Drive Against Corruption

Anti-corruption Concert and Cultural Festival
Children Art Competition
Theater Workshop

Seminar on Ombudsman
Judicial Corruption
CCC News

Drive Against Corruption in Chittagong Port
Report Card Survey

SOCIAL MOVEMENT AGAINST CORRUPTION
Right to Information Law – Precondition for success of anti-corruption reform

The 28th of September is the International Right to Know Day. Countries around the world have been observing this day each year since 2002 campaigning for establishing and promoting people’s right to information. A precondition for ensuring people’s fundamental rights is to ensure their access to information.

People are the ultimate owners of the State and all its resources, and must have the right to know how these are used. The United Nations General Assembly at its very first session in 1946 adopted the Resolution 59(I) which states that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, and it is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which UN is consecrated. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations recognizes the freedom of opinion and expression. The Bangladesh Constitution, in its Article 7 vests all powers in the State to the people. Article 39 of our Constitution provides that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. And thereby, indirectly though, it provides for citizen’s right to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas.

In many countries, such as Sweden, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have the Constitution has accorded explicit recognition to citizen’s right to have access to information and express opinions. In others access to information of citizens has been guaranteed through specific laws, with or without having enshrined in the Constitution. Such right to information (RTI) laws are in vogue in more than 62 countries of the world. In Bangladesh, neither is there a specific Constitutional provision for RTI, nor any separate law to provide for the right.

On the other hand, there is no alternative to free flow of information as the key to curbing corruption and promoting good governance. A strong public opinion has already been created in favour of enacting the RTI law. The Law Commission of Bangladesh prepared a working paper in 2002. Various organizations including TI, the National Press Club have also been campaigning in favour of the RTI law. The Law Adviser recently gave his commitment in favour of the RTI law when the MJF draft was presented to him by representatives of organizations like TIB, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Ain-O-Shalish Kendra.

Secretiveness helps discretion, which by preventing transparency and limiting the scope for accountability creates the space for corruption. Transparency International research shows that corruption is comparatively less in countries where the right to information has been established by law. In our case not only that the right to information law has not been enacted, there are in fact a number of laws that prevent free flow of, and access to information. These include the Official Secrets Act 1923, the Evidence Act 1872, the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure 1860, the Rules of Business 1996 and the Government Servants Conduct Rules 1979.

We want that alongside enactment of the right to information law, the existing laws and regulations that hinder free flow of information be repealed or appropriately amended, without which no right to information law, even if enacted can be effectively enforced.

The present government has taken a strong stand against corruption. For the first time in the country efforts are on to criminalize corruption without fear or favour. Many significant legal, institutional and policy reforms have been undertaken. Independence of the Judiciary, reconstitution and reform of the Anti-corruption Commission, Election Commission and Public Service Commission, and accession to the UN Convention against Corruption are highly commendable and firm signals that the Government is committed to building the structures of an effective national integrity system and democratic institutionalization.

None of these reforms can, however, be truly effective and sustainable without the right to information law, which is an indispensable precondition for effective functioning of those institutions. We therefore urge upon the Government to enact the Right to Information Law without any further delay.
Cover story

Drive Against Corruption

Emdadur Rahman stays in Toronto. He has returned to the country recently. He considers the current drive against corruption as indispensable for the country.

Mahbub Uddin Chowdhury lives in Faridabad of Dhaka. In his opinion, a category of corrupt politicians are responsible for Bangladesh’s reputation as a corrupt country in the world, and they did so by taking turns in going to power. They have ruined the country’s resources. They must be tried. All corrupt people including the bureaucrats and businessmen should be put to trial.

Rokeya Sultana is a housewife. She came to visit her sister’s residence at Rampura of Dhaka. She says, ‘if we cannot eliminate the corrupt from politics, if the prevailing corrupt elements in politics are not eradicated, then we will have to go back to that same politics which we tolerated in the past’.

The country would be freed from corruption Musclemen and criminals would perish, This society would abound with peace Reforms would come through legislation.
Muhammad Habibur Rahman
Former Chief Justice and Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government

Resistance against corruption has to be built up at the grassroots level:
Lt. Gen. Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd.), ACC Chairman
Corruption is the biggest problem facing the country. Now is the right time for eradicating corruption. Compared to curtailing it, prevention of corruption is more effective. A direct and spontaneous role of the civil society is needed in this. Resistance has to be built up against corruption at the grassroots level. We must move forward with the goal of emerging victorious in this continuing fight against corruption. Corruption will have to be buried in this country by holding aloft the slogan: ‘Won’t indulge in corruption, won’t allow others to engage in corruption’. We want to defeat corruption, we seek to conquer corruption.

Like Emdadur Rahman, Mahbub Uddin Chowdhury or Rokeya Sultana, almost everybody in the country wants a corruption-free Bangladesh. This has been a cherished hope of the people. But no importance was attached to such expectations in the past.

A sensation was created when the television channels showed recovery of crores of taka from the pillows, beddings and rice-drum of former Chief Conservator of Forests Mr. Osman Ghani. People never thought that a protector would become such a devourer. But this person had lodged a strong protest when corruption worth Taka 67 crore in the Forest Department was mentioned in the Corruption Database Report released by TIB on 5 July last year. He had rejected that report outright.

We have been strongly determined to uphold the public opinion against corruption from the beginning:
Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government

We have been trying to create a corruption free and decent socio-economic structure in the country. These endeavours and achievements are not only for a fair election. Stability in the socio-economic and political arena and establishment of rule of justice is badly needed for a developing country like us. We have been strongly determined to uphold the public opinion against corruption from the beginning. A corrupt class has accumulated huge amount of wealth previously using their power and influence. The beneficiaries are very little but it is the general people who suffered. For this reason government is strengthening the Anti Corruption Commissions to stop corruption.

Glimpses of corruption committed by the stalwarts are being routinely unravelled during the current drive against corruption. The extent of criminalisation of politics becomes quite evident from the news of confessions given by arrested politicians and bureaucrats before the joint interrogation cell as published in various newspapers. Ironically, the previous two governments pledged to combat corruption in their election manifestos. They also made promises in their election manifestos to appoint an Ombudsman as soon as possible, establish an independent anti-corruption commission, ensure transparency and accountability in purchases undertaken by all state-controlled organizations and publish statements of assets and liabilities of all elected representatives including the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and other individuals of similar status. But most of those pledges remained unfulfilled. The cherished dreams of the voters and the common citizenry were shattered. The institutions which were supposed to play an active role in tackling corruption were either ineffective or were made so.

The status of corruption wouldn’t have been so grave if the organizations responsible to control it performed their duties properly. The much needed political intention to prevent corruption was also absent. Though there was parliamentary government present in the country the parliamentary committees failed to ensure accountability of the government to the people. The Anti-Corruption Commission was practically inactive for two and half years after its establishment. The Election Commission and the Public Service Commission lost their acceptance by getting involved in corruption. The law enforcement organization was heavily corrupt. Corruption affected the
Trials of the corrupt and their exemplary punishment must be ensured:

Dr. Kamal Hossain
Eminent Lawyer

The people want the trials of corruption to be carried forward through proper investigations. For this to happen, trials and exemplary punishment of the corrupt persons must be ensured through a transparent legal process by combining facts and evidential proofs efficiently. The people should be informed about everything. There is undoubtedly a consensus on the subject. It is possible to make much headway in providing healthcare, education and treatment of our people and advance the task of poverty alleviation with the huge amount of money usurped through corruption by depriving the state and the poor and neglected segments of the country’s population. The people who were victims of these fraudulent acts and deprivations are in favour of freeing the society cum polity of corruption. And those who had indulged in these corrupt acts would naturally try to undermine this anti-corruption campaign. And those people who had misappropriated huge amounts of money and transferred those outside the country would seek to make this drive controversial. It may also be seen that publicity is undertaken within and outside the country by capitalising on legal deficiencies, lack of transparency or procedural limitations. Consequently, the government and the Anti-Corruption Commission should demonstrate efficiency and determination in taking stringent legal measures against the corrupt people by investigating all incidents of corruption if this anti-corruption drive is to be successful. The people should be involved in the whole process.

