Effective Parliament Required

Inner Page

International Conference on Right to Information
Election Process of 2008 Tracking
Initiation of Paribartan-Driving Change
Good Governance in NGO Sector
Want an Effective Parliament

The political parties which participated in the Ninth Jatiya Sangsad election had pledged in their party manifestos to make the Parliament effective. The focus in the election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League, under whose leadership the grand alliance has been able to form a government through a massive verdict of the people, contained pledges for taking effective measures to curb corruption and establish good governance. A new hope was generated about parliamentary democracy when the ruling and opposition parties pledged to make the parliament effective even after the election.

The formation of all parliamentary committees and activities of some of them in the very first session of Parliament, selection of some committee chairmen from amongst the opposition, effort for neutral stance of the Speaker in giving floors for discussion, election of women MPs to reserved seats and their nomination as Chairpersons of some parliamentary committees, expression of firm determination by the Prime Minister on taking measures against corruption, participation of the opposition during the question-answer sessions of the Prime Minister and ministers were truly praiseworthy. The people expect such an active role from the parliament.

It was seen in the six reports published by TIB at different junctures on 23 sessions of the Eighth Parliament that the Jatiya Sangsad could not be made really effective due to quorum crises, parliamentary boycotts, unscheduled discussions and use of obscene language, passage of law without quorum and irregular sittings and frequently passive attitude of the committees. Besides, no meaningful discussions took place on vitally important issues like corruption, power crisis or terrorism. The attendance rate of members in the parliament was quite insignificant. The people do not want to see such a state in the Ninth Parliament.

The Jatiya Sangsad is the focal point of all state activities in a parliamentary system of governance. The main objectives of parliamentary democracy are to take decisions on all issues of national importance through discussions in the parliament, framing and updating of laws for the country’s sake, reaching consensus on issues of national interest and providing leadership to the country by taking into consideration the hopes and aspirations of the people alongside the global context. Alongside the crucial legislative function of the parliament in a Parliamentary dispensation, the role of Jatiya Sangsad is also infinitely important in establishing good governance and accountable administration. The Parliament is supposed to carry out this responsibility through effective role of the parliamentary committees. It is possible to establish good governance if transparency, accountability and free flow of information exist in all actions of the government. Democracy is firmly established on the basis of these ingredients.

Accountability is the catchword of parliamentary democracy. The accountability of the Prime Minister and ministers can be ensured in the Parliament through various means. The Parliament can also ensure supervision and accountability of the executive branch through discussions on issues of public importance, statements on various points, questions and answers, drawing of attentions and above all through a powerful committee system. It is expected that the executive branch will remain accountable to the Parliament for all its actions. This accountability depends to a large extent on the response of the people regarding government activities, their expectations from the government and proper identification of areas where there have been successes and failures.

This reflection of public opinion has to be ensured in the Parliament by its members. But the possibility of ensuring accountability diminishes if the MPs do not play their due role as representatives of their constituencies by rising above their party, group, class or professional identities. The opposition also has an important role to play in making the Parliament effective. While the main theme of parliamentary democracy is taking decisions on all issues of national importance through deliberations in Parliament, framing laws for the sake of the country and reaching consensus on matters related to national interest, the reappearance of the politics of boycott in the much hyped Ninth Parliament is indeed very disappointing.

Alongside many praiseworthy developments, some negative indications were visible during the first session of the Ninth Jatiya Sangsad, including boycott of Parliament by the opposition. Especially, loss of time due to lack of quorum, excessive number of unscheduled discussions on different subjects, wastage of time on irrelevant eulogies and criticisms of party leaders have disappointed the people. The people expect that the honourable members will be more cautious about these matters for the sake of making the parliament effective in future. It is possible to increase the effectiveness manifold by solving problems existing between the larger parties represented in the Parliament through political goodwill. The people expect implementation of the pledges made in the party manifestos and mass media by the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on making the Parliament effective.

The citizens of this country have a fiery resolve and support for democracy, good governance and accountability. We all hope that both the government and opposition will take steps for making the parliament truly effective, the Parliament members will discharge their responsibilities properly, and democratic tradition in the country will flourish. TIB holds the view that it will be difficult to raise people’s confidence on the parliament if the hopes and expectations of the general mass remain unrealized. In that case, institutionalisation of democracy will become more and more difficult. We, therefore, demand of the political leaders to exert their whole might collectively in order to reinforce the parliamentary system for the sake of the country and its people through display of mutual tolerance and understanding. There is no other alternative for implementation of the electoral pledges.
The Right to Information Forum organized the international conference titled 'Implementation of Right to Information: Law, Institution and Citizens' at Hotel Sheraton on 21 and 22 June in Dhaka. Right to information activists and specialists from India, Pakistan, Mexico, USA, Australia and UK attended the conference. Government officials from different levels, editors from newspapers, media personalities, law and human rights activists and representatives from civil society were also present. This International Conference was organized to exchange views on how the information commission, information providing organizations or the information delivering institutions of different Right to Information act implementing countries.

Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury was the Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony while Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad was the Special Guest. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB, presented the keynote paper at the inaugural session chaired by Chairperson of Manusher Jonno Foundation and former adviser to the caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi.

In her speech, the Agriculture Minister said, “There is no other alternative but to implement the Right to Information law in order to materialize the dream of a digital Bangladesh. Because information helps people being enlightened and capable.” Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said, “Information is needed to make people proficient.” Noting that the law would be implemented from 1 July he informed, his ministry has already taken some steps in order to form the Information Commission. But he also expressed his anxiety that there may be some challenges to implement the law. Though there are some weaknesses in the law it can be amended.

Syed Manzur Elahi said, “Everything depends on the political will of the government. This law proves that there is the will.” He also said, “If bureaucrats do not disclose information properly, media can deliver wrong information.” In his keynote paper, TIB Executive Director said, “Right to information is the key to all other rights. A combined initiative is needed to ensure the wellbeing of both information seekers and providers so that the enormous possibilities and

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants to see the law being implemented for the poor and deprived. She said, “This law will help increase Bangladesh’s image in the world and also ensure transparency and accountability of the government.”

Prime Minister said this in her speech at the two day international conference organized by Right to Information Forum. Chief Guest Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury read out the speech of the Prime Minister.

In her speech Sheikh Hasina said, “According to this law, all the government organizations will be bound to provide information. And so would be the non-government organizations (NGOs) as they are run by the money of the people.” The Prime Minister expressed her expectation that NGOs will come forward to ensure their transparency and accountability.

“No act remains perfect in the beginning”- Prime Minister urged everyone to come forward to implement the law by upholding its inner meaning without criticizing much.
opportunities created by the Right to Information Law is not hindered by different challenges". Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said in her welcome speech, "If information is provided and received properly then wastage of resources and corruption in GO-NGOs will be reduced as well as transparency and accountability will be ensured.”

