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Let the Anti-Corruption Commission Become Effective

Corruption is the principal impediment against development, good governance, poverty alleviation and rule of law in Bangladesh. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has been engaged in a social movement during the past ten years to raise voice against corruption and create the demand for establishing good governance in the country. At the core of this demand creation process has been the involvement and active role of citizens at various levels through a robust research, advocacy and civic engagement programme.

On the basis of an investigative research report that was released on the then Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC). TIB had raised the demand for an independent Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) by abolishing the BAC, which was proven to have been discredited and ineffective. TIB then put forward a draft law to the then government for establishment of the Commission as part of its advocacy programme. A strong public opinion was thereby created in favour of the proposed independent Commission. The Anti-Corruption Commission was eventually set up in November 2004 grudgingly though, on the basis of an Anti-corruption Act that turned out to be a craftily modified version of the draft law, so as to limit the Commission’s operational independence and jurisdiction. The Commission was handicapped not only because its financial and administrative control was retained by the government, but also because of the subjective and political bias that went into the selection of the Commissioners. As a consequence, the Commission had completely failed to make any headway or earn the confidence of the people.

TIB continued its advocacy campaign for the independence and effectiveness of ACC by putting forward specific recommendations based on observations and examination of its performance. Against this backdrop, the reconstitution of the Commission by the present Government raised new hopes not only for TIB but also for the people at large. TIB would like to continue its watchdog role to catalyze effectiveness of the reincarnated ACC, and to provide all possible support in this regard within its capacity and jurisdiction.

The ACC started to become active immediately after its reconstitution in February 2007. A large number of high-profile individuals suspected of involvement in corruption were arrested. Special tribunals have been set up for their speedy trial. The investigation process has been apparently strengthened. A special high-powered anti-corruption task force is working parallel and in cooperation with the ACC. As TIB wants that strongest signals be sent that corruption is a punishable offence irrespective of status of the allegedly corrupt persons, any failure of this campaign by the Commission and the Task Force would imply a setback for the anti-corruption movement. TIB however expects that the alleged offenders would be tried by strictly adhering to relevant laws and in a transparent process.

The ACC Chairman is travelling to various regions of the country for generating mass awareness against corruption. He is urging upon all to take a vow not to indulge in corruption, to hate it and to encourage others to do the same. He is also calling for building up a social movement against corruption. A well-conceived initiative has been taken to form “Corruption Prevention Committees” at the local level. But how far such committees formed under the aegis of the local administration would be effective and how far they would be able to earn the confidence of the people remain open questions. TIB never holds the view that everyone in administration is involved in corruption. Nevertheless, if these forums are expected to resist corruption at local levels with the participation of the people and act as a forum for social accountability, these must be people’s initiatives rather than imposed by government agencies.

People’s expectations have gone high in view of the active initiatives taken by the new ACC. Some laws which acted as hindrances against the effectiveness of ACC have now been amended. Complexities surrounding the rules and organogram of the ACC are reportedly being addressed. The remaining weaknesses in the Anti-Corruption Act 2004 need to be corrected for ensuring full financial and administrative independence of the Commission. The ACC needs to formulate a long-term strategic plan and make it public. Appropriate measures need to be taken for ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity of the Commission’s officers and employees if it is to be engaged as an institution on which people can repose their full trust.

The main reason for the sky-high expectation of the people is that three highly respected and credible persons have been appointed at the helm of the Commission. But the Commission has to function through collective efforts of all members of its staff. The Commission cannot be expected to succeed without addressing the question of integrity, transparency and capacity of the officials of the BAC who have been absorbed by the commission without due scrutiny.

The sooner effective steps are taken on these issues, the better it will be for the future of the anti-corruption campaign.
Annual Convention of the Committee’s of Concerned Citizens

Welcome the steps taken by the caretaker government to prevent corruption

The members of 36 Committees of the Concerned Citizens (CCCs) have been welcomed the steps taken by the Caretaker Government to prevent corruption in the country in the Annual Convention. They also urged upon the govt. for taking initiatives to prevent corruption permanently.

‘The Annual Convention of the CCCs 2006’ was held on February 10, 2007 at BIAM Foundation in Dhaka. The staff members of TIB have warmly welcomed the CCC members. The convention was started after the National Anthem was sung. At the starting of the programme, conveners and members from different CCCs have presented an enjoyable cultural programme with their colorful performances.

The Executive Director of TIB has addressed welcome speech after the cultural programme. He paid rich tribute to the martyrs of the great Language Movement. He has mentioned in his speech that the year 2006 was the year of multiple incidents, challenges and successes. The successes were attained due to the CCCs’ and TIB’s sincere and strong efforts, he also added. Though the Board of Trustees of TIB staff have the contribution in achieving these, but the key contribution was made by the convenors, advisers, members, volunteers, and the theatre activists of all CCCs who have been working selflessly and actively.

Special honour to Four CCC members

TIB has given special honor to four CCC members in this year. They were, member of CCC Kurigram, Prof. Shamsun Nahar Chowdhury Shanu, Prof. Dr. Subimal Samadder of CCC Pirojpur, convenor of CCC Mymensingh, Prof. Shamsul Islam and the convenor of CCC Sylhet’s Advisory Committee, late Prof. Mohammed Habibur Rahman.

