Democracy is useless without free mass media. Towards strengthening democracy, other than an effective parliament two essential constituents that play the vital role are independent judiciary and mass media. To ensure rule of justice through prevention of corruption, establishment of transparency and accountability, independence of news media and continuous flow of information are essential.

Every citizen has the right to access to all information save affairs of the state security, relationship with other foreign countries and such matters of extreme sensitivity. But the colonial attitude of concealing information still persists. Official Secrets Act of 1923 still hinders the free flow of information. It has come in the maintaining secrecy of information. But screening information merely means remaining backward.

Though it has been mentioned in the article 39 of the Constitution about the unconditional freedom of the press, there still exists a direct or indirect control over the mass media. It is a gross violation of freedom of expression or opinion if journalists face intimidation, exertion of influence or are forced through any means to be partial. It is the basic right of all citizens to know what the parliament is doing or what is being discussed in the parliamentary committees, or if there exists transparency in the activities of the defence personnel or whether the judiciary is functioning impartially. But instead if the journalists have to undergo oppression and are fined and jailed for publishing unbiased news, the very subject of expression of opinion is questioned.

We maintain that mere passing of laws are not enough to ensure free flow of information. What is essential is creating a suitable environment so that people come to know the facts. If the news media are given all the right information only then transparency and accountability will be ensured. To ensure good governance free flow of information is indispensable.

First class government officials are the most corrupt

Corruption causes financial loss of 11 thousand million in one year

First class government officials are the most corrupt persons according to the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Corruption Database Report. Corruption by these officials has caused a loss of eleven thousand two hundred and fifty six crore (US $ 2.0 billion) taka in one year alone. The Research Report has been prepared by collecting and evaluating news on corruption from 23 dailies published between January and December 2001. The Research reveals that though all low and high-ranking officials are more or less corrupt, first class officials are more corruption-prone than others. The first segment of the research carried out on the officials of this tier has revealed 414 incidents of such corruption. The second and the third segments have divulged 111 and 171 cases respectively. (The period of research has been divided into Jan-Jun, July-Sept and Oct-Dec 2001 segments).

Though 632 reports out of 1514 news items examined in the first segment are about monetary loss from the government exchequer, the exact amount lost in such corruption cases has been mentioned in 296 only. Financial loss calculated from the 296 reports is Taka 8926.2 crore. In the second segment 442 reports have been examined out of which although 171 are about govt pecuniary loss, only 76 have mentioned the exact amount. It comes to a total of Taka 494.9 crore. In the 3rd segment a total of 201 incidents have been evaluated among which 115 have mentioned evidences of monetary loss. The loss incurred on these incidents has been calculated to Taka1835.1 crore.
In the research, the law-enforcing agency has been attributed to be the most corrupt department. Within its jurisdiction come sub-sectors like police, BDR, Ansar and VDP. During the first six months of research 227 incidents of corruption by the police were collected from the newspapers, 40 and 86 during the second and last three months respectively. In the police department abuse of power ranks the highest in the corruption list. During the time mentioned this rate was 56.8%, 52.5% and 34.9% respectively. Incidences of bribery and extortion in police force are also considerable. During the research span of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd segments incidences of bribery and extortion had been 22.0%, 27.5% and 27.9% and 13.2%, 15.0% and 36.0% respectively.

Next to law-enforcing agency the most corrupt department happens to be the education sector. Within the jurisdiction of education, sub-sectors included in the review were secondary schools, madrasahs, national and district education offices, primary schools, madrasahs, national and Open Universities including autonomously run universities, food for education, education boards, technical and vocational education, education secretariat and medical college administration. During the entire research period 379 reports had been published on education sector.

The other three corrupt sectors next to those mentioned above are local government, health and forest and environment. Total reports published on the local government were 271. Among them incidences of misappropriation of money were the highest at the Union Parishad level. Chairmen and members of the Parishad misappropriated money allocated under different rural projects like VGR, VGT, and TR etc. 199 and 192 such reports were published on health and forest and environment although incidences of misuse of monopoly powers ranked the highest (236, 69 and 101).