In the session on Right to Information Act, speeches were delivered by Aruna Roy, Head of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Shangathan (MKSS), India, Tahsin Syed, Operation Adviser, World Bank, Shailesh Gandhi, Commissioner, Central Information Commission in India, Juan Pablo Guerrero, Commissioner, Access to Information Institute of Mexico and Researcher Andrew John Eklestone.

In that session, former adviser to the Caretaker Government Rasheda K Chowdhury said, "It is possible to implement the right to information act by training the school teachers, agriculture workers, health workers and NGO activists of our country". She suggested the Right to Information Forum to create an information bank. On 20 June, the foreign guests exchanged their views with some of the Bangladeshi newspaper editors. This meeting was organized on the role of mass media in implementing right to information act. Speakers opined, for the sake of people, mass media should come forward to popularize right to information act. This law will not be effective without the involvement of mass people.

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, former adviser to the caretaker government said, "In the advancement of Right to Information Commission, leadership is a vital issue. It is a matter to think that how much strong the leadership will be in the context of our political culture”. He also said, “Local government, mass media, NGO, civil society and many more can work to establish the right of people on information.”

Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily Star said, “Bureaucracy has historical control over information. It is very tough to establish the right of people on information.” In addition, he indicated the lack of infrastructure, manpower, information bank and archive needed to implement the Right to Information act. Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo said, “Effective implementation of act is very difficult. However, mass media will work to materialize this but others concerned should also work over it.” He also added that, nothing can be said about the future of the Commission until the appointment of its Chairman and members. CPD’s distinguished research fellow Dr. Debopriyo Bhattachariya performed as the Chair of one session. He discussed different aspects of this law in finding out the relation of Right to Information act with people, bureaucrats, businessmen and politicians and preparing research papers. He told, “Though Right to Information act has got some structure, it is a matter to observe the role of bureaucracy in implementing this.”

Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar said, “How much the government is prepared to implement Right to Information act is not known. But newspaper has a role to prepare the government.” The Head of MKSS in India Aruna Roy said, “Mass media should be in balance.” She emphasized on being careful so that the published information is true and accurate and the ethics is ensured. Among the journalists, Mojammel Hossain, Golam Tahabur, Shyamol Dutta, Mashiul Alam and others delivered speech in this session.

Speakers urged on the awareness of mass people, especially the grass root level by utilizing the Right to Information act. They opined that the positive effects of the law are possible to obtain by creating awareness among people about their right to get information.

Law Minister Barrister Shafique Ahmed was the Chief Guest in the concluding session. Regarding a strong Right to Information Commission Law Minister said, “The members of this commission will be recruited on the basis of full transparency. Commission will also perform its duty properly.” He added, rule of law must be established at first in order to institutionalize democracy. The Judiciary should be separated in this regard. Economist Dr. Rehman Sobhan, Joint Secretary of cabinet division Khandokar Anwarul Islam, representatives from civil society, NGO activists and representatives from USA, Mexico, Pakistan and New Zealand participated in another discussion meeting chaired by Shaheen Anam.
Report on the Election Process Tracking Released:

Candidates Spent over Tk 4.4 million on Average from the Day of Nomination Withdrawal up to Election Day

A total of 88 candidates in 40 constituencies who participated in the Ninth Jatiya Sangsad Election spent Tk 4.4 million 20 thousand 979 on an average from the date of withdrawal of nomination papers up to the election-day. TIB disclosed this finding at a press conference held on 6 April 2009 at the National Press Club. This was arranged on the occasion of releasing the final report of the election process tracking of Ninth Parliament Election held in 2008. TIB Trustee Board Chairman Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and the Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman were present in the occasion. The report was presented by Research Fellow Shadhan Kumar Das and Senior Research Fellow Shahzada M. Akram.

This report has reviewed the adherence to electoral laws, rules and code of conduct by the candidates in the Ninth Jatiya Sangsad Election, especially from the day of finalisation of nomination up to the election-day, and made a comparative analysis of the actual expenditure of candidates in comparison to their submitted accounts. These were results from the final phase of this research. Earlier in the first phase, a study was done on the visible and quantifiable expenditure up to 11 December 2008 – the day of withdrawal of candidature, for election campaign of 142 candidates who would contest in 40 constituencies.

The study analysed the information collected and observed on 88 candidates in 40 constituencies. According to the directives of the Election Commission, the expenditure limit in constituencies included in this research was Tk 1.3 million 15 thousand 120. It was found that the candidates had actually spent Tk 4.4 million 20 thousand 979 on an average. Of them, one of the candidates incurred the highest expenditure of Tk 28.1 million, while the lowest expenditure of Tk 434 thousand was spent by another candidate. Based on this estimate, the candidates had incurred an additional expenditure of Tk 3.1 million 5 thousand 859 above the limit set by the Election Commission. It may be noted that, among 88 candidates, 77 spent more than the spending limit set by the Election Commission. If the candidates were examined along party lines, it would be seen that whereas the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party candidates had spent over Tk 5 million on an average, the average figure for the Awami League candidates was Tk 3.5 million 67 thousand 321. However, 6 candidates from the Awami League, 4 from BNP and 1 independent candidate did not cross the expenditure limit.

The candidates incurred maximum expenses for public relations, which was Tk 1.8 million 1 thousand 989 on an average.

It is mandatory for the candidates to submit the return on electoral expenses to the Election Commission within one month of the election. 95.45% of the candidates under this study submitted the return within the stipulated time. An examination of the submitted returns shows that the average expenditure of candidates was Tk 1 million 7 thousand 920. Among these, a candidate incurred the highest expense of Tk 1.4 million 99 thousand 450, while the lowest expenditure by another candidate was Tk 45 thousand only. The most frequent violation of code of conduct was observed in case of use of mikes, which was in excess of allowed time (29.55%). Besides, the candidates spent money for buying nominations, purchasing votes and influencing the administration, which was outside the visible expenditure and could not be measured.
The caretaker government amended the Representation of the People Order 1972 in order to the political system free from the influence of corruption and black money and hold a free and fair election. Through this amendment, registration of political parties was made mandatory for participation in election. Besides, utmost effort was made for re-fixing the ceiling of electoral expenses, creating a level playing field for all parties, withholding concessions to loan and bill defaulters and maintaining a peaceful environment before the election. On the other hand, the Election Commission performed various tasks on time including preparation of a proper and error-free voter-list, re-fixation of the boundaries of constituencies, registration of political parties, formulation of code of conduct applicable for political parties and candidates, printing of voter-list, supply of transparent ballot boxes, sanctioning of symbols for candidates and parties, etc. The Election Commission cancelled the nomination of disqualified candidates after scrutinising their nomination papers. The Commission also closed, exempted or arrested some officials involved in the election process at various levels for violating code of conduct or allegations of political partisanship.