Opening Speech of TIB Chairman

Chairman of the Board of Trustees of TIB, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad has addressed the opening speech in the convention. He uttered in his speech, “we had started the TIB’s anti-corruption movement in a very small scale. We didn’t have any clear idea on which road we will proceed or how far the road will be critical. We want the betterment of the country. So that we are trying to bring the same minded people together who will take risks for combating against corruption. Besides, we are also trying to involve them who will make contribution for getting the effective outcomes in anti-corruption movement.” The Chairman also added that in the way of this movement, sometimes we have been terrified. The govt.’s attitudes was rivalry towards us. But we have protested against such attitudes. We are trying to make a small lamp grow into a bright sun. Now we are on a strong foundation that have built by the courageous efforts of all CCCs.

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad has called on all CCCs through his speech to rebuild our society. He has told the CCC members that we are on the the same boat today. We are all anti-corruption fighters to make the country fair, safety and wellbeing for our future generations. We have to be more attentive to protect our dream.

Welcome speech by the Conveners

On behalf of 36 CCCs Mr Jainal Abedeen Khan, convenor of CCC Savar and the chief adviser of the ‘Annual Convention of the CCCs 2006’ have delivered welcome speech. Begum Mustari Shafi, convenor of CCC Chittagong City, also spoke in the convention. They said that those who had fought with a true spirit of building a peaceful country in the Liberation War in 1971 that could not yet be achieved. The country has soon paralysed by disease named corruption which is
an oldest one. All the members of the CCCs are honest and patriot. Among the country people very few of them are corrupts. Because of the corrupt practices, poverty and terrorism are increasing. It is therefore imperative on the part of all CCC members and the countrymen to come forward. Showing reliance towards the youths creativity and eligibility, they also added that our invincible youths shall take part and make contribution in the war against corruption.

**Subjectwise group discussions**

To make CCC activities more effective by finding out ways, members of the CCCs have taken part in subjectwise group discussions in line with their previous experiences. The CCC members have been divided into four groups in order to facilitate the discussions. The subjects were 1. Role of CCCs to expedite the anti-corruption movement. 2. To find out the ways for involving people, especially the deprived and women this movement. 3. To find out the ways to get the youth in the anti-corruption movement. 4. To find out the initiatives of self dependency of the CCCs.

After the completion of group discussions, representatives from each group have presented the findings of the group works. TIB has got newer and fresh ideas for the road ahead enabling it (TIB) to further creative thinking.

**Question and Answer session**

Question and answer session between the Executive Director of TIB and the members of CCCs started at the end of the day. Before the starting of this session, the Executive Director thanked Mr. Hafizur Rahman, convenor of Khulna CCC for suggesting the name SANAK (Sachetan Nagori Komity in Bangla and in English which is Committee of the Concerned Citizens). In this regard, everyone has given a big hand to Mr. Hafizur Rahman to express their gratitudes.

In this session, questions from the participants were raised both about the activities of TIB and the CCCs. The Executive Director of TIB conducted this session and replied to the questions. Many issues of TIB and the CCCs have became clear through this sessions and a consensus has been made about the future road ahead.

This annual convention of the CCCs has made opportunity for the members to exchange their own experiences, successes and failures with other CCCs. It helped the CCCs to expand and gear up the anti-corruption movement at local levels for eliminating the corruption.

**Death of Theatre Activist**

Theatre activist Kabir Khan Nanna of CCC Pirojpur breathed his last on 27th February. The TIB family expressed their grief and sent their condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

**CCC work-plan for 2007 – ’08**

Seven workshops for co-ordinating and bringing durable and visible changes in the 36 CCCs were planned. The workshops were also designed to pinpoint areas of activities, bring continuity of activities and inter-CCC co-ordination. The Mymensingh workshop was for Muktagacha, Nalitabari, Jamalpur, Modhupur, Mymensingh and Kishoreganj CCCs; Madaripur workshop for Faridpur, madaripur, Rajbari, Barisal, Jhalakathi and Pirojpur; Rajshahi workshop for Natore, Rajshahi, Chapai nawabganj, Rangepur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat; Jessore workshop for Khulna Jessore, Kushlia, Jhenaidah, Satkhira and Bagerhat; Savar workshop for Gazipur, Savar and Munshiganj; Chittagong workshop for Patia, Chokoria, Brahmanbaria, Chittagong, Comilla, and Chandpur and Sylhet workshop was for Sylhet, Sunamganj and Srimangal CCCs.

Members, volunteers and theatre activists from each CCC took part in the workshops. Each CCC discussed among their own presenters and participants and prepared draft plans for integration in the total plan. Budgetary plans for each planned activity were made. Most of the CCCs identified their priorities in the education, health, local government, land and service sectors.
Annual Convention of the Volunteers and Theatre Activists
Pledge to build a well-governed and corruption-free Bangladesh

‘The Annual Convention of the volunteers and theatre activists 2006’ was held on February 11, 2007 at BIAM Foundation in Dhaka. The convention was started after the National Anthem was sung. At the starting of the programme, the Executive Director of TIB has addressed welcome speech. He thanked the volunteers and theatre activists for their huge successes and achievements in this year.

The ED also praised the role of the youths and expressed his gratitude to them because of their Anti-corruption Signature Campaign that resulted in the Caretaker Govt.’s decision to be a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Anti-Corruption. He also appraised their role in generating the anti-corruption demand at local levels. He has been expressed his hope that in future, they would show the country a new path and become enlightened the citizens of the country. Among others the Chairman of the Board of Trustees Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad and member Sultana Kamal were present in the convention. Their speeches have been inspired the participants of the programme.

Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad to the volunteers and theatre activists
Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad has mentioned that the youth should not be considered as a matter of age, it will be focused through the enthusiasm and ability of working. The youths are full of energy and emotion. These should be channeled towards the welfare of the people. But sometimes the surrounding ambience makes the youth selecting the wrong path. He also addressed that the country does not need the rule of the old people. The countrymen want the rule of young. The vibrant youths had been emancipated this country from the British rule. Their patriotism should bring out the social changes as well.

Sultana Kamal to the volunteers and theatre activists
Member of the Board of Trustees of TIB has addressed in her speech that the young generation should not allow the increasing of corruption. It should be rooted out clearly from the society. For that the youth should come forward and have to take a strong role. She also said that if we remain silent it will encourage the corrupts. The youth must speak out clearly and loudly that this country will be free, independent and any sorts of discrimination will be no more. Always the strong and courageous have more burdens on them. We notice everywhere in the world that the young geration take up the responsibilities of bringing positive changes in the society. She administered the anti-corruption oath to the volunteers and theatre activists.

Subjectwise group discussion
The volunteers and theatre activists of 36 CCCs have divided into five groups for finding out the different ways as to how more young people could be involved with the anti-corruption movement. The process has been happened through subject based group discussions. They have discussed among themselves about the formation and organizational structure of Youth Engagement and Support (YES) activity and how to make it sustainable. After the completion of group discussions, representatives from each group have presented the findings of the group works.

Question and Answer session
The Executive Director of TIB took up the Question and Answer session with all the volunteers and theatre activists coming from the 36 CCCs. The role of them, their further responsibilities, activities and future action plan were discussed openly in this session. The Executive Director has answered the questions of volunteers and theatre activists.

Display exhibition and cultural programme
The volunteers and theatre activists have completed some important activities in 2006 for creating anti-corruption demand in their own areas. With the achievements of their own individual area, they have prepared attractive and colorful display-boards in order to share their experiences with other. Due to this effort, the Executive Director has rewarded each CCC.

At the end of the day, an enjoyable cultural function was held. Participants of the convention were impressed by the rich performances of the volunteer and theatre activists. They performed song, dance, mime, recitation, skit and many more. After the cultural programme, with the hope that they would meet again in the next year with the strong determination and spirit of building a corruption free Bangladesh.
Women Against Corruption
Mock Parliament Debate Competition of Women

Keeping the slogan ‘Women against corruption’ ahead, a daylong debate competition was arranged at the TSC Auditorium, Dhaka University for observing ‘International Day of Women’ on 8th March 2007. Students from various colleges and universities around the country participated in the daylong debate competition organized by TIB. Executive Director of TIB inaugurated the competition and among others delivered by the Joint-Editor of the daily Samakal, Moazzam Hossain delivered goodwill speech in inaugural session. Debater Kaniz Fatema Chowdhury administered the oath against corruption. After opening, a rally was arranged participating more than five hundred which crossed Dhaka University campus.

Participants debated on the topics concerning “Women against Corruption” in various sessions of parliamentary style debate competition. Enthusiastic student speakers spoke on the various nature and aspects of deprivations faced by women in all spheres of national, social, political and economic life. They unanimously said that steps must be taken for preventing influences of corruption on women. Women, they agreed, must be engaged with the main stream national development programmes. Competition mainly focussed on the importance of raising women’s awareness on the harmful effects of corruption on women.

A baroari debate took place during the first session of the competition. Four groups were selected through lotteries at the beginning of this session. Subjects selected for these four groups were respectively a) to prevent influence of corruption on women. b) to raise women’s participation in administration. c) to raise women’s participation in preventing corruption in education sector. d) to raise women’s participation in preventing corruption in health sector. Four incomplete sentences were selected for these four groups. A separate group was formed with the best debater of each party. A mid-session debate was held and the two best debaters from this session were then chosen as the leaders of the government and opposition party. Finally, among twelve debaters, seven were chosen as government party members and five were chosen as opposition party members who spoke on a bill titled ‘Prevention of Corruption and Women’s Empowerment Bill, 2007’ placed before the shadow parliament. The main theme of the bill was, ‘Prevention of corruption is only possible through empowerment of women.’ Professor Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University and and Tanveer Mahmud of TIB acted respectively, as the speaker and the deputy-speaker of the Parliament. A few teachers of the Dhaka University and ex-debaters of DUDS were the judges of different sessions. The best debater adjudged in the Parliamentary style debate competition was Kuasha Pal of Rokeya debating arena of Dhaka University. First runner-up adjudged was Junannisa Ahmed Trina of Faridpur Sarada Sundari women’s Government College and a volunteer of TIB. The second runner-up selected was Sushmita Chowdhury of Dhaka University Shamsunnahar Hall Debating Club. Fourth best debater from the four groups selected from the Baroari Debate were Fahima Tasnim Tanya of Rokeya Bitorka Angon, Sushmita Chowdhury of Shamsunnahar Hall Debating Club, Sultana Yasmin Sonia of Fazilatunnesa Debating Association and Lopamudra of Shamsunnahar Hall Debating Club. Three winner of the Parliamentary Style Debate and four winner of Baroari Debate were awarded with crests and certificates. Dhaka University Debating Society, East West University, Independent University, Moitree Debating Club, Rokeya Debating Arena, Shamsunnahar Hall Debating Club, Stamford Debating Forum and Fazilatunnesa Debating Association were co-organizers of the competition. The media partners in the competition were the Daily Samakal, BangliaVision and Radio Today FM89.6.