Number of Thana/Upozilla in Bangladesh is estimated at 500. Though corruption reports in the 1st and 2nd segments during the research had been published on every Upozilla/Thana, there had been some exceptions during July-December. In every segment the name of the Thana/Upozilla that was reported to have committed the highest number of corruption was Ramma of Dhaka district. In all three segments a total of 108 corruption reports had been published on this Thana.

Out of 2570 reports collected and examined from 23 dailies, steps were taken against the incidences reported in 703, i.e., the rate of action taken came to 27.4% of the total cases reported. Among 1514 reports of corruption the extent of use of monopoly

### Governments of rich countries failed greatly to prevent world trade illegal/underhand transactions by the multinational companies

In the press conference arranged in Paris, the capital of France, on the occasion of the publication of the Bribe Payers Index, the Chairman of Transparency International Dr. Peter Eigen said, "Though the politicians and government officials of the industrially developed countries make a hue and cry about the corruption of the developing countries, they tend to deny that the offices of the multinational companies of their countries are involved in immoral bribe paying."

Transparency International, an international forum, has published the Bribe Payers Index, BPI-2002 for the second time. The Index has included 21 highest exporting countries of the world in its list. These countries bribe the highest of the developing countries for investment of capital and international trade.

According to this Index Russia tops the list of the bribe paying countries and three Asian countries, China, Taiwan and South Korea hold the 2nd, 3rd and 4th positions. Australia comes at the bottom of the list. European countries like Sweden, Switzerland and Austria occupy the next 3 positions, while the U.S.A and Japan come 13th and 14th in the list.

It can be mentioned that Gallup International association conducted a survey from last December to March of this year. The survey was made on those 15 countries where business of the multinational companies and their investments are high.

From the result of the Bribe Payers Index it can be found that the foreign companies are engaged in corruption mostly in the business deals that involve public works, arms and defence, whereas this ratio is the lowest in the agricultural sector. Though in the field of trade and commerce in many industrially developed countries it is a crime to bribe foreign officials, laws in those countries are not properly implemented. It can be mentioned that TI started to publish the Bribe Payers Index from 1999.
power could be assessed in 1421. Out of them 916 had been extensive and 415 minor incidences of exercise of absolute power. However, there were no such evidences found in 90 reported incidents. In July-September a total of 442 reports had been published out of which 435 incidences could be assessed in measuring the extent of despotic power exercised. Among them 302 were marked as of high order, 98 as low and 35 without any evidence. On the other hand out of 614 incidents published during October-December, 607 were appraised. It was found that there were 463 cases of extensive and 100 cases of minor abuse of absolute power. In 44 of the reported cases there were no such evidences found.

During the first six months of the research, use of discretionary powers could be assessed in 1046 cases out of 1514 reports published. In 827 reported cases such powers were extensively and, in 104 minimally performed. In 115 cases reported evidence of use of discretionary powers could not be found. Only 197 incidents out of a total of 442 reports on use of such powers could be assessed during July-September. Extensive use of discretionary powers was traced in 171 incidents reported. In 3 cases it was minimal and in 23 absent. Out of 614 reports published during October-December, 246 could be properly evaluated. Discretionary powers were extensively used in 212 such cases while only 5 had evidences of minimum use and 29 had none.

During the first six months of the research, out of 1514 published reports it was possible to measure the presence of amount of accountability in 1457, wherein it was found 1399 had gross absence of accountability. In 25 such cases a little amount of accountability was found, while in 33, signs of accountability were conspicuously noticeable. During July-September absence of accountability was obvious in 389 such incidents, though a little amount of accountability was traced in 17. But positive signs of accountability were noticed in 13 such cases. Vis-a-vis during October-December evidence of accountability was positively noticed in 12, traceable accountability in 30 and gross absence in 501 such incidents.

The authenticity of newspaper reports is often questioned. In order to ascertain the authenticity of the reports included in the database, TIB undertook a verification procedure in this regard. 10% of the reports were verified as sample. 257 reports were selected for verification. TIB used the following three separate questionnaires for corroboration: a) The concerned reporter b) Concerned office c) A third person, who is not a member of the concerned office, but a regular reader of the newspaper and is one of the stakeholders of the related incidents.