A new crisis may emerge in running the country if conflict arises between the anti-corruption drive and the political right of the people:

ABM Musa
Journalist and Columnist

Holding a free, fair, transparent and neutral election benefit the influence of the corrupt for electing genuine people’s representatives who are honest is a fundamental commitment and vital obligation of the present government. It should be acknowledged that there was no alternative to an all-out campaign against the corrupt, reputed-to-be-corrupt, persons identified by the people and political robbers who used arms and money in order to organize such elections. That means one had to take to the fields for killing the cat on the very first night. No questions have therefore been raised on the subject during the past four months. But now time has come for becoming selective. Action should be taken against the infamous and the unknown, unidentified and identified corrupt persons. There may be problems if doubts appear about any other grounds, especially political grounds. A new crisis may crop up if there is any conflict between the anti-corruption drive and the political rights of the people.

The people do not want a return to the old state of affairs, which we have witnessed for so long. Corruption has to be brought down to a tolerable level through political goodwill and participation of the people. We have to move forward systematically if we are to eliminate corruption. A long-term strategy has to be adopted. It took the United States one hundred years to curtail corruption. W

Nobody has asked for forgiveness for the misdeeds they committed:

Selina Hossain
Litterateur

None of the people, who have been arrested, remanded or jailed for corruption has sought forgiveness for their misdeeds. They haven’t said that they did anything wrong by resorting to corruption. It is not proper to expect such behaviour from corrupt individuals. Such an expectation is not appropriate as such examples are quite rare.

The people are now curious to know whether the trial of these corrupt people would actually take place. Whether those being punished by the lower courts would go scot-free after appealing in the higher courts? But whatever questions may appear in people’s minds, there is no doubt that the countrymen support the present drive against corruption.

But it is not possible to curb corruption merely through drives. No doubt, the corrupt are becoming fearful due to this campaign. But combating corruption cannot be successful if the basic institutions in the national integrity system do not function properly. Numerous institutions including the Jatiya Sangsad, Parliamentary Standing Committees on various ministries, the judiciary, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Board of Revenue, office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Public Service Commission, Election Commission, political parties and police administration have a key role in this. It is however encouraging to note that the government has already taken various measures for making these institutions effective and active.

TIB has been waging a massive campaign against corruption during the past ten years. The mass media played a commendable role in this campaign. But the political governments did not pay any heed to the public opinion which was generated as result of this campaign. It can be claimed that the current anti-corruption drive is a direct consequence of that negligence.

Sources of eminent personalities’ statements: The dailies Prothom Alo, Jugantar and Sangbad
Although underhand dealings at Chittagong seaport seem to have ceased in the changed scenario, bribery still continues stealthily despite strict monitoring under the current anti-graft drive. According to a latest investigation by the TIB in the first few months of 2007, about Tk 300 crore has been transacted in bribe while this amount was Tk 943.48 crore in 2006.

TIB released its findings at a roundtable in the conference room of Chittagong Chamber on 12 May. Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd.), who was present at the function, urged the government to go for hard action against the corrupt practices and irregularities.

ACC Chairman said that he was very much surprised while reading the report- “its a wonder that the port is running with all these problems. now it time to get rid off corruption. for this everyone has to bear a sacrificing mentality. He also added that everyone of the country will be affected if corruption can not be uprooted from there.

The TIB report revealed that in the changed situation, after the take-over by the present caretaker government, ships are forced to pay Tk 10,000 to officials for berthing at the port jetty or anchoring at the outer anchorage. all these bribe is paid either by the importer or the exporter. consequently to make up this loss they raise they increase commodity price and ultimately the price is paid by general people and consumers.

But, in case of over-drafting vessels, this rate sometimes crosses Tk 100,000 through “understanding”, the TIB said, adding that the rate of bribing was almost similar in 2004 and 2006. In some particular cases, the rate was raised in 2006. some other problems were revealed in the report like in the human resource sector. It was found that around 31.9% and 33.3% posts are vacant in the port and customs section respectively. there is also lack of technical expertise with a lack of 24% in officially approved machinery.

Lack of transparency and accountability are hindering progress in port and customs authorities’ activities. It was found in the TIB investigation that the extortion and irregularities have been “institutionalized” at the seaport—country’s commercial lifeline.

The TIB put forward some recommendations for elevating the country’s prime port to a modern and efficient one.

These include amendment to Port Authority Act 1976, introducing online system in customs clearance, imposing ban on all kinds of political activities on the port premises and introducing a zero-tolerance policy in dealing with irregularities and corruption.

It was also suggested in the report to set up monitoring cell of ACC, handover the loading and unloading of goods to private management, increase the container storing space, increase ICD number, strengthen security system and use scanner to check goods for reducing corruption and increase efficiency in the port system.
Rendering services to the people through optimum utilisation of available resources is the responsibility of the state. The people also have some accountability in this task. The quality of services decline if the government machinery becomes weak and inefficient and the service-providing organizations become corrupt; the sufferings and harassment of the people rise as they fall prey to financial corruption. The Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) and TIB seek to establish and uphold the rights of the people at local level by improving the quality of services. And as a first step in this endeavour, these CCCs conduct Report Card Surveys for ascertaining the quality of services rendered by the service providing organizations of the government and for determining the level of satisfaction of the service-recipients.

Advocacy is undertaken at various levels for implementing the recommendations produced in the light of findings from these surveys with the objective of raising mass awareness against corruption. The CCCs carry out advocacy at local level on the basis of report card findings through various means like opinion-exchange meetings, workshops, seminars, publicity tools, Satellite Advice and Information desk, people’s theatre, etc. They strive to raise service-quality by identifying corruption in various government organizations on the one hand, and by exchanging views with relevant authorities or by getting involved directly or indirectly as much as possible on the other hand. Side by side, various programmes are taken up on behalf of TIB at local and national levels with the objective of bringing about changes in relevant policies and institutions.

During 2006, over 90 report card surveys on 21 subjects were carried out in 24 CCC areas in accordance with the demands of local populace and the CCCs. During the April-June quarter of 2007, 35 reports on 9 subjects were released at the local level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of Survey</th>
<th>Place of Publication (April-June 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>Chakaria, Jessore, Jhenidah, Satkhira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunamganj, Sreemangal, Sylhet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pirojpur, Jhalkati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>Brahmanbari, Barisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Madhupur, Muktagachha, Nalitabari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bagerhat, Kushthia, Khulna, Patiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jessore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Jamalpur, Madhupur, Mymensingh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muktagachha, Nalitabari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Administration</td>
<td>Jhalkati, Sunamganj, Sylhet, Pirojpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>Khulna, Satkhira, Kushthia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Parishad</td>
<td>Patiya, Chakaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway Station</td>
<td>Chandpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRTA</td>
<td>Comilla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respected individuals including the relevant officials, journalists and members of the civil society are invited by the CCCs during release of these reports, but the concerned authorities do not always respond to these invitations. In most cases, they gave their views on the reports in written form. Through this process, good relations with the government organizations could be established, which were almost non-existent previously. We believe that improvements would take place in the service-delivery system through their joint initiatives and active participation.

Special importance has been attached to education and health in our millennium development goals. TIB has also decided to prioritise the education and health sectors. Supporting this decision, all the CCCs conducted report card surveys in their respective localities on education and healthcare services.

Primary and secondary education: Findings of report card surveys were released in 9 CCC areas during April-June 2007. Opinions of citizens as well as the extent of their dissatisfaction with prevailing irregularities, mismanagement and corruption in the primary education services were narrated in these reports.

It has been observed in most of the reports that fees were collected from the students under different heads although primary education has been declared to be universal and free, stipends are not distributed properly and the students have to take recourse to private coaching as the quality of education in schools was poor. Besides, research also showed lack of attention and sincerity on the part of teachers, neglect in discharging duties, absence of accountability and specific monitoring mechanism, infrastructural weaknesses of schools, mischievous role of school managing committees and inadequate allocation of funds.
The teachers and students who were present during these publication ceremonies also narrated many other anomalies. These included widespread corruption in the education department, corruption in postings and transfers of teachers, wayward acts and lack of supervision by district and upazila education officers, politicisation of primary education, inadequate financial allocation for examinations, nationally observed occasions and entertainment of guests, insufficient number of teachers and fourth class employees in schools, lack of infrastructures like sufficient classrooms, power, pure drinking water and provisions for first aid.