It was found that there were allegations of criminal cases, loan and bill defaults and evasion of taxes against a large segment of candidates nominated by the political parties. One of the main political alliances demanded lifting of embargo on participation in election against retired government officials and bill defaulters. Later, the same alliance demanded relaxation of the stipulations in electoral code of conduct. Again, some political parties violated election laws by holding meetings through blocking roads and using religion in election campaign. Although furnishing of eight categories of information was compulsory during submission of nomination papers, many candidates did not provide some information correctly, such as on educational qualification and sources of income.

There is no mechanism in the Representation of the People Order for verifying the returns submitted by candidates. There are also discrepancies in penalties for violation of code of conduct. Besides, although the ceiling for electoral expense was fixed at Tk 1.5 million, there was no arrangement to monitor the expenses of candidates regularly on behalf of the Election Commission. Adequate measures were also not taken by the Commission in case of failures to provide correct information through affidavits.

TIB proposed a number of methods for monitoring of electoral expenses. For example, the Election Commission can collect information on the conduct of political parties and probable candidates in various constituencies starting from six months before the election. The Commission can take initiative for generating mass awareness and holding opinion-sharing meetings with the media at district and upazila levels on the electoral code of conduct and its violations. It can create a monitoring framework on all candidates in each constituency by identifying various communication strategies. The responsibility of this monitoring function can be vested on the ‘Election Working Group’ approved by the Commission or officials of the Commission at district and upazila levels.

TIB has put forward a number of recommendations for curbing violations of code of conduct in the election process and holding an acceptable election by running the whole process in a transparent and appropriate manner. Notable among these are: regular monitoring of electoral expenses and violation of code of conduct by candidates; taking necessary steps for opening up the flow of information including those on candidates and electoral expenditure of parties for the benefit of the public; incorporation of a section on verifying returns of electoral expenses by candidates and political parties in the election law; and publication of investigative reports in the mass media on electoral expenses of candidates. Besides, different political parties including their leaders, the civil society and public-private organizations involved in election-related work have to be vocal against violation of electoral code of conduct. They should undertake programmes for raising awareness about electoral code of conduct among the people.
Initiation of Paribartan-Driving Change

Four bilateral donors sign MoU with TIB

Four leading bilateral development organizations—DFID of the UK, SIDA of Sweden, SDC of Switzerland and the Danish Embassy on 5 April signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Transparency International Bangladesh to support its new project titled Paribartan – Driving Change.

Consistent with the PRSP, and implemented with the approval of the Government of Bangladesh, the goal of the project is to achieve positive changes in policies and practices conducive to accountable and transparent governance in Bangladesh. The specific objectives include strengthening the National Integrity System, reducing costs of corruption and improving citizens’ access to entitlements through a strengthened and sustained social movement against corruption. Working through an intensified national level advocacy and an up-scaled local level citizens’ engagement the project will strive to achieve better enforcement of policies, laws and rules at both national and local level.

The total budget of the project is $19.6 million (Tk 135 crores) which will cover programmatic and operational expenses of TIB and its 45 local offices all over the country called Committee of Concerned Citizens for five years from April 2009-March 2014.

Newly Elected Chairman of TIB Trustee Board and other office-bearers have taken over charge

Mr. M. Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to the Caretaker Government and Comptroller and Auditor General, has been elected Chairman of the TIB Board of Trustees with effect from June 1, 2009. Mr. Khan has taken over charge from Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, whose three years tenure as Chairman of the Board ended on May 31, 2009. Mr. Khan joined the Board in December 2004 and has been the Treasurer since May 2006.

In the Annual General Meeting of the Board held on 31 May Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Chairman of the Bishwa Shahitya Kendra was also elected as the Secretary General. Advocate Sultana Kamal, former Adviser to the Caretaker Government has been elected as the Treasurer. Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed joined the Board in August 2006 while Advocate Sultana Kamal joined in February 2005.

Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed took over as Secretary General from Mr. Mahtfuz Anam and Advocate Sultana Kamal as the Treasurer from M. Hafizuddin Khan, who finished their respective terms of 3 years on May 31, 2009.

The new office-bearers and other members of the board thanked Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and other outgoing office-bearers for their invaluable contribution to the work of TIB. They expressed their deepest gratitude particularly to Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad for the courage and commitment with which he provided leadership to the social movement against corruption in Bangladesh and to the work of the Board of TIB.
Good Governance in the NGO Sector

Opinion-Sharing at Sylhet and Rajshahi

The government and NGOs are not rivals; rather they are complementary to each other in the development process of the country. The NGO service programmes will have to be extended to remote regions of the country, and they will have to play a more responsible role. Side by side, governmental supervision of NGOs will have to be enhanced. The speakers expressed these opinions during two opinion-sharing meetings organised in Sylhet and Rajshahi on 14 and 24 June respectively. These opinion-sharing meetings on problems of good governance in the NGO sector and what should be done about those was held under the joint auspices of NGO Affairs Bureau of the government, TIB, BRAC, Oxfam GB and Manusher Jonno Foundation.

Sylhet: Held at the district council auditorium, the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Md. Sajjadul Islam, while the Divisional Commissioner of Sylhet Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan was the Chief Guest. DIG of Sylhet Range Md. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan was the Special Guest. The Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau Mustak Hassan Md. Iftekhar, TIB Trustee and Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman and HRD Director of BRAC Sheepa Hafiza took part in the discussion. Assignment Officer of NGO Affairs Bureau Ashfaqul Amin Mukut presented a paper on ‘Good Governance in the NGO Sector: Rules and Regulations, Monitoring and Way Forward’, while TIB’s Research Fellow Shadhan Kumar Das presented another paper titled ‘Problems of Establishing Good Governance in NGO sector: Ways of Remedies’ during the meeting.

In his address, Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan stated that effective and coordinated initiatives by the NGOs and the government were needed for good governance in the NGO sector. Mustak Hassan Md. Iftekhar said that the NGOs should maintain overall transparency and acceptability. Mahfuz Anam opined that the NGOs were making important contributions at home and abroad; establishment of good governance in the NGO sector was very urgent in this backdrop. He added that economic accountability of NGOs should be ensured before anything else and the NGO Affairs Bureau would have to play an effective role in this regard. Administrative officials of the four districts of Sylhet division, NGO representatives and local journalists participated in the open discussion.

Rajshahi: Held at a local hotel, the opinion-sharing meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Shefaul Karim while the Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan was present as the Chief Guest. Others who took part in the discussion included the Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau Mustak Hassan Md. Iftekhar, Additional Divisional Commissioner Syed Ali Nasim Khaliluzzaman, DIG of Rajshahi Range Mokhlesur Rahman, Programme Coordinator of Oxfam Bibhas Chakrabarti and TIB Executive Director. Research Fellow of TIB Shadhan Kuman Das presented a paper on ‘Problems of Establishing Good Governance in NGO Sector: Ways of Remedies’.