During the process, 86.3% of the total reporters could submit their documents. Half of the officials concerned admitted that the reports were wholly true, while 22.5% said the reports were partially correct. Only 2.1 percent claimed that the reports were entirely false and produced documents in support of their claim.
From the pages of newspaper

**Fight for the share of bribe money**

There is no hush-hush in taking bribes anymore. A fight was started openly for the share of it. Last April, the Officer-in-Charge and two Sub Inspectors of Dhanmondi Police station were suspended for taking bribe. The police freed two men arrested for smuggling Indian saries in exchange of large amount of bribe. Later detected, while fighting over the share of the bribe money, they were put under suspension.

*Source: The Daily Ajker Kagoj, 16th April, 2002*

**In one year only**

Through export forgery cash incentive amounting to 4 hundred million taka had been misappropriated last financial year. This large amount of money was misappropriated by showing fake company registration papers by a network conniving with the bank officials. The information was revealed in an investigation report conducted by the tax detectives and investigation directorate.

*Source: The Daily Janakantha, 18th May, 2002*

**Officer-in-Charge takes bribe from Assistant Sub Inspector**

A retired Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) of police released his innocent son by paying 35-thousand taka bribe. ASI Wahab Mollah made this allegation of bribery against the Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police station of Mymensing district in the press club.

*Source: The Daily Prothom Alo, 13th May, 2002*

**Depositors’ 15 lac taka misappropriated**

The former Cash Officer Mohammed Selim of Kaliganj Sonali Bank of Jinaudah misappropriated 15 lac taka of the depositors. He is absconding now. The fraud came to light when a customer went to withdraw money by cheque on 12th May. The news reveals that the amount was misappropriated by not depositing the clients' money in their accounts for the last 4 years.

*Source: The Daily Ittefaq, 25th May, 2002*

**Police in the headlines**

Muggers were none other than police themselves. Police, while searching the house of a businessman in Keraniganj Upazilla, Dhaka, took away 25 thousand taka by force. Led by the Sub Inspector Dulal, the police force conducted a search in the house of a businessman in the Upazilla of South Mandhail. Sub Inspector Dulal mugged the money from the drawer of an almirah. A written complaint was lodged in the police station in this connection.

*Source: The Daily Prothom Alo, 25th May, 2002*
The Speakers at the discussion were Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner, politicians, journalists, NGO activists, lawyers, CCC members and academics.

**Staff Orientation Course**
TIB organized a three-day staff orientation course for the Field Assistants and Field Supervisors of South Asian Regional Corruption Survey from 31st March 2002 to 2nd April, at the BRAC training centre, Mymensingh. The course was coordinated by the Research Officer of TIB. TIB Programme Officer Ekram Hossain, Research Associate Anwarul Amin also spoke on the occasion.

**Performances of 'Bagher Gappa'**
Muktagacha CCC organized three performances of 'Bagher Gappa' in different parts of Muktagacha. Large audiences attended each show. Three performances of 'Bager Gappa' were held in different places of Chittagong on 7-8 April 2002 and were organized by Chittagong 'Friends of TIB'. Over three hundred attended each performance. TIB Media Outreach Relations Officer Md. Imam Uddin, and Dr. Yeahia Akhter spoke on the occasion. TIB member Mohammad Hamidul Islam assisted in organising the programme.

**Corruption with the life saving drugs too**
Allegations of gross irregularities and corruption have been raised against some officials and workers of the Office of the Civil Surgeon of Sirajganj dealing with life saving drugs. News reveals that tender scam is rampant in the Sirajganj Civil Surgeon's Office in case of buying medicines. The chief executive in collaboration with a few office workers is involved with this scam.

*Source: The Daily Baglabazar Patrika 25th May, 2002*

**Police Inspector convicted of 9 years' imprisonment**
The former Officer-in-Charge of Khulna Saddar Police station, Shabuddin Ahmed was imprisoned for 9 years for misappropriating money by submitting fake papers. The Special Judge of Khulna division gave the verdict.