**Healthcare Services:**
Considering the importance of this sector, report card surveys have been conducted in all CCC areas. A total of eight reports were published between April and June this year. Sufferings and harassments faced by the people while receiving healthcare services have been depicted in these reports. The people have to face irregularities and corruption in all areas and are deprived of lawful services. Various categories of officers and employees including physicians and nurses are directly involved in these anomalies. Proofs of various institutional weaknesses could be deciphered from these surveys including payment of extra fees for services meant to be free or cheap, irresponsibility of physicians, meetings with medical representatives during consultation sessions, neglect and misbehaviour with patients, wayward acts by officials, staffs and middlemen and insufficient medicines and beds.

It has been observed in most of the reports that fees were collected from the students under different heads although primary education has been declared to be universal and free, stipends are not distributed properly and the students have to take recourse to private coaching as the quality of education in schools was poor. Besides, research also showed lack of attention and sincerity on the part of teachers, neglect in discharging duties, absence of accountability and specific monitoring mechanism, infrastructural weaknesses of schools, mischievous role of school managing committees and inadequate allocation of funds.

The CCCs put forward a number of recommendations to the local government authorities on the basis of these survey findings; some recommendations were also sent to policy levels for solving the problems. During the publication ceremonies, the concerned CCCs stated their resolve to play an effective role in raising the service quality of various public sector institutions through advocacy programmes. The CCCs and TIB hope that the relevant service-providing organizations of the government would themselves conduct report card surveys for ensuring satisfaction of citizens in the near future.

Shadhan Kumar Das, Research Officer, TIB.
Corruption is undermining judicial systems around the world, denying citizens access to justice and the basic human right to a fair and impartial trial, sometimes even to a trial at all, according to the Global Corruption Report 2007: Corruption in Judicial Systems issued on 24 May by Transparency International.

“Equal treatment before the law is a pillar of democratic societies. When courts are corrupted by greed or political expediency, the scales of justice are tipped, and ordinary people suffer,” said Dr. Huguette Labelle, Chair of Transparency International. “Judicial corruption means the voice of the innocent goes unheard, while the guilty act with impunity.”

The new Global Corruption Report concludes that a corrupt judiciary erodes the international community’s ability to prosecute transnational crime and inhibits access to justice and redress for human rights violations. It undermines economic growth by damaging the trust of the investment community, and impedes efforts to reduce poverty.

Judicial corruption usually falls into two categories: political interference in the judicial process by the legislative or executive branch, and bribery. The importance of an independent judiciary cannot be overemphasised. Everyone loses when justice is corrupted, in particular the poor, who are forced to pay bribes they cannot afford. TI’s latest global survey of attitudes towards corruption reveals that in more than twenty-five countries, at least one in ten households had to pay a bribe to get access to justice. In a further twenty countries, more than three in ten households reported that bribery was involved in securing access to justice or a ‘fair’ outcome in court. Petty bribery and political influence in the judiciary erode social cohesion: one system for the rich and another for the poor fractures communities.

The Global Corruption Report 2007 offers detailed recommendations to promote judicial independence and accountability, encourage individual integrity, more effective enforcement of the law and to safeguard the judiciary against political influence. Judicial and prosecutorial appointments and removals must be transparent, independent of the executive and legislative branches, and based on experience and performance. Journalists must be free to monitor and comment on legal proceedings, reporting reliable information on laws, proposed changes in legislation, court procedures and judgements to the public.

An independent judicial appointments body should be at the heart of the judicial selection process. Judicial appointments should be merit-based, with clear and well publicised election criteria; candidates should be required to demonstrate a record of competence and integrity. Civil society, including professional associations linked to judicial activities, should be consulted on the merits of candidates. Judicial salaries should reflect experience, performance and professional development; fair pensions should be provided on retirement. Protections to safeguard salaries and working conditions against interference by the executive and legislature branches should be established. Judicial transfers should be based on objective criteria to protect independent and impartial judges.

Judges should receive limited immunity for actions relating to judicial duties. Allegations against judges should be rigorously investigated, including by an independent body. The removal process should be transparent and fair, with strict and exacting standards; if there is a finding of corruption, a judge should be liable to prosecution. The judiciary should provide the public with reliable information about activities and spending. Access to information on laws, proposed changes in legislation, court procedures, judgments, judicial vacancies and appointments is needed. The prosecution must conduct judicial proceedings in public and publish reasons for decisions.

The TI disclosed the GCR 2007 simultaneously from Dhaka, London and Berlin on 24 May. TI released the report at a roundtable discussion held at BIAM Multipurpose Auditorium with its trustee Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid in the chair. TI treasurer M. Hafizuddin Khan moderated the session while Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman presented the GCR 2007. Among others, Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, Justice KM Sobhan, Prof. Moniruzzaman Mia, Justice Abdur Rouf, Justice Golam Rabbani, Awami League Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta, Col. Shawkat Ali (Retd.), Dr. Enamul Haque and Taleya Rehman spoke in the occasion.

Suggesting the set up of ‘Elders Council’ that would be composed of three former chief justices to appoint justices, former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury said corruption has taken a turn into “blood cancer” and it would not be eradicated if nepotism, favouritism are not stopped. He also said, “The chief justice should be provided with more power so that he can take actions against the corrupt people in judiciary,” adding that judges should be given the opportunity to work independently.
"The chief justice should also be strong in keeping the district judges corruption free," the former chief justice observed rejecting any links between corruption and the provision to make former chief justices the chief of caretaker government. Emphasising the need for 'human quality' improvement of the judges, Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid said judges should be provided proper training. He also said the judiciary should be a self-regulating body and a responsible press might act as the guardian. "No institution can sustain ignoring the society but many things were done in last 20 years keeping the people in the dark," he said.

Calling on finding out ways to remove the inefficient justices, Justice K M Sobhan said "systematic changes are necessary in the judiciary and the Bar Council should get more power and salaries of the judges should be increased." At this point Suranjit Sengupta said, "I hope the chief justice will write for forming Supreme Judicial Council without making any delay." "Elders Council might be formed if there was no legal complexity or the decision might come from the people," he said regarding the removal procedure of a judge. He said everyone should work together to make the society corruption free.

Prof. Moniruzzaman Mia also asked for bringing changes in the system and said “judges’ appointment system is the root of all evils so it should be changed.” Justice Abdur Rouf stressed ‘human quality’ of all involved in the judicial process to eradicate corruption and also developing the judicial system. Justice Golam Rabbani stressed the need for strengthening local government institutions to eliminate corruption from all levels of society.

South Asia Chapters of Transparency International call for integrity of judicial system and enactment of Right to Information Law

The 7th Annual Meeting of South Asian Chapters of Transparency International held in Colombo, Sri Lanka during May 31-June 2, 2007, called upon all stakeholders to work with topmost priority to prevent corruption in judicial system and establish integrity and honesty of this vital institution of democracy. The meeting urged upon South Asian Governments including Bangladesh, who have not yet enacted the Right to Information Law, to do so without any further delay.

The Annual Meeting was attended by participants from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka and officials of the TI Secretariat. The Bangladesh team was headed by Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the Caretaker Government and a Trustee of TIB. Other participants from Bangladesh were Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB, Prof. Mustafijur Rahman and Ms. Shipra Goswami of Committee of Concerned Citizens of Jessore and Faridpur respectively.

The participants shared with each other the experiences, good practices, challenges and learning from the manifold activities implemented by the TI Chapters throughout the year 2006, and reviewed their plan of work for 2007-8. The meeting noted that inspire of many challenges faced in the anti-corruption work in the region, the Chapters continued their efforts relentlessly, and with considerable success in many cases.

Special emphasis of TI South Asian Chapters’ work was on institutional, legal and policy reform. Equally important was citizen’s engagement, especially awareness and participation of the youth and new generation, which the participants recognized as indispensable for preventing corruption. Chapters decided to maintain this focus in their work ahead.

UN Convention against Corruption

The meeting called upon all South Asian Governments who have not yet ratified the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) to do so without any further delay. The South Asian Chapters decided to further strengthen advocacy work for early ratification, and in countries like Bangladesh which have already ratified, for proper implementation, follow-up and monitoring of UNCAC commitments.

Integrity in Judiciary

Participants agreed to make special efforts to catalyze reform for strengthening the pillars of the national integrity system. After threadbare discussion of the key findings and recommendation of the Global Corruption Report 2007 on Judiciary released by Transparency International on 24 May 2007, the Chapters emphasized the need to engage in advocacy work for the independence, integrity, accountability and capacity building of the Judiciary.

