a session entitled, ‘Anti-corruption movement in Bangladesh – the role of journalists’; on June 24, two meetings, one CCC Mymensingh meeting the press on the topic, ‘Role of journalists in preventing corruption and establishing good governance’ and another at Satkhira entitled ‘Role of journalists and CCC’s in resisting corruption’; and on June 12 the CCC Patiya arranged a meeting at its own office. Organized separately, in these Sharing Meetings, problems such as how to reduce corruption in the local self-government administration, various non-government organizations and how to increase accountability and transparency were discussed by CCCs and TIB officials with journalists.

**Discussion Meeting**

On the inception programme of CCC Jessore office, a Discussion Meeting was arranged by CCC Jessore on 5 April at its office. Besides, on the occasion of formal beginning of Barisal CCC and inauguration of its Advice and Information Desk (AID) a meeting was held on April 11. Similar meetings were organized by CCC Comilla and Rangpur on topics like ‘Role of women in preventing corruption’ and ‘Improving the quality of health service’ respectively, on May 22 and May 31.

**Exchange of views**

A meeting, to exchange views with the officials of Modhupur Upazilla Settlement Office in regard to corruption and irregularity in Land Administration was organized by CCC Modhupur on April 19. Apart from this meeting, several other meetings were organized by various CCCs at different places. They were as follows: on April 10 at Nalitabari on, ‘Getting govt. office services - problems and solutions’; on April 30, between all NGOs in Brahmanbaria Sadar Upazilla including local social and cultural organizations and CCC Brahmanbaria; on May 03, CCC Chittagong City met with Chittagong’s ‘Citizens for Transparency (Swajan)’; on May 20 CCC Brahmanbaria met with local citizens at Brahmanbaria Upazilla auditorium; on May 20, CCC Khulna arranged a meeting titled ‘CCC Khulna and Khulna City Corporation Mayor’; CCC Chandpur arranged a meeting with Chandpur Municipal Corporation on ‘Rights of citizens and transparency, accountability of Municipal Corporation’; and on May 22 CCC Kushlia arranged a exchange of view meeting at Kushlia Press Club Auditorium.

**Workshops**

A workshop on ‘Corruption: its effects on women’ was arranged by Advocate Nazrul Islam convenor of CCC Jamalpur at the Jamalpur Bar Auditorium on June 06. Besides, the CCC Sreemangal also arranged a workshop on ‘Influence of corruption on women and its remedies’. The workshop held at the office of CCC was chaired by its convenor, Saiyeed Mujeeb Rahman where the Sreemangal UNO Mr. Abbas Uddin was present as the Chief Guest.
Report Card Survey

Results of Report Card Survey by CCC Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Chapai Nawabganj on Primary and Secondary School’s services have already published. The results were announced through separate press conferences in the following way: On April 12, survey by CCC Kurigram at Kurigram District Education Building auditorium; on April 13 survey by CCC Lalmonirhat at Lalmonirha LGED auditorium; on May 18 survey by CCC Chapai Nawabganj. The reports show that in cases of primary and secondary education corruption and irregularities took place at all stages, such as, admission, scholarships, pay, distribution of free books, and collection of examination fee.

Other activities

Bangla New Year was celebrated in Barisal on April 15 at BM School play ground at the Udichi Boishakh Fair premises where Children’s Painting Competition on Anti-corruption subject ‘Dream of a Corruption Free Bangladesh’ was arranged by CCC Barisal. Prizes were distributed and discussions were held. On the occasion of May-Day volunteers of CCC Comilla organized a discussion meeting on ‘The role of working men and women against corruption’. Besides, the CCC Chakaria arranged at their own office a discussion meet on ‘Anti-corruption movement in Bangladesh: the role of working class’. People from all walks of life in Chokoria, its elite and leaders of various Labour Unions attended the meeting. On April 28 the convenor of CCC Patiya arranged a citizen’s conference in the King of Patiya auditorium. Mr. Sagir Mohammed, the convenor himself, presided over the meeting. At Mymensingh the CCC Mymensingh organized a workshop at Hotel Mustafiz on ‘Field level log-framing’. In the workshop subjects, such as, TIB’s monitoring and decision on evaluation base-line, log-frame evaluation and strategies to be adopted to gain the objective, were discussed.

Volunteer Activities

A one-day Orientation Programme was held in Sylhet on April 25, at the Hotel Sylhet Inn, for the Volunteer Groups from CCC Sylhet, Sunamganj and Sreemangal. About 60 CCC Volunteers, CCC members, TIB Executive Director and other officials were present.

On April 17, an Orientation Programme was organized by CCC Comilla where members of Volunteer Groups of CCC Comilla and CCC Chandpur attended.