*Source: The Bangladesh Observer, 8th May, 2002*

**Hospital in control of miscreants**
The miscreants and middlemen from outside are now controlling Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. In open daylight in front of the emergency, they collect money from the patients. Same thing is unabatedly carried on everyday in the Hospital out-door too. It is an open secret now to extort cash money from the visitors at the Hospital gate.

*Source: The Daily Janakantha, 27th April, 2002*
Inaugural of the reorganised Citizens Committee in Jamalpur

The Committees of Concerned Citizens of Jamalpur, which was defunct for last one year has recently been reorganised. The Committee was set up once again on 13th March last at a meeting arranged in Jamalpur. Eminent advocate and social worker Mr. Nazrul Islam was made the convenor of the 11-member committee. The other members of the committee are Professor Meer Ansar Ali, Advocate H. R. Zahid Anwar, Mr. Shukumar Chowdhury, Advocate Sarwar Sahan, Mr. Mustafa Babul, Shamima Khan, Advocate Shamim Ara Begum, Mr. Mostafa Monzu, Mr. Anwar Hossain and Mr. Hasanur Rahman Khan.

The inaugural ceremony of the newly set up committee was held on March 24th. The Convenor of the Committee Nazrul Islam presided over the function. The aims and objects of the TI and TIB, the present programmes of the TIB were illustrated at the function. Besides, a memorandum of understanding between the TIB and CCC was also signed at the function. The Executive Director of TIB Manzoor Hasan, Program Officer Ekram Hossain, Assistant Program Officer and field assistant were also present at the ceremony.

Meeting with District Primary Education Officer (DPEO)

Muktagacha CCC members met with Mr. Sheikh Afzal Ali, the District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) on 9 April 2002. The CCC convener Advocate Shamsul Hoque, Secretary Ms. Akhi Kundu, and Field Assistant Karuna Kishor Chakrabarty were present at the meeting. The CCC convener presented the findings of the report card survey on primary education. Sheikh Afzal Ali, District Education Officer of Mymensingh appreciated the initiatives taken by TIB and CCC. The Education Officer accepted the CCC members' invitation to co-operate with TIB in curbing corruption in the education sector.

Anti-mass-Cheating Campaign

The Muktagacha CCC organized a campaign on 11-12 May, 2002 against mass-cheating in public examinations. They published a leaflet to raise awareness among students of the negative side of cheating. The CCC also organized a rally against mass cheating on 12 May, 2002. The Muktagacha Upazilla Nirbahi Officer, CCC members and a number of students attended the rally.

Need Assessment Study

A need assessment study was conducted in Mymensingh on 15 May 2002 by TIB. Kamrul Aman, Senior Trainer, BRAC and Mohammad Hossain, Chief Trainer, TARC, BRAC, Madhupur conducted the study. Most of the CCC members of Mymensingh participated in the study.

Advocacy Program on Report Card on Primary Education

The Mymensingh CCC members met with Md. Safiqul Islam, the new Upazilla Education Officer (UEO) of Mymensingh sadar Upazilla on 3 April 2002. The Mymensingh CCC members Mr. Md. Montaz Uddin, Mr. Sharifulzzaman Parag and Mr. Niamul Kabir Sajal, Secretary Ms. Sazia Afreen, and Field Assistant Karuna Kishor Chakrabarty were present at the meeting. The CCC members presented the findings of the report card survey on primary education. The Upazilla Education Officer appreciated the initiatives taken by TIB and the CCC. The Education Officer accepted the CCC members' invitation to co-operate with TIB in curbing corruption in the education sector.

The Madhupur CCC members met with the Upazilla Education Committee on 27 April 2002. The Madhupur CCC members, TIB Programme Officer, Madhupur Upazilla Nirbahi Officer, Upazilla Education Officer, Assistant Education Officer, Members of Upazilla Education Committee, leaders of Upazilla Teachers Association were present at the meeting. They discussed about the findings of the report card survey on primary education. Some decisions were also made regarding the examination fees at the meeting.