Right to Information Law

The meeting urged upon South Asian Governments, who have not yet done so, to enact the Right to Information Law which participants considered indispensable for transparency and accountability in governance as well as for effectively controlling and preventing corruption. The Chapters decided to intensify efforts in this regard including specific initiatives for enforcement.

Role of Media

Recognizing the importance of the role and integrity of media in fighting corruption, the South Asia TI Chapters called upon the South Asian Governments to create conditions in which media can function independently and objectively without fear or favour.

Integrity in Defence

The participants recognized the importance of work in the field of integrity in defence, particularly transparency in procurement process. It was agreed that in addition to transactions in defence purchases by developing countries, problems of integrity in both public and private sector transactions related to defence in developed countries should also be addressed.
Appoint Ombudsman to ensure good governance

Speakers on seminar

Civil society members underscored the need to appoint national as well as sector-wise Ombudsman in order to ensure good governance and accountability at every level of public life. They expressed their concern that people should also be more aware of their rights and be courageous enough to lodge complaints, if any, with the Ombudsman for remedy, they said.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Manusher Jonna Foundation (MJF) jointly organised the seminar on ‘Ombudsman needed for good governance: why and how’ at the BRAC Centre Inn in the capital.

Presenting the keynote paper, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said “the present government should establish the office of an Ombudsman by issuing an ordinance, as it has already brought about a number of basic reforms, including the separation of Judiciary and strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the Election Commission.”

In the absence of Parliament, the Ombudsman may be appointed by the president on the recommendation of a committee comprising the Chief Justice or his nominee, a retired Cabinet Secretary or Secretary of high integrity and credibility, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Council, Chairman of the ACC and an eminent citizen, he said.

The Ombudsman must have a proven record of being a non-partisan individual of high integrity and credibility and professional experience reputed for commendable contribution in public life, he said, suggesting that the tenure of the Ombudsman should be five years instead of three years.

Suggesting amendments to the 1980 Act on Ombudsman, Iftekharuzzaman said the provision under the act that authorises the government to exempt any public officer or class of public officers from the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman should be dropped.

Khairuzzaman Chowdhury, the first tax Ombudsman of the country, said, “the national Ombudsman should be appointed to deal with the issues involving the administration while sector-wise Ombudsman should look into the problems in the respective sectors.”

“[T]o ensure transparency and accountability in the Ombudsman’s activities, internal self-regulatory mechanism should be in place,” he said, adding that information about all activities should be made public and regularly updated through website and the media.

“The objective of appointing an Ombudsman would be not only to curb corruption but also to look into faults and mistakes in the performance of officials in the administration.”

“We realise that the regional and sector-wise Ombudsman are more functional,” he said, adding that the Ombudsman should submit annual reports to the Parliament instead of the president.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, who moderated the seminar, said “many people may not know what Ombudsman is but feel that they need to go to somebody for justice when they are denied their rights.”

“All the institutions should function properly in order to establish good governance and the rule of law and the Ombudsman has a complementary role to play in this regard” she said.

Diabetic Association of Bangladesh Ombudsman Prof Wahid Uddin Ahmed and Brac Ombudsman Manzur Ul Karim also spoke.

Dhaka Declaration on Healthcare Adopted during First National Conference: Pledge to Wage Social Movement for Establishing Right to Health

A national conference titled “Health is a Right, not privilege and it needs to be delivered with equity” was held from 14 to 15 June in Dhaka, this year at the BIAM auditorium organized jointly by 53 organizations. Over six hundred representatives from two hundred organizations were present at the conference. A 21 point health focused demand ‘Dhaka Declaration on Health’ was adopted at the conference with pledge for a social movement. Former advisor to the Caretaker Government and TIB Trustee Advocate Sultana Kamal said “As health is a fundamental right, the Govt. of Bangladesh have to ensure this to the people” during the inaugural session. Chairman of the TIB Board of Trustees Professor Muzaffar Ahmad asked for raising demand for quality health who was present as the chief guest at the concluding session.

TIB executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman moderated the session on ‘Health policy, financing the health sector, transparency and accountability’ on the first day. In another session, a key note paper titled “Participatory Role of Civil Society in Ensuring Health Rights” was presented by TIB. Apart from the inaugural and closing ceremonies, a total of 45 papers were presented during 9 sessions of the conference. The participants and the invited guests took part in discussions on various important themes like health policy, healthcare, drug policy, hospital services, health education occupational health, healthcare for vulnerable, environmental health, healthcare management in private and public sectors, budgetary allocation for health sector, etc.
TIB News

TIB welcomes SAARC recognition of corruption as a serious issue

TIB welcomes the highest level recognition given to the importance of fighting corruption by the fourteenth Summit of SAARC held in New Delhi on April 3-4, 2007.

TIB has been encouraged that alongside other key challenges like poverty, disease, natural disasters and terrorism, for the first time the “Heads of State or Government of South Asia recognized that corruption was an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption to effectively address this problem” (para 27 of the Declaration).

“We understand that this has happened at the initiative of the Bangladesh delegation, and we commend them, especially in view of the strategic thrust of the Summit on regional connectivity”, said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB on 9 April. Because of the growing importance of cross-border dimension of corruption international cooperation has become indispensable for fighting it, he said.

Corruption being the main predicament against development and poverty reduction, TIB urges upon the Government to explore, jointly with other SAARC Governments, specific follow-up measures for strengthening cooperation in the field of anti-corruption. These may include mutual assistance in prevention, repatriation of laundered money, investigation, and prosecution of offenders.

Cooperation can be sought for specific forms of mutual legal assistance in gathering and transferring evidences for judicial use, and to facilitate extradition of offenders. Such cooperation may be explored bilaterally as well as regionally.

SAARC should now seek membership of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) under its article 67.2. The UNCAC includes ground-breaking mechanisms to facilitate recovery of stolen assets including measures for tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of corruption.

Since work has already begun on a draft SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, TIB demands inclusion in it specific provisions against corruption. This can pave the way to a SAARC Regional Convention against Corruption in line with UNCAC and similar regional anti-corruption conventions already adopted in other regions.

Central American states have recently declared themselves as a corruption-free zone; South Asia can also show the courage and commitment to adopt a time-line in the same direction, TIB urged.

Workshop on the Role of UPs in Curbing Corruption

A workshop titled ‘Role of Union Parishads in Curbing Corruption’ was held at the LGED auditorium of Dhaka on 27 June under the aegis of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum. The Nari Uddyog Kendra (NUK) extended cooperation for holding the workshop. Presided by Forum Convener Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, Chairman of the TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffar Ahmad was the chief guest while Professor Zarina Rahman Khan was the special guest. The welcome address was delivered by the Executive Director of Nari Uddyog Kendra Masuda Khatun Shefali. Professor Dr. Tofail Ahmed was present as a discussant. Besides, journalists, human rights workers, NGO activists, UP chairmen and members also attended the workshop. The speakers highlighted the role, task, responsibilities and limitations of the Union Parishad during the workshop. Besides, some recommendations were placed for reforms by adopting a stance against corruption resulting from lack of transparency and accountability in the UPs.

Land Rights Day Observed

The Land Rights Day was observed on 10 June with the slogan “Right to land is a human right, land reform is needed for alleviating poverty”. Various organizations including the CCCs organized various programmes throughout the country on the occasion. The land rights celebration committee organized a seminar in Dhaka on “Agriculture-land-water-bodies reforms for achieving millennium development goals in Bangladesh”. Justice Golam Rabbani was the chief guest at this seminar held LGED auditorium of Dhaka. The chairperson of Nijera Kori chaired the seminar while the Executive Director of ‘Samata’ delivered the welcome address. The discussants included former Adviser of the Caretaker Government Dhiraj Kumar Natt, President of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr. Quazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed, the Chief of Chakma Circle Barrister Raja Debashish Roy and Editor of the daily New Age Nurul Kabir. TIB representative also participated in it.
Our Sister Shanu –
A Brave and Accomplished Lady

Was it the right time for her to depart! Couldn’t nature allow her a little more time? At a time when the country has woken up against corruption, people have become vocal for ensuring transparency and accountability at all strata – at that very juncture, a pioneer in the anti-corruption movement and a torch-bearer of women’s emancipation movement, Shamsun Nahar Chowdhury – our Shanu Apa was gone.