In his address, Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan said that the government should play the principal role in supervision of the NGO programmes. Those who are doing good work should be rewarded by the NGO Bureau and those who are doing bad things should be brought under the purview of justice. Mustak Hassan Md. Iftekhar mentioned about various limitations of the NGO Bureau including dearth of manpower. Moderated by Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, district and upazila level officers, bankers, media-men, NGO activists and representatives of the civil society took part in the open discussion. Some recommendations emerged for establishing good governance in the NGO sector. Notable among these were: opening of branch offices of NGO Affairs Bureau in all divisional headquarters, framing policy on registration of NGOs, involvement of people’s representatives in programme supervision, etc.
The Dakar Declaration containing six resolutions for achieving Education for All by the year 2015 was adopted by 180 countries including Bangladesh at the World Education Summit held in Dakar, the capital of Senegal during April 2000. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is implementing various education programmes in 180 countries of the world including Bangladesh. GCE has been striving since its inception for ensuring ‘Education for All’ by holding the governments accountable alongside making the people conscious. Besides, GCE has continued its effort to raise awareness among the mass people in order to ensure the quality of education systems. The countries under the purview of GCE observe Global Action Week (GAW) simultaneously in April each year in commemoration of the Dakar Declaration, as a key initiative for materialising this objective. As the coordinating body of GCE in Bangladesh, the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) has been observing the Global Action Week since the year 2001. It observes the week through joint initiatives with various government and non-government organizations, professional bodies and private institutions.

The GCE took up various programmes during 20-26 April this year for observing the Global Action Week. The theme this year was ‘Youth and Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning’. The week was observed in Bangladesh by CAMPE in concert with its partner organizations including TIB. TIB has been extending issue-based partnership to CAMPE for advancing anti-corruption programmes in order to establish transparency in the education sector. As a follow-up, TIB observed this day in Dhaka under the auspices of CAMPE alongside other partner organizations. TIB participated in the rallies, big read and education fair organised by CAMPE for the purpose. TIB staffs including YES group members participated in these programmes.

Held on 22 April, the rally started from the National Museum at Shahbag at 10 in the morning and concluded at Central Shaheed Minar after going round the Dhaka University campus. TIB staff and YES members participated in the rally by hoisting placards, festoons and banners carrying slogans. The Big Read took place at Shaheed Minar after the rally, in presence of around 2000 people. Apart from representatives of TIB, CAMPE and its partner organizations, people from different strata of society participated in the rally. The CAMPE organised an education fair at Dhaka Residential Model School & College ground on 24-25 April. This fair was organised to generate mass awareness through display of communication tools relevant for pre-primary, primary and adult education. On 24 April it was inaugurated by the Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on education Rashed Khan Menon, MP.

Around 22 organizations including TIB set up stalls in the fair. Alongside display of awareness-generating materials, mass awareness was also raised through popular cultural mediums like folk-music, folk-dance, recitation, songs and puppet show. The fair was attended by people belonging to different professions and age.
The hospitals lack efficient management for rendering healthcare services in the aftermath of disasters. The public life is imperilled by poor quality of services owing to absence of accountability. Initiatives should therefore be taken for ensuring good governance in healthcare sector instead of focusing only on construction of robust infrastructure and solving manpower problem in order to tackle post-disaster situations. The speakers said this at a roundtable organised at the conference room of BRAC University on the occasion of World Health Day 2009.

The theme of the day of this year was ‘Ensure Hospital Services for Tackling Disasters: Save Lives’. The programme on this theme was jointly organised by the James P Grant School of Public Health and TIB. The Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad and the Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury jointly chaired the sessions on the occasion.

The keynote paper at the discussion was presented by the Executive Director of TIB. He explained why proper management and services should be ensured in hospitals, especially in times of emergency, despite limited resources and manpower. He pointed out that whereas 27% corruption takes place in government hospitals of Bangladesh during ordinary times, the possibility of corruption increases during natural calamities due to existing arrangements for resource supply and limited participation of people in service delivery. He put forward some suggestions for ensuring accountability of governmental authority and relevant service-providers, including formulation of code of conduct for emergency situations, access to information, coordinated actions and participation of the citizens.

Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury recommended reconstruction of old buildings like government-run cyclone shelters and Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Professor Muzaffer Ahmad recommended measures for providing patient-friendly healthcare services at nominal price by relating the public sector healthcare services to the demands of the people. He opined that instead of relying on foreign experts, the government itself would have to take such initiative.

Others who put forward important recommendations during the discussion included Project Coordinator of Ganashasthya Kendra Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury, Country Director of Population Council Dr. Obaidur Rab, Health Director of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Dr. Ahmed Shafiqul Haider, Senior Assistant Chief of human resource section of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Dr. Khaled Shamsul Islam, Assistant Professor-Public Health and Health Management of NIPSOM Dr. Zahidur Rahman, Health Adviser of PLAN-Bangladesh Dr. Selina Amin and Director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Brigadier General Dr. Abdus Shahid Khan. They recommended adoption of plans for achieving strategic goals and enhancing efficiency, preparedness for natural disasters, setting up managing committees in hospitals, monitoring construction of robust infrastructure, effective information and communication management, proper management system, intensive supervision and control mechanisms.

## World Health Day 2009 Observed

Professor Md. Nurul Islam, a member of CCC-Bagerhat passed away on 25 June (Innalillahihe Razeen). He was 70 years old at the time of his death. TIB expresses deep sorrow at his demise. In a condolence message, TIB Executive Director extended his deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.
Satellite AI Desk in Natore
The YES group of CCC Natore set up a Satellite AI Desk at Tebaria Hat on 13 May. They distributed around two thousand leaflets on the services provided by Natore Sadar Hospital, Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, Rajshahi Education Board, Dhaka Medical College Hospital and primary education sector among the general mass. Besides, another Satellite AI Desk was set up and a campaign was conducted by the CCC at Maternal and Child Healthcare Centre of Luxmipur union on 9 June. Views were exchanged with the health officials and doctors on healthcare services.

Open Budget held at Rajshahi City Corporation
The budget for 2009-10 of Rajshahi City Corporation was announced on 31 May under the auspices of CCC Rajshahi City. Held at the Corporation Plaza, the event was chaired by the City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton. Others present in the programme included former Mayor Advocate Md. Abdul Hadi, Editor of Sonali Sangbad Liaquat Ali, President of Chamber of Commerce and Industries Kazi Abu Bakkar and Co-Convener of the CCC Professor Dr. Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal.

Human Chain at Comilla
An anti-corruption human chain was organised on the road adjacent to Comilla Circuit House under the initiative of District Corruption Prevention Committee. It carried the slogan ‘Wake up people, Resist Corruption’. Those who participated in it included the Convener of CCC-Comilla Badrul Huda Jenu, YES member Rezbaul Haque Rana, Parvez, Shumon, Rupa, Ether, Shyamol, Barnali, Fahad, Habib, Taimur, Zaki, Kausar, Rimon, Ripon, Jalal and Mahbub.