Muktagacha CCC members met with the Primary School Teachers' Association of Muktagacha on 30 May 2002. Muktagacha CCC convener Advocate Shamsul Hoque, CCC member Debashish Achariya Chowdhury and Paritosh Kar, CCC secretary Akhi Kundu, field assistant Karuna Kishor Chakrabarty were present at the meeting. The CCC members presented the findings of the report card survey on primary education. The members of the association appreciated the initiatives taken by TIB and the CCC. The members of the association accepted the
Regional Meeting of South Asian TI Chapters

Regional meeting of South Asian TI Chapter was held during 10-12 June, 2002 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Twenty two participants from all national TI chapters of South Asia and three participants from TI Secretariat were present at the regional meeting. TI-Bangladesh chaired the first day of the regional meeting. At the first day, discussion was held on the decisions of the 2001 meeting, the implications of the current political instability in the region for the work of the chapters, TI strategic discussion, recent developments of integrity system in the country, ongoing programmes, funding situation etc. TIB CCCs members made six presentations. At the second day, discussions were held on regional survey. In that day, different chapters also presented their new toolkits. At the third day, discussions were held on the anti-corruption action plan for Asia and priority areas for joint action. The participants of the regional meeting were: Margit van Ham, Jeff Lovitt and Gopakumar Krishnan from TI-Secretariat. Mr. Biswamihber MS Pradhan- Dr. Devendra Raj Panday, Dr. Krishna Hachhethu, Mr. Ashish Thapa from TI-Nepal. Roland de Souza, Shaukat Omari, Shameim Kazmi from TI- Pakistan. Pradeep Peiris from TI- Sri Lanka. Mr. Geo-Sung Kim from TI- Seoul. Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, Syed Humayan Kabir, Manzoor Hasan, Zia Haider Rahman from TI- Bangladesh. Admiral RH Tahlili (retd), C.M. Ramakrishnan, Dr. SK Agarwal, Mr. Ushakant Shah , Ms. Kajal Muley, Mr. LM Menezes, Ms. Poonam Singh, Shri Prasannvadan Mehta and Dr. S.S. Mehta from TI- India attended the meeting.

Nalitabari CCC organized a debating competition on 4 April 2002 for TIB Volunteers. The motion was that "The present education system is responsible for cheating in public examinations". The CCC convener M. A Hakam Hira presided over the competition.

Transparency International Pacific Regional Conference And Consultation

Manzoor Hasan attended a five day regional conference in Papua New Guinea, from 11-15 May 2002. He addressed two training sessions on Regional survey and report card on 14 and 15 May 2002, respectively. TI-Vanuatu, TI-Solomon Islands, TI-Fiji, TI-PNG, TI-New Zealand, TI-Australia also attended the conference. TI-Secretariat was represented by Margit van Ham and Folkard Wohlgemuth.

Mutual Legal Assistance Seminar

TIB was invited to attend a seminar on Mutual Legal Assistance, held in Hampshire, England on 1st and 2nd May, 2002. The seminar was organized by the Department for International Development in association with TI-UK. The seminar highlighted the legal provisions available to foreign governments in seeking assistance with legal proceedings against alleged beneficiaries of corruption. Representatives from Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe were present.

World Bank's PREM Week

Executive Director of TIB was invited to speak at two sessions of the World Bank's PREM week. The first session entitled 'Round Table on Experience with Institutional and Governance Reviews (IGRs) and Political Analysis' on 19th June 2002. IGR is a new type of analytical report that traces the institutional roots of poor government performance and provides practical alternatives for operational design and country strategy. Such a review has been undertaken in the case of Bangladesh together with few other countries. Taming Leviathan: Reforming Governance in Bangladesh was published in March 2002. It was pointed out that such IGRs give a better understanding of the context in which reform measures are being implemented. Such a 'big picture' analysis could readily identify both the past failures and future 'windows of opportunity'.

The second session was entitled 'Governance and Corruption' (held on 25th June 2002) and Manzoor Hasan was one of four panel members. Many countries have formulated programmes to improve governance and combat corruption, yet implementation has been uneven. The session discussed case studies to explore what worked and what did not and why with the aim of provoking ideas on the Bank's role in helping to combat corruption and strengthen governance.
We are not involved in corruption. The doctors are involved in it. A few days back when my wife got sick I took her to Chittagong Medical Hospital collecting subscription from friends and relatives. But the doctors instead of admitting her in the hospital told me to go to the ward-boy. I got her admitted paying the ward boy taka 50. After a few days the operation date was fixed. They asked me to buy medicine worth three thousand taka and 2 bags of O negative blood. But even after paying the money and blood they did not operate on my wife. They treated rich patients. They said that they had no time. The doctors took away the medicine and 3 weeks passed this way. The blood got spoilt. How long could I stay in the hospital? I once again paid the ward boy and requested him to convince the doctor to do the operation. I had to arrange the blood once more. There is no treatment for the poor, it is only for those who have money.