A lamp that was lit in Chhinai union of Lalmonirhat thana on 16 March 1956 was suddenly extinguished by a gusty wind on 13 June 2007 at Kurigram’s Khalilganj inside her own house. But she left behind the luminosity of her eventful life and the numerous bondages with different souls.

Inspired by her academic-oriented father, Shanu Apa was greatly attracted towards education. She studied at various educational institutions as her father’s job was transferable. While studying at those institutions, she was lucky to come into contact and receive the affection of some great teachers of the time; they included leader of the Swadeshi movement Pandit Jogendra Prasad Saha, Santosh Kumar Chakrabarty, Rakhal Chakrabarty and the revered Pranballav Karanjai. She got the raw-material for her progressive thinking by coming into contact with such luminaries and got infinite inspiration for traversing multifarious arenas of culture. Besides, her father’s colleague Karim Chacha and elder brother ATM Enamul Haque Chowdhury also made significant contribution to her family education.

After the independence war, she went to Rajshahi University for higher education. There, she became actively involved with the progressive students’ organization Chhata Union. She played a vocal role as the Assistant Secretary of Rajshahi district committee and Vice-President of its University branch. She created sensation in 1977-78 by undertaking hunger-strike demanding resignation of the then Vice-Chancellor A T Bar, who was an anti-liberation element.

Her teaching life started in 1981. She joined the Kurigram Women’s College as a lecturer of history. She was an Associate Professor and Head of the history department of this college till her death.

She got involved in the women’s right movement during her student life as a follower of the accomplished female poet Sufia Kamal. She was elected the President of district Mohila Parishad in 1981. She held on to this position till her death. During this long journey, she was vocal about establishment of the rights of women. Legal assistance was extended to thousands of helpless and repressed women on behalf of the organization. Besides, she undertook various welfare measures for their rehabilitation in society and family.

Shanu Apa also played a leading role in establishing various social and cultural organizations in Kurigram. Her role was outstanding in the establishment of Kurigram Law College, district Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Shilpakala Academy, Khelaghar and Rotary Club. She was also involved with the Red Crescent Society and Rover Scouts. Shanu Apa was also an accomplished writer. She had collected many unknown tales and stories of heroism out of her unfettered love for the liberation war. She compiled interviews and memoirs of over two hundred freedom fighters as the chief of liberation war-related cell of the local non-government organization solidarity.

And lastly, Shanu Apa got involved with the TIB-inspired Committee of Concerned Citizens of Kurigram – as a soldier in the social movement against corruption. She started working with full devotion along with a commitment to arouse the people against the hazards of all-pervasive corruption. But a killer disease also set up its base in her body at the same time. Despite her physical adversities, Shanu Apa worked tirelessly for erasing the blot of corruption from the nation’s face. She believed that desired national development would never be achieved unless transparency was established at all levels. When her health was fine, she attached most importance to rectifying the harmful effects of corruption on women and the role of conscious citizens in preventing those in most discussion meetings of the CCC. She used to say that the dark clutches of corruption devoured the womenfolk most because they were victims of discrimination in all strata of family, society and nation. She urged the women community to remain vocal against corruption during the workshops on women and corruption as well as the mothers’ gatherings. As a member of the health sub-committee of the CCC, her counsels for improving the healthcare facilities at Kurigram Sadar Hospital and the encouragements she gave to involving the youths of the locality inspired them greatly to groom themselves up as good citizens.

Shanu Apa did not work with the expectation of receiving any prizes or honours. But she received numerous awards and prizes in recognition of her extraordinary contributions. This very year, she was awarded a special prize for her spontaneous contribution to the social movement against corruption.

Leaving behind so many work, so much feeling, such inspiration, honour and illumination, our Shanu Apa left for eternity by leaving us all on 13 June 2007. To a place, from where nobody returns. The sun would rise in accordance with the law of nature, the moon and stars would shower light, children would sleep in the bosom of mothers after listening to nursery song, but at a secluded corner a young girl would cry out in pain for losing her mother, a brother would feel sad and innumerable struggling and freedom-loving people would shed tears for losing somebody dear.

Ashraf Mahmood is APO and Lovely Yeasmin Jeba is SGO of TIB
Notable Activities of CCCs

Announcement of Open Budget by Boulai UP of Kishoreganj
A 'face to face session with the people' announcement of open budget took place at no. 6 Boulai Union Parishad auditorium of Kishoreganj on 6 June. The chairman of Boulai UP Md. Aulad Hossain replied to various queries from the public during the programme. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahnewaz Dilruba Khan was present in the programme as chief guest. CCC member Adv. Bhupendra Bhowmick Dulong and the CCC Convener Advocate Ashok Sarkar made a presentation on the responsibilities of the elected members of UP and roles and responsibilities of the citizens. CCC member Khalelta Fency acted as the moderator. The UP Chairman presented a status-report on the progress of work against last year’s plans. He mentioned that specific guidelines are followed in distribution of VGD and VGF cards and these are distributed among the genuinely poor people. He expressed regret for not being able to set up a post office due to non-availability of land. While mentioning about his efforts, he said that the citizens still owed Taka 2 lakh as tax to the parishad. He pointed out that it was difficult to provide services if the citizens did not pay taxes regularly. The speakers proposed setting up of a bulletin board and a complaint box during their deliberations.

Release of report on services provided by Khulna City Corporation and exchange of views with the Mayor
With the assistance of TIB, the CCC Khulna released a report on the views of citizens regarding the services provided by Khulna City Corporation on 20 May. Presided over by the convener of CCC Khulna Hafizur Rahman, the report was presented by CCC member Anwarul Kadir at the press conference. According to the report, most of the respondents were dissatisfied with the present condition of roads, footpaths and bridges and the role of the city corporation for their development. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents said, no steps have been taken during the past one year for planting trees and erecting gardens and parks by the city corporation. Sixty-five percent respondents informed that there were no public toilets in their locality. Ninety-six percent respondents claimed that there was no initiative on the part of city-corporation for building sanitary latrines during the past one year. It should be mentioned that a CCC delegation exchanged views with the Mayor of Khulna City Corporation on the findings of the report on services provided by the corporation on 16 May. The objective of the meeting was to inform the Mayor about the opinions and expectations of citizens regarding the corporation’s services, so that these could be improved. The CCC convener Hafizur Rahman, members Ferdousi Ali, Shaikh Abdul Quayum, AK Hiru and Sheikh Abu Hassan were present on behalf of CCC Khulna during the meeting.

4 receive stipends due to initiatives taken by mothers
Alokdia Government Primary School is an 80 year old institution of Madhupur under Tangail district. Only one student got scholarship from here during British rule. None got stipend during the Pakistany era. It is for the first time since independence that 4 students received stipends from here in 2006. The Headmaster of the school acknowledged the mothers of these students for their success. He also said that the CCC Madhupur played the role of a catalyst by encouraging mothers to take the initiative and befriend the children during their studies. The CCC organized a mothers’ gathering on 24 June where the stipend-winning students were awarded prizes on behalf of the school. The respected mothers were also awarded prizes as this success could be achieved due to their direct role. Convener of the Education Sub-Committee of CCC Madhupur Golam Samdani said, only the conscious mothers could groom a child as an ideal person. The CCC Convener Advocate Salahuddin Ahmed Selim delivered the welcome address. CCC member Abdus Salam thanked the mothers for their extraordinary contributions. After the meeting, prizes were also distributed among the students who occupied first three positions in all classes of the school.