Professor Tajmeri S A Islam, Prof. Atiqur Rahman, Prof. Razia Akhter Banu, Dr. Dili Roshan Zinnat ara Nazneen, Prof. Tahmina Akhter and the TIB Executive Director, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman and many distinguished guests were present at the prize-giving ceremony in evening.
Reform of Election Commission and Anti-corruption Commission

The government started undertaking a wide range of institutional reforms giving special emphasis on combating corruption. Under the commitment of establishing an environment congenial for good governance, the government has started reforms in some of the institutions under the national integrity system. The Election Commission (EC) and the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) are among them.

Reform of the EC

The present caretaker government has ratified the UN Convention on Anti-corruption. Through this initiative the strong position of the government against corruption is reflected, which is widely commended from every quarter. The government has commenced a series of reform measures with the aim to create an election-friendly environment and a well-planned electoral system. In the draft electoral laws with proposed reforms for combating corruption, there is a significant reflection of the recommendations offered by TIB. The government is now taking steps to ensure transparency and neutrality in the electoral process. It is observed that the recommendations made by TIB through the reports titled Parliament Watch and Election Commission: A Diagnostic Study have been seriously considered while proposing the reforms. The EC proposed a few changes in the Representation of the People Order 1972.

Some of the key recommendations of TIB included barring political parties, not registered with the EC, from participation in elections, at least three year interval after retirement in case of government officers for taking part in election, mandatory submission of eight point information including the income and list of properties of a candidate according to the High Court order, and the people given the opportunity to know about the candidates’ social and economic activities. Uploading all documents submitted by a candidate on the EC website was also recommended. If anyone submits false information with regard to his/her income or expenditure concerning electoral campaign and if it is detected, it was recommended that the candidate’s membership in the parliament would be cancelled.

Bill and loan defaulters need to be declared incompetent. Another important recommendation was to ensure neutrality, transparency and accountability with regard to practicing democracy in the parliament. There should be an office for each MP in the respective constituency where a question-answer session in every two months should be organized.

TIB also recommended for strengthening the EC through enacting appropriate law and creating a healthy political environment. This is a prime responsibility of the political parties that come to power. The relations between the EC and the EC Secretariat should be clearly identified. A neutral and non-partisan mechanism should be adopted for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners. The EC should have the authority to appoint its own staff. The allegedly partisan staff of the EC should be identified through proper investigation of individual records and recruitment process. Indiscriminate promotion should be stopped, and the recommendations made by the Azizul Islam Committee should be immediately implemented. The EC must be financially independent. All documents including the yearly audit report, detail budget, and annual financial statement should be made open to the public. In order to ensure transparency and accountability the annual report of the EC should be submitted to the President through the parliament. All these documents must be discussed in the parliament and made available to common people. The computerized voter database should be updated every year and uploaded in the website for easy access. Electronic voting machines should be installed and voter identity card should be introduced in different phases.

The present EC, after taking over the responsibility, proposed a few changes in the electoral process. It has proposed to put bar upon the political parties without registration for participating in elections. That one has to be a member of a political party for at least three years should s/he seeks nomination from that party was also proposed. However this will not be applicable if the duration of the registration is not above three years. The EC also proposed that no officer or employee of a government, affiliated body or the defense or anyone serving in such institutions on contract would be allowed to contest in elections within three years after his/her retirement or end of the contract. Every candidate has to submit detail of his/her probable election expenses and their sources in a prescribed form.

The EC also plans to make it mandatory for political parties to send financial statements of all nominated candidates of that party to the EC through registered post within 60 days after the declaration of election result. In the proposed amendment any candidate, taking loan from any financial institution, would be considered as loan defaulters. Similarly, any candidate being unable to pay bills up to three
months to any service providing institution would be considered as bill defaulter, and thus would not be allowed to contest. The EC also suggested that the political parties willing to participate in elections must have local offices in at least 50 percent of all the districts and Upazilas under these districts.

Reform of the ACC
In many countries, the independent anti-corruption commission (ACC) is considered as one of the important pillars to ensure the national integrity system. The ACC not only acts against corruption, but also significantly contribute to the institutionalization of democracy, and a transparent and accountable administration. In Bangladesh the Anti-corruption Commission Act 2004 is the basis of establishing such ACC. Immediately after taking over power, the present caretaker government declared that it would not compromise the least in its anti-corruption drive. As a part of this commitment, the government has restructured the ACC. In the past TIB proposed a number of recommendations to establish the ACC instead of the Bureau and Anti-corruption. TIB suggested that honest, qualified and non-partisan personnel should be given the responsibility of running the ACC. It seems that implementation of some of the recommendations has started.

The ACC, as part of the reform initiatives, first published a list of highly corrupt persons. Then gradually it made charges against them, asked for their bank accounts and list of properties. Following investigation, the ACC is also trying to bring back the money laundered by these corrupt people. Besides, attempts have been made to train the investigative officers and personnel responsible for conducting the corruption cases.