Hello police station, yes my nephew. I am sending money, release him.

Corruption in the eyes of working people

Medical Treatment only for the rich not for the poor
Mohammad Idris Chandarpara
Bandar, Chittagong.

We are not involved in corruption. The doctors are involved in it. A few days back when my wife got sick I took her to Chittagong Medical Hospital collecting subscription from friends and relatives. But the doctors instead of admitting her in the hospital told me to go to the ward-boy. I got her admitted paying the ward boy taka 50. After a few days the operation date was fixed. They asked me to buy medicine worth three thousand taka and 2 bags of O negative blood. But even after paying the money and blood they did not operate on my wife. They treated rich patients. They said that they had no time. The doctors took away the medicine and 3 weeks passed this way. The blood got spoilt. How long could I stay in the hospital? I once again paid the ward boy and requested him to convince the doctor to do the operation. I had to arrange the blood once more. There is no treatment for the poor, it is only for those who have money.

Anti-Corruption Commission

The election manifesto of the main political parties vouched to establish ombudsman, human rights and anti corruption commissions. But no initiative has yet been taken in this regard. The nation will be benefited tremendously if these organizations are set up forsaking any political motive. But it is also true that rather than depending merely on the corruption prevention laws or organizations if a concerted effort is set off or a social revaluation is initiated against it then corruption would gradually, if not immediately, be eradicated. Thanks for publishing an editorial on this in the TIB Newsletter March, 2002.

Ranjan Karmakar
Nalitabari, Sherpur

Democracy and good governance

The endeavour to ensure democracy and human rights can never be strengthened without good governance. On the other hand there cannot be good governance without democracy and human rights. One cannot say there is good governance when democracy and human rights are absent. Therefore the government that brings total democracy in practice or at least tries for it and ensures human rights or at least puts its effort to do so, that government can be said to be practicing good governance. Programs run by TIB towards establishing good governance in the country is doubtlessly praise worthy.

Tuli
Moshin College, Chittagong

Proper direction is needed

Because of long negligence, inefficiency and imprudence of the policy makers, corruption and irregularities have taken a menacing shape in the government organizations of the country. Politics, society and economy have reached a disastrous state because of the bank loan and bill defaulters as well as political false hopes. We hope that the new budget will have specific practical directions that will help establish good governance. People will thus regain their confidence on the government.

Mahabubur Rahman
Azizul Haq Govt. University and College Bagura.

Amendment of Law

Most of the prevalent laws in Bangladesh are fossilised and were framed during colonial rule. There are many laws that are ineffective in the present day context. There is Law Reform Commission in the country, but many of their recommendations are not being implemented. Citizens’ rights can only be ensured if time-befitting laws are framed and rule of law is ensured keeping an eye on public interest.

Shoumen Das
Central Law College, Dhaka

Decentralization of Power

Country’s entire government infrastructure is extremely centralized. If the local government is not made strong enough corruption will never recede and good governance cannot be established too. Absence of transparency and accountability is mostly scene in a centralized administration. To make the local government stronger the centre has to forgo the responsibility of decision-making and financial allocation. Zilla, Upazilla and Union Parishad need to be made more effective too.

Mukti Chowdhury
Haldarpara, Brahmanbaria

Police Corruption

TIB in its various survey reports has mentioned that Police is the most corrupt department in Bangladesh. But have you ever thought that the police department has to work in maximum risk? They have to work day and night. There are also inadequate transportation facilities and logistic support. It is almost impossible to lead an honest life with the meagre salary and benefits they get. More over our politicians exert their pressures on them too. If these hindrances were not there police corruption would obviously come down.

Anonymous
A member of the police department