“Do not hand over country to plunderers and bad people” Sultana Kamal at the seminar on Corruption and Women organized by CCC Chandpur
Former Adviser of the Caretaker Government and member of the TIB Board of Trustees Advocate Sultana Kamal has said, the Parliament is not functional in the country at this moment. But media is playing the role of a Parliament. She urged the people and the Caretaker Government through the mass media not to hand over the country to plunderers, unjust and bad people. She said this while speaking as chief guest at the seminar titled ‘Corruption and Women’ held on 22 May at Chandpur Rotary Club under the aegis of the CCC. Sultana Kamal said, whatever good are happening in the country are due to womenfolk, but ofcourse with the help of man. Presided by CCC member Rupali Champak, the TIB Executive Director addressed the seminar as special guest. The keynote paper at the seminar was presented by CCC member Engineer Md. Delwar Hussain. Others who spoke on the occasion included CCC Convener Prof. Monohar Ali, Engineer Delwar Hossain, Professor Bilkis Aziz, Kazi Shahadat, et al. Crests were awarded to 3 labourers on the occasion of May Day. They are: waitess of Midland Hospital Saima Khan, tea seller Arun Misra and construction worker Suryat Khan.
The Youth are Asked to Raise Their Voice and Stand Strongly Against Corruption

TIB-CUDS Inter-Departmental Debate Competition

Upholding the slogan "with the power of logic... invincible youth shall surely resist corruption" a group of young enthusiastic students of Chittagong University Debating Society (CUDS) organized the "TIB-CUDS 9th Bangla – 3rd English Debate Competition" at Chittagong University from 12 to 16 May. Lt. General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd.) chief of Anti corruption Commission and former advisor of caretaker government was present as chief guest in the event. CCC convenor of Chittagong City and eminent social worker Begum Mustari Shafi, advisor of former caretaker government and treasurer of TIB trustee board M. Hafizuddin Khan, Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University Dr. M. Badiul Alam were also present. Dean of Business Faculty, Executive Director of TIB, Moderator, chairman and General Secretary of CUDS and teachers and students of Chittagong University were also present in the Occasion.

In the opening ceremony ACC Chairman Lt. General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd.) asked the youth to raise their voice and stand strongly to prevent corruption. He said that this event is very important and in accordance with the present time. He also said that there has been much discussion about corruption in Bangladesh, now it is time to stand against it- to fight. We have to win this war. He proclaimed that the youth can bravely play a significant role in this fight. M. Hafizuddin Khan, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Dr. M. Badiul Alam delivered their speech in the inaugural session among others. Begum Mustari Shafi recited the oath against corruption to more than two thousand students of Chittagong University.

CUDS organizes Inter-Departmental Debate Competition every year. This year’s competition was the biggest so far. The purpose of the event was to organize the intelligent debaters of Chittagong University under a single roof so that they can show their intellect through debate. 34 teams from various departments took part in the competition, 20 in Bangla and 14 in English debate.

After the first round and quarter final of English debate the four semi-finalists were from Marketing, Finance and Banking, Bangla and Law department. On the other hand in the Bangla debate the four finalists were from Mass Communication and Journalism, Marketing, Bangla, and Biochemistry department. Every event of the semi-final session was remarkable. From this session in the English debate the two finalist were Finance and Banking, and Law and in Bangla debate Mass Communication and Journalism, and Biochemistry department.

The main event took place at the auditorium of Commerce Faculty. "Corruption, not terrorism, is making the present world more unstable" was the issue in the final round in the Bangla section and Mass Communication and Journalism Department became champion defeating Biochemistry. Prabir Barua of the champion team was selected as the best debater in this section. On the other side, "Corruption, not politics, is the major hindrance to encouraging investment in Bangladesh" was the issue in the English debate in which Law Department became the champion for the third time defeating Finance and Banking. Md. Nasir Uddin of the champion team was selected as the best debater in this section.

Professor of Department of English of Dhaka University and an eminent writer Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam was the chief guest in the closing session. He said that the power of youth is the power of culture, the power to reveal truth, the power of discipline. The youth should contain that spirit and moral which will be able to eradicate all corruption, injustice and irregularities in the country. It should be noted that Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam and former president of CUDS Shariful Abedin acted as speaker in the final round of the English and Bangla debate respectively. The panel of judges was formed by the teachers of Chittagong University.

Makhduma- YES member, CCC Chittagong City and member of CUDS
Hemal- YES member, CCC Chittagong City and General Secretary of CUDS
Anti-corruption Cultural Festival at Khulna University

TIB is working relentlessly with the objective of building a social movement against corruption throughout the country by raising mass awareness and generating demand against corruption. In line with this trend, a 4-day long cultural festival was organized by 11 cultural organizations of Khulna University in association with TIB and CCC-Khulna between 24 to 26 May with the slogan ‘The Invincible youth shall surely resist corruption’. The campus wore a festive look on the occasion of this festival. The campus became lively through spontaneous participation of all categories of teachers, students and officials of the university determined to build a corruption-free society.

The festival was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Khulna University by urging the students to become imbied with an anti-corruption spirit. He said in his address: ‘This programme has been arranged at a time when an anti-corruption drive is going on throughout the country. The convener of CCC Khulna Hafizur Rahman was present as chief guest while the TIB Executive Director was the special guest on the occasion. The TIB Executive Director called upon the student community to play an active role in the anti-corruption movement. On the concluding day, convener of the festival Dr. Monirul Islam urged the students to become united against all types of injustices including corruption.

The organizations who arranged the festival were: Nri-Natya, Theatre Nipun, Ba-Path, Krishi, Surapat, Prothom Alo Bandhusabha, Rotoract Club, Bhaiibi, Nayayik, 35 MM and Onkar-srinuta. Various types of programmes including dramas, musical sessions, anti-corruption debate contest, blood-donation programme and exhibition of films and cartoons were arranged on the occasion of the festival.

Anti-Corruption Cartoon Exhibition and Cultural Programme held at Chapai Nawabganj

18 June was the founding anniversary of Chapai Nawabganj Volunteer Group. The CCC Chapai Nawabganj has brought dynamism in their activities by involving the youths in their social movement against corruption. A cartoon exhibition was arranged on the occasion from 18 to 22 June. Alongside this, cultural programme, anti-corruption plays ‘Notun Suryer Prottashay’ (In the hope of a new sun) and ‘Fand’ (Trap), display of mangoes, Gambhira songs, anti-corruption songs of the Sanjay-Keramat group, were staged. At the start of the 5-day long programme, a colourful anti-corruption rally went round the town. The anti-corruption exhibition was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Md. Shahadat Hossain. The Police Super Md. Mokhlesur Rahman was the special guest. After the inauguration, the Deputy Commissioner said at a gathering chaired by the CCC Convener Advocate Abu Md. Saiful Islam Reza that previously the government did not trust the TIB reports. But now times have changed. He urged everybody to become vocal against corruption and resist corruption from their respective positions. The Police Super told the guests: inform the police administration directly if any irregularities or corruption takes place. The police would take necessary action. A total of 36 anti-corruption cartoons and 138 varieties of mangoes were put on display at the exhibition. The Advice and Information Desk distributed anti-corruption leaflets among the guests. The cartoons played an important role in forging opinion against corruption. As an expression of this, they wrote comments and signed up for the anti-corruption movement. The volunteers enlisted interested people among the guests for voluntary blood donation with the goal of standing beside sick and poor patients.

Anti-Corruption Campaign ‘Say No to Corruption’ in Sunamganj

A 3-day long anti-corruption campaign participated by CCC Sunamganj YES group (volunteers and theatre workers) was held from 24 to 26 May. A fair titled ‘Banning forced marriages’ was arranged on the occasion on 24 May with the assistance of National Women’s Lawyers’ Association, British High Commission and the British Council. The YES members informed the people about the bad consequences of forced marriage to visitors at the fair. At the same time, they distributed various posters, stickers and leaflets. Side by side, signatures of people were collected on a large canvas with the following lines: ‘The invincible youth shall surely resist corruption, come, let us be united and say No to Corruption’ etc. Eminent citizens from various classes and professions, including the Executive Director of Women’s Lawyers’ Association Advocate Salma Ali, Vice-Consul of British High Commission Madeleine Hermann, Consular Officer Farhana Haque, Ashraf Ali, Gender and Governance Officer of British Council Rifat Jahan, Administrative Officer Kafi Chowdhury, Project Manager of Women’s Lawyers’ Association Abdullah Al Hasan, Chairman of Sunamganj Municipality Momintul Moizdin, President of District Bar Advocate Golam Mortuza, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Md. Al Amin, Editor of Weekly Sunamkantha Bijon Sen Ray put their signatures on it. Over one hundred citizens wrote various anti-corruption opinions and signed the comments book.
Jahangirnagar University students take oath against corruption

The students of Jahangirnagar University have taken an anti-corruption oath by expressing their firm stand against corruption. They stated their resolve during the festival marking the completion of education of the 30th batch students. A concert and cartoon exhibition was jointly organized by the TIB, CCC Savar and 30th batch of the university at the Mukto Mancha of the university on 26 June.