TIB recommended for appointing ACC’s own lawyer to conduct cases against the corrupt. It also recommended for redesigning the organogram before recruitment in the ACC. So far steps have been taken to redesign the organogram and appoint new staff. Even if the ACC had no authority to interfere into money laundering and corruption through the banking sector in the past, the ACC is now working on these issues under the revised rules.

Transparency is very important in ACC’s activities. At present the ACC provides with information about their activities through the electronic and print media regularly. Most of all, the ACC Chairman has started an anti-corruption campaign and opinion sharing all over the country. This initiative is bringing high hopes among common people.

However, the problems that are responsible for crippling the ACC to become an independent and efficient organization still need to be addressed as early as possible. Such issues include amendments required in the Anti-corruption Act 2004 for complete financial independence of the ACC, measures to be taken after assessing the effectiveness of the present organogram whether it meets the demand, re-assess the effectiveness of co-opting the human resource of the abolished Bureau of Anti-corruption into the ACC, and make the ACC accountable to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Other important issues that need to be addressed include ensuring the transparency, accountability and integrity of the officers and employees of the ACC, publicly declaring their income and expenditure, assets and liabilities, and setting indicators for their salary, promotion and other benefits on the basis of their skill, competence, experience and performance.

To create awareness among the people against corruption, strong media campaign is required. Most of all, the ACC should develop a long-term strategic planning to wage war against corruption.

TIB Welcomes ACC Chairman and Commissioners

TIB has welcomed joining of Lt. General (retd.) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury as Chairman and Commissioners M. Habibur Rahman and Abul Hasan Manjur Mannan of Anti-corruption Commission (ACC). TIB hopes this decision for resisting corruption in the existing situation taken by government is timely, appropriate reflection of people’s demand and very essential for national interest.

Executive Director of TIB says, “For resisting corruption, recruitment of chairman and commissioners for effective ACC is most important initial steps of this government. TIB hopes they will be able to play effective role according to people’s demand. For effectively operating ACC, ensuring full independence by resolving the legal limitations is essential, which TIB has been recommending to government on various occasions.”
The UN Convention Against Corruption
Reflection of the Government’s Anti-Corruption Commitment

The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the first legally recognised international instrument to put anti-corruption measures within a framework of regulatory agreements and laws. Since 2004, TIB had been vigorously advocating for Bangladesh to sign and ratify the UNCAC. At last the present Caretaker Government took a commendable decision to sign this document on February 5, and Bangladesh became a signatory to the convention on February 27, 2007. Thus, Bangladesh government has significantly proved its determination and political will to curb corruption by ratifying the UN Convention against Corruption.

International Background

The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was adopted actually as a demand of time. The relentless progress of globalization allowed corruption of one country to cross its geographical borders. Efforts, both multinationally and internationally, therefore became urgent necessity. The international community felt that wide corrupt practices spreading all over the world needed UN co-operation and thus the UN Convention was adopted. This was the most decisive step taken so far in a process that begun in earnest in the 1990s. The General Assembly of UN in 1996 decided to start taking steps to prevent corruption as grafts taking in cases of foreign loans and grants, high-officials of donor and receiving countries and international business communities also. Berlin-based Transparency International, in particular, placed a spotlight on the problem through its wide read “Corruption Perception Index (CPI)” and emphasized the need for an international cooperation. Based on the recommendations of the Expert Group in August 2001, an ad-hoc committee of the General Assembly began the task of drafting an anti-corruption treaty on 2002. Later on, the Anti-Corruption Convention was adopted and made open for signature in a meeting at Medira, Mexico in 9 December 2003.

TIB’s initiatives to make Bangladesh ratify the Convention

TIB had been trying since 2004, through its CCCs and their various programmes, to convince the government the need for ratifying the UN Convention. Public awareness in this regard was being raised. TIB had been organising many debate competitions, cartoon competitions and exhibitions, concerts and seminars, especially on the International Anti-corruption Day (IACD). TIB had been successful in collecting, as many as, one hundred thousand signatures in favour of ratifying the UNCAC, the UN Convention against Corruption.

Highlights of the Convention

The Convention provides sufficient safeguards for sovereign and independent policy and decision making of States Parties with respect to implementation of provisions of the Convention. Article 4 clearly states that “States Parties shall carry out their obligations in a manner consistent with the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and that of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States”. Following are the specifics of the Convention:

Asset Recovery (Arts. 51-59) The return of assets to the country of origin is stated as a fundamental principle of UNCAC. It requires states to take steps to support the return of confiscated funds to the requesting state, or legitimate owner, and the payment of compensation to the victims of corruption.

Money Laundering (Arts. 14, 23) UNCAC requires governments to establish regulatory and supervisory frameworks for preventing money laundering, which focus on customer identification, record-keeping and the reporting of suspicious transactions.

Access to Information (Arts 9, 10, 13) It requires governments to enhance transparency in public procurement and public administration.

Public Sector Corruption (Arts. 8 and 9) it encouraging governments to establish recruitment system based on transparency, merit and adequate pay, provide education and training, especially to employees in posts vulnerable to corruption and adopt code of conduct.

Private Sector Corruption (Arts. 12, 21) It recommends improving transparency of ownership, strengthening accounting standards, adopting codes of conduct.