Opinion-sharing Meeting at Kishoreganj
An opinion-sharing meeting titled ‘Role of Service-Providing Organizations and the Civil Society in Curbing Corruption’ was held at the open stage of the local press club on 7 May under the aegis of CCC Kishoreganj. The Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Syed Nesar Ahmed, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman and Mayor of Kishoreganj Municipality Alhaj Abu Taher Mia were present on the occasion as guests. Chaired by the CCC Convener Advocate Ashok Sarkar, those who spoke at the meeting included newly elected Convener of the CCC Advocate Maya Bhowmik, lawyer Advocate Nasir Uddin Farooqui, women’s leader Sultana Razia, journalist A K Nasim Khan, Mostafa Kamal, teacher Nadira Begum Beauty and YES member Julhas Uddin Sarkar.
World Health Day Observed at Muktagachha
A colourful rally was brought out through the joint initiative of CCC-Muktagachha, Upazila Health Office and World Vision on 7 April on the occasion of World Health Day. It commenced from the upazila office compound and culminated at Upazila Health Complex. The rally was inaugurated by the Upazila Chairman Advocate Badar Uddin Ahmed. Over one hundred citizens were present at the rally.

Information Board set up at Sreemangal Health Complex
"We seek service; we want to ensure people’s right to get services. Sincere cooperation of all is required for this". Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Vice-Principal Alhaj Md. Abdus Shahid MP said this while inaugurating the information board set up at Sreemangal Upazila Health Complex on 24 May. He added that the present government is sincerely working to ensure rightful services to the people. Upazila Nirbahi Officer Faiz Ahmed, Health Officer Dr. Haripada Ray, CCC Convener Saiyeed Mujeebur Rahman, physicians of the health complex, local elites and CCC and YES members were present on the occasion.

Hospital Authority Meets Service-recipients in Kushtia
A programme on ‘Hospital authority meets the service-recipients’ was organised on the compound of Kushtia General Hospital on 21 May by the CCC Kushtia with the help of Authority. The Civil Surgeon Dr. Subodh Kumar Kundu and Resident Medical Officer Dr. Arabinda Pal gave answers to various queries from the service-recipients. They urged the authorities to discharge their responsibilities sincerely in order to enhance service quality and solve existing problems. The programme was chaired by CCC Convener Md. Rafiqul Alam (Tuku). Others who spoke on the occasion included former Deputy Director of Health Department and CCC member Dr. Md. Abu Daud.

Opinion Sharing Meeting at Faridpur
The Civil Surgeon Dr. Md. Bashirul Islam has given assurance of all-out assistance for enhancing the service quality of Faridpur General Hospital. He has also promised to set up an information board on services provided as well as a complaint box. He gave these assurances during an opinion exchange meeting held at the Civil Surgeon’s Office on 3 June. The meeting started with an address of welcome by CCC Convener Professor Md. Altaf Hossain. Those who took part in the proceedings included Dr. Nikhil Chandra Dutta, Dr. Md. Afzal Hossain, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Saha, Dr. Dilruba Zeba, Dr. Syed Obaidur Rahman, Dr. Nayeem Al Imam, hospital pharmacist Md. Shamsul Islam, Md. Ismail Hossain, Co-Convener of the CCC Muzibur Rahman, member Munshi Harun-ar- Rashid and Panna Bala.

Opinion Sharing Meeting at Satkhira
An opinion-sharing meeting was held between the CCC and the teachers of Rajarbagan Government Primary School, Satkhira on 9 June. CCC member Principal Abdul Hamid and the school teachers were present on the occasion. Both the sides expressed the hope that they would work together for improving the quality of school education.

Opinion Sharing Meeting with the Civil Surgeon of Khulna
An opinion sharing meeting was held at the Khulna Civil Surgeon’s Office on 7 May under the aegis of CCC-Khulna. Discussions were held on identifying the causes of various irregularities and mismanagement in the hospital and ways and means of removing those. Those present on the occasion included the District Civil Surgeon Dr. Md. Lutfar Rahman Khan, RMO Dr. Md. Ishaque Ali, Convener of CCC Khulna Hafizur Rahman, member Shaikh Abdul Quayum, Syed Monowar Ali, Advocate Ashok Kumar Saha, Shamima Sultana Shilu and Nasrin Haider.

Networking Meeting on Healthcare in Rajshahi
A networking meeting on healthcare was organised by CCC Rajshahi City, at the CCC office on 7 June with the participation of NGOs working in the health sector. The meeting decided to work together on the healthcare sector of Rajshahi City through proper coordination between the CCC and NGOs. A committee was formed with the convener of health sub-committee of the CCC Akbarul Hasan Millat as the Convener.
Open Budget held at Lalmonirhat
An open budget announcement programme took place at the Mogalhat Union Parishad of Lalmonirhat sadar on 24 June through the initiative of CCC Lalmonirhat. Chaired by the UP Chairman Habibur Rahman Habib, those present on the occasion included CCC Convener Advocate Md. Moyzul Islam, Captain (Retd.) Azizul Hoque Bir Pratik, CCC member S. M. Shafiqul Islam, Md. Mokter Hossain, Advocate Iasminara Begum, YES members and inhabitants of the union. The Chairman announced the budget in front of the local people and replied to various queries on the budget from them.

Rally and Cartoon Exhibition held at Patiya
A rally was brought out from Patiya Health Complex compound on 26 June with the goal of creating awareness about health rights. The Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr. Saroj Kumar Barua formally inaugurated the rally. A mobile anti-corruption cartoon exhibition comprising of six vans went round different unions of Patiya upazila with the same objective.

Rickshaw Campaign at Mymensingh
The YES group of CCC-Mymensingh organised an anti-corruption campaign with the participation of rickshaw pullers of the town on 6 June as part of the overall anti-corruption campaign. The YES group members pasted stickers carrying the slogan ‘What is your stand in curbing corruption? Boycott the Corrupt’ behind the rickshaws. They also distributed t-shirts among the rickshaw pullers. It may be mentioned that both the front-side and the backside of the t-shirts carried slogans.

Press Conference in Protest against Attack on Indigenous People in Naogaon
A local land-robber resorted to looting, setting on fire and indecent assaults on 12 June against 72 indigenous and Bengalee families living on 18 bighas of land in Chhaorh union of Porsha upazila under Naogaon district. A number of indigenous and Bengalee inhabitants suffered injuries and destitution due to this incident. In this backdrop, a press conference was arranged at the auditorium of Dhaka Reporters’ Unity on 25 June morning at 10:30 o’clock under the joint auspices of 5 NGOs working at the national level; these were, ALRD, BLAST, Nijera Kori, Ain O Shalish Kendra and TIB.

Those who were present at the press conference on behalf of these organizations were Executive Director of Ain O Shalish Kendra Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of BLAST Farida Yasmin, Rashida Begum of Nijera Kori, Executive Director of ALRD Shamsul Huda and Programme Manager of TIB Md. Rafiqul Islam. A delegation comprising representatives of these organizations visited the place of occurrence on 17-19 June for an on-the-spot inquiry of the incident on 12 June. BLAST official Abdul Malek read out the inquiry report at the press conference. An indigenous citizen named Naren Murmu described their ordeal on behalf of the distressed people.