Popular singer Ayub Bachchu and a new band called ‘Ganwalla’ – comprising of some young singers of Jahangirnagar – kept the audience alive during the programme, which carried the slogan “We shall sow light in the roots of darkness – the invincible youth shall conquer corruption”.

The convener of the festival Shafiqul Islam stated the resolve to fight corruption on behalf of the 30 batch at the commencement of the concert on Tuesday evening. Others who spoke on the occasion included the Director of (Student Welfare and Advice Centre) Professor ATM Atiqur Rahman, eminent freedom fighter and Convener of CCC-Savar Jainal Abedin Khan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Enamul Haque Khan and the Vice-Chancellor of the university Professor Khandakar Mustahidur Rahman. TIB Trustee and visionary founder cum groomer of enlightened people of Bishwa Sahitya Kendro Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed delivered an address for inspiring the students with an anti-corruption spirit. He said, a corrupt person can never be happy. That is why there are still honest people in our country in the midst of so many dishonest persons; they have shone in life through their honesty and hard work. Professor Sayeed urged everybody to practice honesty and perseverance and groom themselves as good citizens by waging an indomitable campaign against corruption. He told the youths: we must believe that we would one day be able to free this country from corruption.

At one stage of the concert, when eminent singer Ayub Bachchu urged the youths to come forward, around 10 thousand students who had assembled in front of Mukto Mancha expressed their resolve to fight corruption by raising their hands thrice.

It may be mentioned that the TIB is organizing numerous programmes for raising awareness among the country’s youths about the adverse impact of corruption, means of curbing it and for grooming future workers for the anti-corruption campaign as a part of its social movement against corruption. An anti-corruption concert was organized for the first time on 29 December 2006 under the aegis of TIB. The holding of the 3-day long anti-corruption cartoon exhibition (25-27 June) and the concert on 26 June as part of the valedictory festival for the 30th batch students of Jahangirnagar University was a continuation of that endeavour. Nearly 2 thousand students who visited the cartoon exhibition signed the anti-corruption oath.
Anti-Corruption Cartoon Touches the Minds of People

Cartoon exhibitions were held at different places of the country with prize-winning and nominated cartoons from the cartoon competition organized by TIB. Prevailing corruption and irregularities were depicted in a satirical manner by those cartoons. These cartoons could touch the hearts and minds of the spectators. They audience jotted down their views in the book of comments. The exhibitions were arranged by TIB and the local CCCs.

Chittagong City: A 3-day anti-corruption cartoon exhibition was held at port city Chittagong from 3 to 5 April. Professor Abul Mansur of the Fine Arts department of Chittagong University formally inaugurated the exhibition at the gallery of Alliance of Francais in Panchalish on 3 April afternoon. Eminent citizens belonging to various classes and professions including Professor Dhali Al Mamun, Convener of CCC Chittagong City and writer Begum Mustari Shafi and TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman were present during the inaugural ceremony. The exhibition was organized with the help of TIB and CCC volunteers. It was kept open for the audience between 4 pm and 8 pm everyday. There were 55 cartoons on display and they were kept in such a manner that the disabled people could also see.

Patiya: A 2-day anti-corruption cartoon exhibition was organized at A S Ragat Ali High School auditorium of Patiya upazila headquarters under Chittagong district on 7 and 8 April. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Upazila Education Officer Azim Sharif. Among others, Convener of CCC Patiya and teacher Sagir Ahmed, President of Patiya Lawyers’ Association Advocate Moazzem Hossain, APP of Patiya Bar Advocate Rafiul Islam, CCC members, volunteers and TIB staffs were present on the occasion. The exhibition was kept open between 3 pm and 8 pm. A total of 46 cartoons were on display here.

Chakaria: A 2-day anti-corruption cartoon exhibition was organized in Chakaria during 9 and 10 April. The exhibition was formally inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner of Cox’s Bazar Md. Aminul Islam at 11 am in the morning on 9 April. Others who spoke on the occasion included CCC Convener Engineer Rafiqul Haque, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Shah Alam, Chairman of the Municipality Zafar Alam, Officer-in-Charge of Chakaria police station Rahul Amin Siddique, Principal of Chakaria College Abdullah Masud and Principal of Chakoria Women’s College S M Manzoor Hossain. Forty-six cartoons were displayed in the exhibition.

Lalmonirhat: A cartoon exhibition was held at the Church of God School at Lalmonirhat on 19 and 20 May. The Deputy Commissioner Md. Rafiqul Islam inaugurated it. Among others, Major Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, CCC Convener Md. Moyzul Islam, members of the CCC and volunteers were present on the occasion. The Deputy Commissioner termed the exhibition as an excellent one and said that these types of exhibitions were required for raising mass awareness and combating corruption. Despite inclement weather, the exhibition attracted a large crowd. Among them the number of children and youths was quite notable.

Kurigram: A cartoon exhibition was held at Kurigram Municipal Auditorium on 21 and 22 June. President of Kurigram Bar Advocate K S Ali Ahmed inaugurated the exhibition. The President of Press Club Rabindranath Ray, BMA President Dr. Mowdud Hossain, convener of CCC Kurigram A.T.M Enamul Haque Chowdhury and other CCC members and volunteers were also present on the occasion.

Rangpur: A large crowd thronged the cartoon exhibition which was held at the CCC Rangpur office during 23 and 24 June. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Khandakar Atiar Rahman. The Convener of CCC Md. Kuddus Ali, other CCC members and volunteers were present on the occasion.

Comilla Students Express Their Resolve Against Corruption

The students of Comilla Victoria College and Government Women’s College expressed their resolve to fight corruption by holding aloft the slogan ‘Invincible youth shall surely resist corruption’ and by signing pledges and comments. They did this during a participatory campaign for social movement against corruption which took place at Comilla Victoria College (higher secondary section) on 11 April under the aegis of YES. The Victoria College Campaign was inaugurated by the Principal of the college Professor Narayan Chakrabarty. Professor Zobaida Noor of the English department called upon the students to abhor corruption from their respective positions. CCC member Ali Akbar Masum thanked the college administration, teachers, students and others concerned for their assistance and participation in organizing the campaign. The campaign at the Comilla Government Women’s College was inaugurated by its Principal Professor Md. Rezaul Karim. In his address, he encouraged the students to lead the social movement against corruption from the front by taking a firm stand in favour of morality. The Vice-Principal Professor Abdul Matin urged the new generation to inculcate an anti-corruption mentality through proper education. Others who were present in the campaign participated by over 200 students included Professor Enamul Haque and Khandakar Mokhtesur Rahman. CCC member Alhaj Shah Md. Aloqmir Khan thanked all concerned for their assistance in holding the campaign on behalf of CCC Comilla.
Human Chain and Street Gathering by over One Hundred Landless at Lalmonirhat

A human chain was organized at Mission Corner of Lalmonirhat district on 10 June by the YES Group of Lalmonirhat with assistance from the CCC on the occasion of Land Rights Day. The genuinely landless people stood at the Mission Corner of the town for 25 minutes by holding aloft festoons featuring various demands of the landless including distribution of khas land among them. Apart from the members of the YES Group, the programme was participated by CCC members, students of various educational institutions and around one hundred landless people of Rajpur union under sadar upazila. A street gathering was held after the human chain programme. The gathering was addressed by the CCC members Amirul Hayat Ahmed, S.M. Shafiqu Islam Kanu and Abdur Rob Suzon. The people of Rajpur union who attended the gathering expressed their gratitude for organizing such a programme for the landless. They said that their inherited lands were now occupied by a millionaire. A total of 33 families were adversely affected by the incident and many families were uprooted. They mentioned that petitions have been sent to the district administration and the Chief Adviser for justice.