The CCC Brahmanbaria Volunteers have started, side by side their own work, a long-term ‘Signature Campaign against Corruption’ from April 14, 2006. They have also started publishing a wallpaper named Ongikar (Pledges) from that day.

Volunteers of CCC Rangpur distributed a paper on April 30, containing information about services and fees/charges at Rangpur Medical College, as a part of their campaign against corruption. Besides, they also had a meeting about cleaning of wastes of Rangpur town with the Chairman, Rangpur Municipality.

June 5 was the World Environment Day. On that day Volunteers of CCC Mymensingh joined different rallies, street meetings and cultural functions, jointly organized by Mymensingh Municipality and local NGOs, with a special slogan ‘Wanted a cleaner and greener environment’, of their own.

An Orientation Programme for the Volunteers of CCC Jessore, Kushita and Jhenidah was arranged by CCC Jessore on June 18. Held at the auditorium of Jessore Rural Reconstruction Foundation this was attended by 60 Volunteers. Besides, the CCC Patiya arranged an Orientation programme on June 23 at Patiya Beta Cultural Centre. About 40 Volunteers from CCC Patiya and Chakaria took part in the programme.

They were given ideas about the role of youth in fighting corruption.

A human-chain was organized by CCC Modhupur Volunteers in order to save the wildlife and-teak forest of Modhupur. Thousands of people from various educational institutions, NGOs, journalists, different local associations, representatives from the civil society and people from different professions joined the human chain with clourful banners inscribed with slogans and posters demanding immediate and appropriate government action to save Modhupur wildlife and teak-forest.

CCCs formed at Savar and Munshiganj

On June 10, a meeting in VERC Training Centre at Savar formed CCC Savar inspired by TIB. A 12 member CCC was formed with the distinguished Savar citizen Mr. Jynal Abedin Khan as the convenor. On the other hand, a ten member CCC committee was formed at Munshiganj on June 26 with Professor Anil Kumar Chakrabarty as the convener. Meanwhile, 30 other such CCCs have already been formed in other places of Bangladesh and are functioning. It may be mentioned that by July 2006, four more CCCs will be formed, one each at Gazipur, Faridpur, Rajbari and Madariup.
Production based theatre workshop

Jhenaidah and Pirojpur: A production based theatre workshop was organized by CCC Jhenaidah from April 16 to 20. This workshop was inaugurated by CCC convenor Advocate Sheikh Salim at the Central Training Centre of a local organization ‘Aid’. A play entitled Crush (Devour) was produced in that workshop. Similarly, another production based theatre workshop was organized from April 30 to May 4 by CCC Pirojpur. This five-day workshop was inaugurated at the local Scout Bhaban by CCC Convenor Prof. Sheikh Sayedur Rahman. A play Praytasha (Aspirations) was produced reflecting the problems and corruption of Pirojpur.

Mymensingh, Muktagachha, Nalitabari and Kishoreganj: A joint production based theatre workshop was organized at the National Academy for Primary Education at Mymensingh College Road from May 3 to May 7 by the CCCs of Kishoreganj, Nalitabari, Mymensingh and Muktagachha. Four separate plays namely, ‘Arr Na (No More), ’ ‘Janatar Shakti (People’s Power), ’ ‘Akasher Shimana (Sky is the Limit), ’ ‘Arekta Juddho (Another War)’ were produced respectively by the Mymensingh, Nalitabari, Muktagachha and Kishoreganj People’s Theatre Groups. All the plays showed how people were oppressed by corruption and irregularity at local level and how the same people stood up and started resistance against such exploitation. Premier show of Arekta Juddho’ held in Kishoreganj Model Boy’s School auditorium on June 20. More than 300 people enjoyed the play.

Comilla: A production based theatre workshop was organized by CCC Comilla from May 15 to 19. 12 theatre activists attended the workshop. The workshop identified areas of corruption in Comilla and prepared a play entitled, ‘Jege Othar Pala (Time to Wake up).’ All theatre activists of different groups were given certificates after each workshop.

Regular Shows

‘Wake up Men’ (Jago Manush) a play by people’s theatre group of CCC Sreemangal was staged at Sindurkhlan Bazar premises of Sreemangal Upazila on May 16. About a thousand audience, tea-garden labour, students, teachers, local government representatives, businessmen and journalists were present at the show. Address of welcome was delivered by the Chairman No. 4 Sindurkhlan Union Council, Hussain Mohammad Abdullah at the beginning of the show.

On May 21, at Taragarj on Rangpur, CCC Rangpur People’s Theatre Group staged an anti-corruption play, ‘Andhar (Darkness).’ More than 700 people enjoyed the play. Another play, ‘Durnitir Chobal (Bite of Corruption)’ by the theatre group of CCC Muktagachha was staged at Fakirganj Bazar of Muktagachha in the spontaneous presence of more than 400 audience.