Advocate Sultana Kamal pointed out at the press conference that the election manifesto of the present government contained pledges about protecting the land rights of the indigenous people. Despite that, this incident of attack on the indigenous community of Naogaon for evicting them from their land was very sad and a matter of great concern. She urged the government to immediately take steps for constituting a separate land commission for the indigenous people living in the plains.

The five NGOs expressed their dismay at this incident of assault. They demanded appropriate actions on the basis of a neutral investigation on the dubious role played by the local administration and police after the incident had taken place. They also demanded immediate arrest and trial of the land-grabbers and torturers. At the same time, the cooked-up cases against the landless families should also be withdrawn, they demanded.
What kind of civilisation is this, where a segment of human society is honoured as superiors or masters by virtue of their birth? And for the other segment, their very birth is as if a sin! They are inferior, dependent and pitiable therefore vilified! According to feminism as described by Marxism, the exploitation of women has been historically an outcome of private ownership; consequently, emancipation of women is possible only through disbanding private ownership. According to T. Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone, the subjugation of women is basically biological in nature. A revolution is therefore needed for women's emancipation. They hold the view that technology has developed to such an extent in human history that it is possible to free women by utilising it. Sexual repression would come to an end if the biological families are disbanded.

Raja Rammohan Ray and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar were probably the first feminist males who wanted to give womenfolk minimum rights for a living, which the patriarchal society could not provide. Begum Rokeya, Begum Sufia Kamal, Nurjahan Begum et al were torch-bearers of women's education geared towards women’s awakening. They made contributions through their ideas and razor-sharp writings. Competition for development started with the progress of knowledge and science. Those who could realize that it would be difficult to sustain in this competition if men and women do not advance together are today known as developed societies of the world. But the wheel of civilization and progress did not make much headway in case of those who kept their womenfolk captive inside homes by sticking to religious and social bigotry. Our country is also being crushed by this force.

The life-cycle of women in our social system is divided into three stages. The first stage of this dissected lifecycle is that of a daughter by virtue of birth, where father is the guardian. Paternal residence is therefore like a seed-bed in this life cycle. At one stage after adolescence, the girl is uprooted from the seedbed of paternal abode and sent to the husband’s home in the name of marriage. Here, the husband is the guardian. The husband’s small abode now becomes her roaming ground. In the last stage of her life during old age, the son becomes the guardian, which continues up to her death. The familial and social position of a male is solid and specific from his very birth up to death. But what about females? Which address is her own? She does not even know whether she has any asset! Despite all her social, economic and political rights, women become victims of discrimination from the very first stage of her life. In contrast, fathers look at their sons as their own images and groom them as apt successors with utmost care.

Exploitation, deprivation and discriminatory behaviour are the main roots of corruption. Azan is given in Muslim families when a male offspring is born; in case of Hindu families, the ulu-sounds are made five to seven times. But when female offsprings are born, no Azan is given and the number of ulu-sound comes down to three. Consequently, women start fighting against the corrupt trait called discrimination from their very birth. They grow up amid the mental conflict of discrimination and deprivation at all stages of life. All human beings get a name after their birth, which gives them identity throughout their lives. But in case of women, ‘Miss’ title is added prior to marriage, ‘Mrs’ after marriage and ‘Beoa’ is added at the end of their names when the husbands die. But the identity of men is never adorned with such adjectives at any stage.

When the girl-child grows up physically and mentally, she faces a variety of harassments on the streets and even over mobile phones from bad boys, which often crosses the limit of tolerance. If they fail to protect themselves, they suffer abductions, acid violence, rapes and murders; or they choose the path of suicide when they fail to get justice in society. Their parents want to feel relieved by marrying off their adolescent daughter after taking into consideration her security. The situation is like ‘crocodiles in water, tigers on dry land’. Despite provisions of stringent punishment, innumerable incidents of acid-throwing are taking place each year. Countless women are carrying the pains of a brutal, horrible and handicapped life.

Rape is another primitive and brutal tool of violence against women in this patriarchal society. This most primitive and brutal weapon of cruelty is such a sensitive matter that the pain that women endure is worse than death. If women were considered humans, then women trafficking would not have taken place. It is because women are looked upon as commodities that they are trafficked abroad when some pervert men take advantage of their poverty and simplicity and entice them by promising to give...
jobs or by undertaking polygamous marriages. Many of them are forced to take up the profession of sexwork for the remainder of their lives and return only after getting infected with HIV-AIDS.

Another weapon of repression against women is ‘fatwa’ (religious decree), who’s literal meaning is ‘opinion’. It is not a judicial procedure. There is no scope for pronouncing punishment by holding somebody guilty or innocent through this method. Despite that, one-sided tortures and repressions are being carried out against women in the name of justice through this unconstitutional and illegal ‘fatwa’ by some conservative individuals of this country.

There are discriminations between males and females in all regions of the world. Its dreadfulness is manifested through repressions. Therefore alongside state actors, the United Nations Organization has also framed various principles for elimination of discrimination between men and women and prevention of women’s repression. These principles are applicable for females throughout the world irrespective of race and religion. Some of these international charters approved by the Government of Bangladesh are: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ILO Charter, CEDAW Charter, Vienna Declaration, Beijing Declaration – Platform for Action, etc.

The world civilization is progressing fast. Today man is striving to set up habitats in other planets through scientific and technological knowledge. But we are still stumbling in a cycle of underdevelopment. We are still being crushed by ignorance and poverty even after 38 years of independence. We shall never achieve economic emancipation as long as the blight of discrimination, exploitation, deprivation and corruption among the people is not erased from the face of the nation.

Wealth is a source of power and honour in a social system. Keeping the women community in a backward state through exploitation, deprivation and discrimination implies rendering the wheel of a nation dysfunctional. If the flow of a river is hindered, the riverbed gets filled up with sands and grains. Weeds start to grow in clear water. The water which carries sediments makes the villages on its two banks green with crops. But this river, which is comparable to woman, would die at some point of time; the fertile land on the two banks would become grey deserts. Similarly, if the economic dynamism of the country is not based on the principle of equitable distribution, then some people would become excessively rich while the ordinary citizens, especially the women community would be lost below the depths of the poverty line. The adverse impact of corruption on powerful men is negligible. But it has tremendous adverse impact on women. This in turn has negative impact on the family, the society and the nation – which is not at all desirable. So, let us all become vocal against discrimination and repression against women.

Jubeyda Khatun, Co-Convener, CCC-Nalitabari

Premiere Show and Theatre Workshop

A number of theatre workshops has been organised under the auspices of TIB and CCCs. The anti-corruption theatre workshops were held at Chapai Nawabganj during 17-19 May and at Sreemangal during 24-26 May 2009. Following a 3-day workshop at Sreemangal, the drama ‘Jago Manush’ (Wake-up People) was staged before the audience.