5 Hundred Female-Students Take Oath for Curbing Corruption in Savar

Five hundred female students of Savar Girls’ High School have signed a pledge to preserve the country’s independence and sovereignty, implement the spirit of liberation war, strengthen social values and morality, forego unfair practices in examinations and above all build a corruption-free society by being imbued with patriotism. The TIB Executive Director was present as chief guest on the occasion. The oath-taking ceremony was conducted by the Headmaster of the school. Presided over the Convener of CCC Savar jainal Abedin Khan, the discussants at the gathering included Principal of M Chakladar College Md. Atahar Uddin, CCC members Md. Hamid Ranju, Khandakar Mir Hamida Aziz, Md. Abdul Khaleque, Dr. Md. Rafique, Tuhin Khan, Govinda Acherjee et al. In his address, the TIB Executive Director blamed a few powerful people rather than the general masses of the country for prevailing corruption. He urged all to build a corruption-free Bangladesh by increasing the participation of female-students in the anti-corruption movement. After the oath-taking ceremony, the TIB Executive Director planted a sapling at the school premises on behalf of all present.

OBITUARY

Jahanara Begum: Jahanara Begum, mother of TIB Board of Trustees Professor Muzaffar Ahmad, died on 28 May. The members of the TIB Board of Trustees, Executive Director, all officials, members of the 36 Committees of Concerned Citizens formed through the initiative of TIB, YES members expressed deep sorrow at her sad demise, prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and sent condolence message to the bereaved family. Late Jahanara Begum was 89 years old and had been suffering from various complex diseases including diabetes. She left behind many well-wishers including 5 sons and 2 daughters.

Shamsun Nahar Chowdhury: Eminent women’s activist and CCC member of Kurigram Shamsun Nahar Chowdhury expired on 13 June at her residence. She was suffering from cancer for a long time. She was 52 years old at the time of her death. Apart from being the chairperson of Kurigram Mohila Parishad, she was active in various social works. TIB expressed its deep shock at the sad demise of Shamsun Nahar Chowdhury. In a condolence message, the TIB Executive Director said, “TIB has lost an active co-worker in the movement against corruption. TIB recalls with reverence her farsighted advice and sincere cooperation since the establishment of CCC Kurigram. The TIB Board of Trustees, members of the advisory council, workers and volunteers are all saddened by her death. TIB prays for the salvation of the departed soul and expresses deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family”.

Nitai Chandra Sutradhar (60) was electrocuted at his own house in Tangail on 28 May. He was the father of TIB’s Senior Programme Officer Nandralal Sutradhar. Humayun Reza Chowdhury (60), father of Wasim Reza Chowdhury – who works in the Advocacy Division of TIB – expired in Dhaka on 29 May. Md. Reazuddin Biswas (67), father of TIB’s Jessore staff Md. Firoz Uddin died on 5 June. The TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman conveyed his grief to the three TIB staffs on behalf of the TIB family.
Workshops on Theatre Production by CCCs

The People’s Theatre Groups are staging anti-corruption dramas on a regular basis in far-flung areas of the country. Thirty-three people’s theatre groups have already been formed at various CCC areas of the country under the aegis of TIB. Workshops on theatre production were organized for newly-formed theatre groups through the initiative of CCCs.

Rajbari: A workshop for the theatre group of CCC Rajbari was held from 4 to 9 May at the training room of a local non-government organization. The drama ‘Amader Prottasha’ (Our expectations) was produced at the workshop by dwelling on problems in education, health, narcotics and railway departments. A total of 17 theatre workers including 2 females took part in it. A technical show of the drama was staged on the last day of the workshop.

Patiya: A production workshop on theatre was held here between 14 and 20 May. A total of 18 theatre workers including 5 females participated in this workshop meant for CCC theatre workers. A drama was produced in the workshop by identifying various problems in the locality on a participatory basis. The subjects covered in the drama included education, health, local governance and women’s repression. A technical show of the drama was staged on the last day of the workshop. The CCC members were present on the occasion.

Chandpur: A workshop for the CCC theatre group was held from 3 to 8 June. On the last day of the workshop, a technical show of the produced drama was staged in presence of CCC members. The theme of the drama was education, health and water development. Eighteen theatre workers participated in this 6-day long programme. The participants included 5 females and 13 males. The workshop and the technical show was staged at the Chandpur Rotary Club auditorium.

Munshiganj: A workshop was held under the aegis of CCC Munshiganj between 14 and 19 June. A play was produced through the workshop by identifying problems in areas of education, health, drainage and drugs. The drama ‘Bibek’ (Conscience) was staged on the last day of the workshop in presence of 19 CCC members.

Madaripur: A production-oriented theatre workshop was held from 5 to 10 April at Madaripur Legal Aid Association premises for the theatre group of CCC Madaripur. A drama was prepared during the workshop with the participation of 18 local theatre workers. Of them, 7 were females. The main theme of the drama was impact of corruption on the health sector. A technical show of the drama titled ‘Sonali roddurey megher tandob’ (Ravages of the cloud in the midst of sunshine) was staged on the last day of the workshop.

Sylhet: A workshop for the local theatre group was organized at Srihatta Sangskrit College of Sylhet from 18 to 23 April. Fourteen theatre workers including 1 female took part in it. A drama titled ‘Swapnabhanga’ (Shattered dream) was produced during the workshop, which mainly dwelt on health-related problems of the local populace. A technical show was staged on the last day of the workshop.

Barishal: A six-day long production based theatre workshop was held at BNDN auditorium in Barishal on 8 May. Through this workshop the theater activists created the anti-corruption theater show titled ‘Kirton Kholar Pare.’

Natore: A production-based theatre workshop was held at SACAM Auditorium from 15 to 20 May. Fifteen theatre workers including 3 females participated in it. A drama was produced at the workshop mainly dwelling on problems in the local health sector. The drama titled ‘Haspatal O Ekjon Sramiker Mrittu’ (Hospital and death of a labourer) was staged on the last day of the workshop.

Khulna: A production based theter workshop was held from 26 to 30 April participated by 18 theater activists of CCC Khulna. In the last day of the workshop a technical show took place of ‘Shatorko’, a drama focused on health, education and passport office problem.

Rangpur: Fifteen theatre activists participated in the workshop arranged for the theatre group of CCC Rangpur during 5-10 June. Three among the participants were females. A drama was produced during the workshop by employing participatory methods on corruption in the education and health sectors. The drama titled ‘Sadharan Galpa’ (Ordinary story) was staged on the last day of the workshop in presence of CCC members. The workshop was held at Rangpur Sadar Hospital.

Kurigram: The theatre workshop of CCC Kurigram was held from 12 to 18 June at the Kurigram office of Aparajeya Bangladesh. Fifteen theatre workers including 5 females and 10 males participated in the workshop. Pictures of corruption prevalent in the education, health and local government sectors were shown in the drama produced at the workshop. A technical show of the newly produced drama ‘Alo Andharer Jatri’ (Passenger of light and darkness) was staged on 18 June evening.
Children depict their rights through paint and brush

Transparency International Bangladesh organized an Art Competition for children on the theme ‘Good health, beautiful country’. The children who participated in this contest depicted their views on various aspects of their rights quite exquisitely through paints and brushes. The competition was held at the Lecture Theatre of Bangladesh Shishu Academy on 15 June. The participating children from various educational institutions belonged to the age-group of 7 to 16 years and were divided into three categories. At the end of the competition, 9 winners, 3 from each group, were awarded prizes and certificates. Besides, special prizes were awarded to 60 contestants, 20 from each group, for drawing beautiful pictures.

Children between 7 and 9 years were placed in Group-A. Md. Saif Hasan, a student of class three of Rifles Public School of Dhaka, Sadaf Abrar, a student of KG class of the same school and Md. Irfan Hossain Imon of Agrani School were awarded for best pictures in this group. Children between 10 to 12 years of age took part in Group-B. A N M Ferdous Al-Rabbi, student of class six of ABC International School, Jannatul Ferdous, student of class seven of T&T Model High School and Sadia Islam Mou, student of class seven of Agrani School were awarded prizes for best pictures in this group. Besides, children belonging to 13-16 years age-group were bracketed in Group-C. Mahabub Showkat Biki, student of class seven at Scholastica School, Reshad Mansur Mehran, student of class eight of Sunbeam School and Nusrat Jahan Nipu, student of class nine of Ideal School were awarded prizes for best pictures in Group-C. Artistes Hashem Khan, Moniruzzaman and Samina Nafis acted as judges in the competition. Hashem Khan praised the quality of children’s paintings profusely during the prize-giving ceremony. Besides, the TIB Executive Director also delivered a brief speech.

It may be mentioned that TIB had organized this competition on the occasion of National Health Rights Conference held in Dhaka during 14 and 15 June 2007.