Anti-Corruption Gambhira

CCC Chapai Nawabganj organized a Gambhira (a special type of folk song of Rajshahi, Maldaha, Mursidabad area) to show its oneness with the anti-corruption movement of Kansat in Chapai Nawabganj on May 1, at Kansat Bazaar.

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Want to know about Huguette Labelle

Want to know detail about Huguette Labelle, the present Chairperson of Transparency International. How long he or she has been associated with TI and where is he/she from?

Shelly Ahmed, Kushtha

Reply: Huguette Labelle is a Canadian citizen. She was elected Chair of TI on November 13, 2005 at the annual meeting of TI. A Ph.D in Education, Huguette Labelle held various government and international organization posts. Important among them were the posts of President, Canadian CIDA, Deputy Chief of Working Group on Health and Development Policy of World Health Organization, Deputy Minister of Communication, Canada and Chairperson of Public Service Commission. Before she was elected Chair of TI she was a honorary member of many Canadian and international organizations and the Chancellor of Ottawa University.

POST BOX

Women’s empowerment

“Women are the worst victims of corruption. Women suffer comparatively much higher injustice and exploitation than men as a result of corruption. Women’s empowerment is necessary to fight corruption”- congratulation to TIB for writing an editorial on this subject in its March issue.

Munmun Rahman, Nirala Road, Khulna.

Honest and corruption-free candidates needed for the election

If everything goes alright, then the next national election will take place in January, next year. This election is very important for the country. Specially, a real people’s parliament is needed to save the country from corruption. Some limited number of people engage themselves in corruption and the whole nation bears the burden. If the conscious people of the country elect honest and fairminded people for the parliament then only the country will be free of corruption. We all hope and pray that honest and able people will be given nomination for the next election.

Abul Kashem, Sadar Road, Barisal

A multi-millioaire peon of Agrani Bank

Anwar Hossain Belal is a peon of Agrani Bank. But that did not prevent him from having the owner of a multistoried building in Dhaka. He has a house at 135 South Mugda, a two storied house at 484, South Mandar in front of Battala Mosque, lots of land and property at North Mugda and Mridhabari, Demra. Anti Corruption Commission has sent a letter to this peon of Agrani Bank main office to explain the source of his wealth. Another letter issued by the Zeaul Islam, Director of Commission, asking him to send the wealth statement of his dependents within 30 days.

Source: The Daily Inqilab, May 24, 2006
Professor Muzaffer Ahmad of TIB takes over as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Mr. Abdullah Abu Syed and Dr. Iqbal Mahmud new trustees.

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, renowned educationist, leader of many citizen’s rights movement including Movement for Safe Environment and one of the founding trustees of TIB took over as the Chairman of Board of Trustees with effect from May 1, 2006. In a recent Annual General Meeting of the TIB Board of Trustees he was unanimously elected as the Chairman for the next two years. Before this, he was the Treasurer of the Board.

On the same day another founding Trustee of TIB, Mr. Mahfuz Anam, editor of a daily newspaper The Daily Star, took over the duties of Secretary-General of TIB Board of Trustees. Mr. Anam took over this responsibilities from S. Ruhy Ghuznavi. An adviser to the last Caretaker Government, M. Hafiz Uddin Khan took over the duties of the Treasurer. Two members of Trustee Board, Syed Humayun Kabir and Kazi Aminul Huq, went on retirement recently.

Dr. Iqbal Mahmud, renowned educationist and Abdullah Abu Syed, founder of the Biswa Sahitya Kendra joined the Board of Trustees. Other members of the Board are, Samson H Chowdhury, Professor Khan Sawar Murshid, Advocate Tawfiq Nawaz, S. Ruhy Ghuznavi and Sultana Kamal.

Advisory Committee
Some renowned persons of the country joined the Advisory Committee of the TIB Board of Trustees. They are: renowned educationist and professor of BRAC University, Dr. Ferdous Azim, women entrepreneur, Laila Rahman Kabir, Country Director of the Hunger Project, Dr. Badru Alam Majumder, renowned researcher and Director General of Bangladesh Family Planning Association (FPAB), Dr. Halida Hanum Akhtar and professor of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dhaka, Dr. Parween Hassan. Besides, on behalf of TIB members Associate Professor of IBA of Dhaka University, Mr. Imran Rahman and eminent writer-educationist Professor Hasan Azizul Huq from the Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) joined the Advisory Committee of TIB for a year.