Another theatre workshop took place from 25 to 27 May in Pirojpur. The premiere show of the street drama ‘Durnitir Dusshomoy’ (Bad times for corruption) was staged by the people’s theatre group of Pirojpur CCC at the local Morshed Smriti Shishu Niketan auditorium on the last day of the workshop. Another production-based theatre workshop was held from 2 to 4 June with the participation of YES members of CCC- Madhupur by holding aloft the slogan ‘Theatre against corruption’. The newly produced theatre was staged on the last day of the workshop at Madhupur MCDP open stage.

Holding the slogan ‘Let theatre become an artistic protest against corruption’, CCC Kishoreganj arranged a production-based people’s theatre workshop from 31 May to 2 June. The CCC distributed prizes to the theatre activists on the occasion for participating in the workshop with distinction.

A 3 daylong refreshers’ workshop on people’s theatre was held from 23 to 25 June at Muktagachha Regional Cooperative Institute. Besides, the people’s theatre group of CCC Muktagachha staged the drama ‘Boba Kanna’ (Muted Cry) at the open-air stage of the municipal library on 25 June. The drama was enjoyed and highly appreciated by around 4 hundred spectators.
It is not possible to uproot corruption without active role of the youth

Speakers at the workshop organised by TIB

It is not possible to eliminate corruption from the country without active role of the youth. The youth had played a distinguished role in all the noteworthy episodes of Bangladesh’s history, starting from the Language Movement of 1952 up to the Liberation War in 1971. The speakers said this at a roundtable discussion on ‘Role of the Youth in the Anti-corruption Movement’. This discussion was organised by TIB at Proshika Manob Unnayan Kendro, Koitta, Manikganj, on 8 May. It took place on the second day of a 3-day workshop organised to provide an overall idea about the anti-corruption movement to the members of Youth Engagement and Support (YES) groups formed in the colleges and universities of Dhaka metropolitan area, and to provide them an opportunity to draw up annual action-plans for themselves. Over two hundred youth participated in the workshop. All present in the inaugural programme took an anti-corruption oath together.

Eminent persons who spoke at the roundtable included TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, litterateurs Selina Hossain and Anisul Haque, and Trustee of Liberation War Museum Akku Chowdhury. Teachers of various educational institutions expressed their support and good wishes for the programme. They included Mohammad Morad Hossain Khan, Salah Uddin Sumon, M. Hafiz Uddin Bhuiyan, Farzana Parveen, Dulali Rani Saha, Mohammad Mosharrat Hossain, Engineer Kamrul Hassan, Abdullah Al-Mamun and Saiful Alam. Litterateur Selina Hossain said that this sub-continent had always advanced forward with the support of the youth. We must acknowledge their strength. The youth of this country had sacrificed their lives for the freedom and independence of this country. Not only in the anti-corruption movement, if they remained honest at any corner of society, this country was bound to undergo transformation. Akku Chowdhury stated that the freedom fighters had dreamt of a corruption-free beautiful Bangladesh. We got our land, but we could not free the country from corruption. The youth must come forward if we are to build a golden Bangladesh. Litterateur Anisul Haque termed the youth as architects of change and said the whole nation would be illuminated if an individual becomes enlightened. He urged the youth to become illumined as torch-bearers and hoped that this country would rid itself of corruption through this process.

Earlier, the programme of the inaugural day started at 9 in the morning through singing of the national anthem and a choreographic presentation of the anti-corruption theme song ‘Wake-up People’. The welcome address was delivered by the TIB Executive Director. In his address, he urged the youth to actively participate in the struggle against corruption in Bangladesh. Recalling various successes achieved in Bangladesh in the past, he said, “We could have made more headway towards development through eradication of poverty if we could effectively control corruption”. Dr. Zaman emphasised on the need for a specific anti-corruption strategy by generating anti-corruption demand among the people through political goodwill, identification of corruption as a punishable offence, strengthening of national integrity system and mass awareness.

It may be mentioned that the YES members of Rokeya Hall, Kuwait Maitree Hall, Management Studies Department, Institute of Education and Research and Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Dhaka University, as well as YES members of East West University, Northern University, Stamford University, ULAB, Uttara University, IBAIS University, Rajuk Uttara Model College and Dhaka YES-1 participated in the workshop.
YES News

YES Groups Formed in the Educational Institutions

YES groups have been formed amid much enthusiasm at various educational institutions of Dhaka with the goal of involving the country’s youth in the social movement against corruption.

The YES group activities commenced at RAJUK Uttara Model College on 2 April. The YES group- RAJUK Uttara Model College was formed with 42 members taken from two shifts of the college. Senior teacher Md. Zahidur Rahman, YES adviser Asrafuzzaman Akhunji, Najnin Aktar and relevant officials of TIB were present at the inaugural ceremony.

On the same day, the YES group of Stamford University Bangladesh was constituted with 22 students. The orientation programme of the YES group was held at the university auditorium. The YES group took oath on the day to build Bangladesh as a corruption-free and accomplished country. Those who were present at the programme included Deputy Registrar of the university Faruk Kabi Uddin, YES adviser Tahsina Yasmin, Fatima Tabasum and TIB officials.

The YES group of Uttara University formed on 20 April with 20 members of Uttara University were selected through this process. University teachers, chief adviser of the YES group Professor Md. Dr Khairul Islam Khan and others were present on the occasion.

The YES group of the Management Studies department of Dhaka University commenced its journey with 23 students as members. The group has become functional under the supervision of group adviser and Associate Professor of the department Md. Mosharraf Hossain. The orientation meeting of the group was held on 25 April under his chairmanship.

YES Group of Bangladesh Kuwait Moitree Hall of Dhaka University was formally launched on 2 May. 28 students stated their firm resolve against corruption in presence of the YES group adviser and resident teacher Luna Afroz as well as TIB officials.

Besides, the YES group of East West University was formed on the same day, consisting of 29 students from various departments. Assistant Professor of the Business Administration department Engineer Kamrul Hassan and Lecturer of Electrical and Electronic Engineering department Tahseen Kamal were inducted as advisers of the YES group.

The YES group members of IBAIS University and Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University started their journey on 3 and 4 May respectively by expressing their solidarity with the anti-corruption movement.

United efforts of all are required for deterring environmental disasters. Based on this theme, the YES group of Kuwait Maitree Hall published a wallmagazine and staged a skit-drama on ‘sound pollution’ on 6 June. The Director of Outreach and Communication of TIB Rezwan-ul-Alam and the Provost of Bangladesh Kuwait Maitree Hall Professor Farida Begum were present at the publication ceremony. The YES group of the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University planted trees on its compound on the occasion of World Environment Day.
The private sector uses bribes to influence public policy

TI Global Corruption Barometer 2009

The private sector uses bribes to influence public policy, laws and regulations, believe over half of those polled for 2009 Global Corruption Barometer. The Barometer, a global public opinion survey released on 3 June by Transparency International (TI), also found that half of respondents expressed a willingness to pay a premium to buy from corruption-free companies.