Freedom of the Press (Art. 13) It requires governments to respect and promote the freedom to seek, receive and publish information on corruption.

Funding Campaigns/Parties (Art. 7) Funding of political campaigns and parties are major channels of corruption in developed and developing countries. UNCAC urges governments to take steps to enhance overall transparency.

Effectiveness of UNCAC in the perspective of Bangladesh

It was essential for Bangladesh to ratify the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) for its own interest. The signing of the Convention reflects the Govt’s commitment nationally and internationally. It would be possible to take effective steps to retrieve money and property, which have been smuggled out of the country, and to enact and enforce the right to information and free flow of information which is a must for ensuring transparency, accountability.
and good governance. More over the convention would help attracting the international cooperation in launching investigation to curb corruption and ensure legal steps to payment of compensation to the victims of corruption. Friendly cooperation with other signatory governments can be maintained by remaining faithful to one country’s own rules and would help to participate International Anti-Corruption activities.

By ratifying the Convention against Corruption Bangladesh Government can take steps to stop corruption both in public and private sectors by using its own assets and strategies. It can also exchange ideas in cooperation with other countries of the world and find out their effective steps. The government can also establish contacts with various other national and international organisations that are working against corruption.

**Implementation of the Convention: Need Positive steps by the Government**

Immediately after ratifying the UNCAC, the Government took steps in issuing a notification to amending the ACC act for effective functioning of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to start the process for confiscating properties considering wealth statement. Besides, developing a counter-intelligence cell to make similar investigation against ACC’s own staff, has shown its determination to prevent corruption. More over, Many other organisation requested our government to ensure the rights of migrants workers and of physically and mentally disabled in accordance with the rights and responsibilities mentioned in the UN Convention.

**Integration of National Laws and Institutional Reforms**

The signing of UN Convention has made it necessary that the institutional reform and internal rules and regulations are taken in hand. It is necessary to involve the business sectors and the development oriented non-government organisations in the process. The ratification of the Convention will certainly help the country’s anti-corruption measures and set up of good governance which definitely supports the integration of national laws and institutional reforms.

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**TI welcomes Bangladesh Government’s decision to sign UN Convention**

Transparency International (TI) welcomes and commends the decision by the government of Bangladesh to accede to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The decision is most appropriate and prudent for Bangladesh’s national interest.

TI has been following with keen interest and expectation the importance attached at the highest level of the new caretaker government to combating corruption with a comprehensive approach as reflected in the statement to the nation by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, the Chief Adviser leading the interim government on 22 January.

“The main thrust being on making the forthcoming national elections free from the influence of corruption and illicit money, we are inspired by some of the initiatives taken by Dr. Ahmed’s government, which include measures for an independent judiciary and reconstitution of the Election and Anti-Corruption commissions, aiming at making these vital institutions truly independent and effective,” said Huguette Labelle, Chair of TI.

“As much as we have been concerned over the years by Bangladesh’s poor score in TI’s Corruption Perceptions Index, we are deeply encouraged now by the significant recent steps sending strong signals nationally and internationally about the highest level of commitment for real change,” said Labelle.

“The initiatives reflect the demands and aspirations of every citizen of Bangladesh. If properly implemented with supportive legal and institutional reforms the basis will be created for effective and sustainable control of corruption and establishment of transparent and accountable governance in the country”, said Dr. Iftekhar Zaman, ED, TIB.

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**Ekushey February Observed**

21 February was International Mothers’ Language Day. TIB has been observing the day since last two years by showing due respect to the language martyrs. CCCs along with TIB have arranged different daylong programs to observe this day. With the view of ‘Corruption is against the spirit of Ekushey’, TIB calls on people to be active in anti-corruption movement through it’s various activities. It also invites people to establish good governance by emancipating the country from widespread of corruption. On 21 February in this year, TIB officials and their families laid floral wreaths at the martyrs’ memorial by taking part in a rally.
8th National Parliament
Quorum Crisis Costs Tk 20 crore

Around Tk 20 crore went down the drain as members of the 8th parliament did not attend the sessions in time leading to quorum crisis, while the House failed to resolve audit objections involving over Tk 12,500 crore. Throughout the period between October 2001 and October 2006, unscheduled discussions, ineffective parliamentary standing committees, misuse of money, and reluctance of the lawmakers to attend the sessions and discuss matters of public importance marred the 8th parliament.

The research report on Effective Parliament for Institutionalizing Democracy was released on 12 February 2007 at the National Press Club. Key researcher Tanvir Mahmud presented the summery of the research findings. TIB closely observed the activities of the 8th Parliament right from its first session to assess how effectively the national assembly is performing to ensure good governance in the country.

The research observed that the 8th parliament suffered from 227 hours of quorum crisis, which was one-fifth of the 23 sessions, and caused misuse of Tk 20.45 crore. The working days began on time only on nine occasions during these five years. Out of a total of 373 working days, the Prime Minister (PM) and the leader of the opposition did not show up for 178 and 328 days respectively. The opposition stayed away from the House proceedings for 223 days.

The research also found that during its tenure, the standing committees on six ministries did not submit any report to the parliament. Out of a total Tk 13,154 crore audit objections, the 8th parliament could realise only Tk 63.76 crore. The Communications Ministry alone had audit objections worth Tk 12,775 crore. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) could realise only Tk 12 crore from this ministry.