Research Fellowship
TIB is offering fellowships to undertake policy and action-oriented research on specific themes and issues related to fighting corruption and promoting accountability, transparency and good governance in Bangladesh. Overall objective of the fellowships is to facilitate new thinking and strategies on strengthening TIB’s social movement against corruption, especially greater public awareness and participation as well as collaboration and advocacy with all stakeholders including the Government. For more details visit TIB’s website: www.ti-bangladesh.org

Members Day – May 2006
Members Day – May 2006 was celebrated on May 27 amidst discussion by the participants on the role of TIB to ensure that the next national election is held in a free, fair and corruption-free ambience. The Day started at 3 p.m. at the conference room of TIB Head Office with good wishes to everyone present. TIB members engaged themselves in finding different ways and means to increase momentum to the current activities of TIB for good and corruption-free governance. The members also came out with suggestions regarding further new activities to be taken by TIB. Executive Director, TIB, briefed the members about the new Advisory Committee of TIB. For the first time this year a large number of young members took part on this Members Day.

Important Activities, July – September 2006
- Exchange View Meeting with UP members: July
- CCC Formation: July
- Report Card Workshop: July – September
- Volunteer Activities in Barisal, Khulna, Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Comilla: July – September
- Inter University Debate Competition: September
- People’s Theatre Workshop: August – September
- Publication of Research Report: August – September
- Seminar on Gender and Corruption: September
- Publication of Working Paper on Ombudsman: September
People’s movement against corruption

Corruption is one of the most difficult and complex challenges hindering the process of development and social change in Bangladesh. Corruption discourages internal and external investments, slows down balanced distribution of wealth and increases social inequality. It also prevents human development, increases poverty and stands in the way of citizens’ entitlement of fundamental rights. It increases deprivation and creates a sense of insecurity amongst people by encouraging social chaos, crimes and disorder. Rampant corruption has eroded democratic values and deepened people’s frustration. Pushed against the wall, the people have now started to mobilize themselves for specific action against corruption as recently observed in Kansat, Shanir Akhra and some other places.

It was no less than a people’s revolution in Kansat in Chapainawabganj, where people protested against the irregularities and corruption in the Rural Electrification Board. The local subscribers have been paying high price for electricity, but were too often deprived of the supply of electricity consistent with price paid. The supply of electricity were reduced or stopped without any notice or compensation. It has been mandatory for all subscribers to pay a fixed fee of Taka 110 as monthly rent and minimum charge even if electricity supply was unavailable for days together. Customers were charged indiscriminately to compensate for losses incurred for theft of a transformer or cable. Complain of bribery are widespread in all stages of management ranging from collection of application forms for new connection to actual connection of power-line and replacement of a meter. Allegations of highhandedness by the staff were common. Shortage of electricity for irrigation of farm lands angered the people further.

At one stage the movement of people at Kansat took the shape of a fierce struggle. A peaceful people's movement for establishing their rights turned violent when the Government resorted to repression and the law enforcement agencies opened fire on the striking citizens. Four months of people’s struggle for ensuring their rights to electricity finally compelled the authority to accept their demands, though by then 20 valuable lives were lost.

Elsewhere also the people are getting more organized to press their demands for eliminating corruption in various service sectors such as electricity and water supply. News of such assertion of people’s rights is often reported in the media. General strikes were observed in Chatmohar (Pabna) in protest against corruption in rural electrification. Enraged people resorted to protest meetings and rallies at places like Gazipur, Naogaon. A near-explosive situation was created at Shanir Akhra near Dhaka. People in this area came out on the streets on the 5th of May to press their demands for water and electricity. Frustration of nearly 10 lakh people living in the area crossed the level of tolerance and they stood up against chronic irregularities and corruption and absence of accountability of the concerned authority. Later, the situation was brought under control with the help of the army.

It is quite natural that the people would protest against failures of the concerned authorities to ensure the delivery of public services at the desired level, especially when the people are paying. Most of the common people work hard to make both ends meet. The state is run by the tax paid by the people and the revenue earned from whatever they produce. But they do not receive the desired level and quality of service. On the contrary, corruption, violence and other numerous governance failures make their lives miserable.

Article 14 of the Bangladesh Constitution provides that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to emancipate the toiling masses - the peasants and workers - and backward sections of the people from all forms of exploitation. We therefore, demand that the people be soon relieved of all the deprivation and exploitation resulting from corrupt practices especially those prevailing in the key service sectors directly affecting the daily lives the people. It is incumbent upon the Government to take the main responsibility. We want that the Government demonstrates the political will to fight corruption and plays its due role effectively and responsibly. Special efforts must be made to develop accountability and transparency mechanisms in key public service delivery institutions at local levels. Concrete results in controlling and reducing corruption are indispensable to prevent recurrence of movements such as those in Kansat and Shanir Akhra.