“These results show a public sobered by a financial crisis precipitated by weak regulations and a lack of corporate accountability,” said Transparency International Chair, Huguette Labelle. “But we also see that the public is willing to actively support clean business. What is needed now is bold action by companies to continue strengthening their policies and practices, and to report more transparently on finances and interactions with government.”

The Barometer, with more than 73,000 respondents drawn from 69 countries and territories around the world, also found the poor to be disproportionately burdened by bribe demands. And it was found that government efforts to combat corruption are generally perceived as ineffective, in addition to high levels of perceived corruption in political parties, parliaments and the civil service.

Although Bangladesh was not covered by the survey, the findings of the Barometer in many ways reflect the situation in the country, especially impact of corruption on the poor and the powerless, role of the private sector as the supply side of corruption, and growing public demand for integrity in both public and private sectors, said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and a member of the International Board of TI. He also stressed the finding of the report that both the private and public sectors have a great deal of work to do to achieve greater public trust.

The business-related findings of the Barometer send a powerful signal to the private sector and provide yet another incentive - in addition to the legal, reputational and financial risks of corruption - for companies to prove that they are clean and to communicate this clearly to the public. In Cambodia, Hong Kong, Liberia and Sierra Leone, as many as 4 out of 5 respondents said they would pay a premium for products and services from corruption-free companies.

Asked specifically how much corrupt- they perceived different domestic institutions to be, half of respondents said they saw the private sector as corrupt, an increase of 8 percentage points over five years ago. And in roughly a fifth of the countries and territories surveyed, including countries home to some of the world’s major financial centres, such as Hong Kong, Luxemburg and Switzerland, respondents identified the private sector as the most corrupt.

“Companies must engage meaningfully with the reporting frameworks and anti-corruption codes now available and begin applying these in earnest, reporting clearly and honestly about their efforts, and benchmarking their policies and practices,” said Robin Hodess, Director of Policy and Research at Transparency International.

The 2009 Barometer shows that the poorest families continue to be punished by petty bribe demands. Across the board, low-income respondents were more likely to be met with bribe demands than high-income respondents. Additionally, petty bribery was found to be on the rise in Venezuela, Ghana, Indonesia, Cambodia Bolivia, Senegal, Russia and Kenya, compounding the already difficult situation of low-income households, as jobs and income dwindle in the economic downturn.

Only three in ten respondents believed their government’s efforts to fight corruption were effective, although opinion in Sub-Saharan Africa was notably more positive than in other regions.

Most of those polled also felt that existing channels for making corruption-related complaints were ineffective. Fewer than one in four who paid a
bribe in the past year lodged a formal complaint, demonstrating serious deficits in the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions and channels for controlling corruption.

Echoing the findings of past editions of the Barometer, 68 percent of respondents saw political parties as corrupt, and 29 percent saw them as the single most corrupt institution in their country. The civil service and parliament trailed political parties, perceived by 63 and 60 percent of respondents respectively as being corrupt.

The media, while not perceived as clean, scored best with just over 40 percent of respondents labelling the sector as corrupt and with only 6 percent seeing it as the single most corrupt domestic institution.

The tragically familiar stories of this year’s Barometer are the negative perceptions of public institutions and government anti-corruption efforts, and low-income households saddled with petty bribe payments for ostensibly free services. New this year was the increasingly critical view of the private sector and a public motivated to pay a premium for clean business. The 2009 Barometer makes clear that both the private and public sectors have a great deal of work to do to win back the public trust.

Cultural Festival

A two daylong anti-corruption cultural festival was held at the Shaheed Minar premises of Khulna University on 12 and 13 May with the cooperation of TIB for celebrating the 2nd founding anniversary of the university’s Friends Forum. Chaired by the member of the council of advisers of the forum Professor Dr. Dilip Kumar Datta, those who spoke on the occasion included the chief guest and Khulna University Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Md. Saifuddin Shah and the convener of CCC- Khulna Hafizur Rahman.

The speakers praised the TIB initiative to generate awareness among Khulna University students regarding the pervasiveness of corruption in Bangladesh and wished it all success. The cultural programme began after welcoming the newly formed committee of the Friends’ Forum and staging of a people’s play by the Rupantar Institute of Folk Theatre.

In addition, an exhibition of anti-corruption cartoons at the university cafeteria, eminent singers Kiran Chandra Roy and Chandana Majumdar presented songs on the concluding day of the programme. In between songs, the artistes urged the youth to become vocal and fight corruption. Side by side with cultural renderings, the organizations which extended active cooperation in holding the festival included Krishti, Bhairabi, Ongkarsrinuta, Theater Nipun, Naiyaik, Noise Factor, Bandhushabha, Bandhon, Nri-Natya and 35MM.
Health Minister Praises Advice and Information Desk Programme

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque has commended the ‘Advice and Information Desk’ programme run by TIB. He expressed his admiration while inspecting the TIB desk at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on the occasion of World Health Day on 7 April. Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali and Additional Secretary Abul Kalam Azad were present on the occasion. The Director of the hospital Brigadier General Dr. Abdus Shahid Khan briefed the Health Minister about the ‘information and advice desk’.

TIB organised the ‘AI-Desk’ as part of the observance of ‘Service Week 2009’ of Dhaka Medical College Hospital on the occasion of World Health Day. By keeping in mind the theme of World Health Day this year, the Government of Bangladesh took the initiative to take a look at the services provided by different departments of hospitals in the country between 7 and 13 April.

To make this initiative successful at DMC Hospital, the authorities invited TIB to conduct the AI-Desk at its premises. The YES group members of TIB ran this desk on the first two days (7-8 April) and the last two days (12-13 April) of the week. It may be mentioned that maximum number of service-recipients (total 3208) were distributed various information through this desk during the ‘Service Week 2009’ of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Md. Rafiqul Islam, Mothertek, Dhaka

Effective Anti Corruption Commission

There is no end to our dream about the ACC. It can play a huge role as a vital pillar of the national integrity system. But we do not see much ray of hope now due to its present performance. TIB played an active part in the establishment of ACC. We hope that TIB will continue its powerful advocacy campaign regarding the desired active role of ACC. I thank the TIB authority for publishing an editorial on the subject in the March 2009 issue of TIB Newsletter.

Md. Rafiqul Islam, Mothertek, Dhaka

Right to Information Commission

Bangladesh advanced one step ahead on the path to good governance through the passage of ‘Right to Information Act-2009’ in the Jatiya Sangsad on 29 March. What is required now is successful enforcement of this law. As a first step, we hope that the Right to Information Commission will be constituted by inducting people who are efficient, experienced and qualified.

Kamrunnahar Sweety, Bahaddar Hat, Chittagong