TIB made a number of recommendations to make the Parliament more effective and to ensure good governance. Reducing the length of absence from 90 days to 20 days required for cancellation of a membership, amending Article 70 of the Constitution, increasing the number of working days and duration of parliament sessions, appointing the Deputy Speaker from the opposition bench, and declaring loan and bill defaulters disqualified for election were some of the significant recommendations.

It also recommended for setting up an office by a lawmaker at his/her constituency and a question-answer session with the people in every two months. All the private and public media should be allowed to cover the parliamentary sessions, and regular participation of the leaders of House and the opposition should be ensured. It also proposed for a code of ethics for the MPs and a schedule for parliamentary proceedings. Another important recommendation was that the standing committees should be formed in the first session of any parliament with 50% of the MPs from the opposition.

The study pointed out that the last Parliament allocated Tk 5,601 crore in non-sector block allocations. The PM answered to 112 questions and 92% of those came from the members of the ruling alliance. About 93% of the proposals submitted by the opposition members for assessing public opinion on the proposed bills were rejected by voice-vote. The same happened to the amendment proposals brought forward by the opposition, the study revealed. A total of 104 members were absent for half of the working days and of them, 47 were from the government benches. Most of the absentees were businessmen by profession, the report noted.

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Reducing Corruption and Ensuring Transparency in Public Universities Urged

The public universities today represent not only a low of standard but also suffer from administrative chaos, corruption and gross politicisation. This is found not only at the level of students but also at the level of teachers and employees. While teaching is ignored, vested interest groups have emerged whose objective is not to provide education but to promote political agenda along with their own self-advancement. Despite that fact that now teachers enjoy more facilities for research, revaluation and updating of knowledge than their predecessors, they are spending time in other activities. The Ordinance of 1973 has given the autonomy of the teacher but it could not ensure their responsibility. The rules and regulation of public university has now become a shield for protecting teachers and university authorities from accountability.

The situation in public universities has been revealed through the research report of Dr. Muhammad Yeahia Akhter. This study was conducted under the Fellowship Program of TIB, and released through a roundtable on Corruption in Public University: Features and Remedy. Prof Muzaffar Ahmad, Chairman of TIB Trustee Board, moderated this event on 8 February 2007 at CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka.

In his report Prof Akhter showed that 74% students, teachers and guardians blamed teacher and student politics for destroying the academic environment of the public universities. According to the research findings, 50% teachers do not take classes regularly, while the students do not complain about it for fear of harassment. 52% observed that the syndicate should take a decision for stopping politics on the campus and strictly implement it. The research paper identified the Engineering Department, which deals with the construction of dormitories and maintenance of university buildings, as a den of corruption.

The discussants, mainly university teachers, observed that it is high time to stop campus politics as no political government will take such decision fearing political repercussion. They also blamed politicians and bureaucrats for destroying the academic atmosphere at public universities. They demanded strict rules and regulations for appointing university teachers and cancellation of the election system for the appointment of the Vice-chancellor, Pro Vice-chancellor and Deans. They also demanded abolishing the system of the VC’s appointment for more than one term.

The discussion was attended by Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, Dr. Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, M. Hafizuddin Khan, UGC Chairman Prof Asaduzzaman, former VC of Chittagong University Prof Mohammad Ali, VC of Bangladesh Agricultural University Prof Mosharraf Hossain Mian, VC of Jagannath University Prof Sirajul Islam, Prof Moinul Islam and Prof. Mahabub Ullah of Chittagong University, Prof Mohabbat Khan, Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, Prof Amena Mohsin, Prof Sadeka Halim, and Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University, and TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.
Expenditure for campaign for the cancelled 9th Parliamentary Election: Candidates spent Tk 15.2 lakh on average

Candidates had already spent Tk 15.2 lakh on average for campaigns before the closing of withdrawal of nominations for the recently cancelled 22 January 9th Parliamentary Election. In 38 constituencies a number of 122 candidates spent over Tk 18.5 crore in total. Among them, one candidate nominated from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) spent over Tk 1.94 crore, while one from the Awami League (AL) spent Tk 1.67 crore for campaigns before 3 January 2007, the last date for withdrawing nominations. The above information was shared through a research report that was released on 6 February 2007 at the National Press Club.

The study covered 38 constituencies across 32 districts in all six divisions. Shahzada M Akram and Sadhan Kumar Das, TIB researchers, presented the findings. Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, Chairman of the TIB Board of Trustees, presided over the session.

According to the report, the major political parties favour businessmen with black money, criminals, and industrialists for nomination, while voters tend to attach greater importance to a contender’s election symbol, wealth and showing off. It also mentioned that different organisations connected with polls spew rhetoric against influence of black money but hardly do anything concrete to that end. The large political parties are not at all sincere in this regard. According to law, a person can be considered a candidate only after the schedule is declared. The candidates spent money in colourful posters, public relations, rallies and processions.

About the political parties, the report stated that as the parties are not interested to make themselves accountable to the people, they did not register themselves with the EC. ‘There is no provision for the EC to monitor and investigate election expenditures,’ the report said, adding that ‘various election-related institutions and stakeholders are not acting to prevent the use of black money in polls and violation of electoral rules.’ In addition, the study finds the punishments for electoral crimes in the Representation of the People Order 1972 and the Electoral Code of Conduct incoherent, while the commission’s role in administering the punishment is unclear.

Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad stated that the EC’s duty is to fix the parameters of the constituencies before each election. However, it is often the case that while one constituency has only around one lakh voters, another might have six lakh, which leads to disproportionate representation. He opined that the maximum limit of Tk 5 lakh for the cost of election campaign is unrealistic and it should be reviewed. He emphasised that funding from external sources for electioneering must also be probed. “Good and honest candidates are losing out to the power of money”, said Prof. Ahmad.

The study report proposed a number of recommendations to bring about a radical change in the electoral process and prevent election-related corruption. Creation of a panel of law experts to amend the RPO 1972 and the Electoral Code of Conduct 1996 figured high among the proposals. It also recommended that a committee comprised of acceptable individuals should constantly monitor election expenditures and application of the Code of Conduct. Besides, in line with the High Court directives, the EC should make it compulsory for the candidates to furnish personal information. It also called on the media to focus progressively on investigative reporting on campaign expenditures. It also recommended for competent auditors assigned to a more rigorous auditing of all election campaign funding and expenditure.
TIB and CCC recently conducted report Card Surveys on Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital and Police Station. Kishoreganj CCC released the surveys on Sadar Hospital and Police Station on 17 March and 19 March consecutively. Both the surveys were released through press conference. Simultaneously, Sreemangal CCC released a report on Land Office. All the reports revealed the picture of corruption and irregularities of the concerned offices.

It appeared from the survey on Kishoregonj Modern Sadar Hospital that the patients went there for treatment in the last one year had to pay a total 1 crore 8 lac and 272 taka as bribe. Patients and their families had to pay money to the doctor, nurse, ward boy and other staffs although they were not satisfied to the service they received. Thirty three out of every one hundred patients went to outdoor treatment had to pay 115 Taka on an average for x-ray. According to this statement, the yearly amount of bribing for x-ray is 13 lac 29 thousand and 968 Taka. At the same time the amount of bribing for the indoor treatment is 1 lac 71 thousand 307 Taka for x-ray, 4 lac 24 thousand 947 Taka for blood and stool and iron tests, 30 thousand 353 Taka for ECG, 56 thousand 201 Taka for Altrasonogram and 4 lac 80 thousand 595 Taka for others.

On the other hand, the report card survey on Thana police revealed several irregularities and corruptions of Kishoregonj police station. It appeared from the study that general people had to pay 14 lac 6 thousand 768 taka for general diary and 11 lac 39 thousand 442 Taka for register case and FIR as a bribe in one-year. The survey showed that, 14% of the accused from GD were arrested and the plaintiffs had to pay 3 thousand and 933 Taka on an average as bribe to arrest the accused. 30% of the plaintiffs blamed the police for not arresting 86% of the accused. Accused who were sent to remand had to pay 650 Taka as bribe to get rid of physical torture. The survey showed that most of the people who went to police station were dissatisfied.

Land is amongst the most corrupted sectors of Bangladesh. Report card survey organized by TIB and CCC revealed that in 2005 taka 62 lac 67 thousand was paid to Registry office as bribe for the works related to purchase and sell of land. Besides, 2 thousand 566 Taka was paid for receiving documents, 1 thousand 500 taka for paying less than the actual tax, every household had to pay 1 thousand 500 taka for land survey and 2 thousand 125 taka for land annulment. It takes three months on an average for land annulment. TIB and CCC gave separate suggestions to avoid irregularities and corruption from these sectors and ensure entitled services.

### Training and Workshops

**Training:** TIB organized a five-day training for its staff related to AI-Desk realizing the necessity of ensuring the right to information of people as a precondition for establishing good governance in the country. The purposes of the training were to let the participants know about the importance of the AI-Desk and at the same time tell them about how to develop relationship while working with the community, identify the techniques to deliver effective and necessary advice and information through interactive discussion, relevance of presentation of advice and information and building alliance with mutual understanding and increasing the capacity of management.

**Workshop:** With the support of DFID and coordinated by Overseas Development Institute TIB organized a workshop on 12-14 February. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss in detail about the process of policy formulation and the techniques to change the policy considering the experience and research of different countries for policymaking process, participation in policymaking process through the combination of research and advocacy initiatives.

**Workshop for building alliance and alliance for land:** An opinion sharing meeting was held at 24 January at the conference room of TIB for building alliance to make the AI-Desk more effective and ensure the basic entitlement of the people. Naripokkho, NFOWD, ALRD, D net, NDD, BLAST and Samata were present in the meeting. All the organizations gave their consent with the fullest interest to provide necessary support to the AI-Desks at CCC areas. In its continuation, a workshop was held at TIB office at 12 March to build a land mobilization alliance of the organizations that provide legal aid and information service for establishing the land rights of landless people. Representatives of the organizations were present in the workshop. Combined job space areas were identified and future action plan was discussed at the workshop. With the agreement of all the members, Natore was identified as a pilot area to work for all the organizations. Besides, the organizations of the alliance decided to observe 10 June, the Land Right Day, together.

**Workshop on Right to Information at Nepal:** A workshop on Right to Information was held from 18 to 21 March at Godavari Village Resort of Nepal. Transparency International and Public Affairs Centre jointly organized the Workshop. 18 representatives from Nepal and Bangladesh attended the workshop. Amongst the 9 representatives from Bangladesh Fahreen Alamgir and Mohammed Imam Uddin of Advocacy Division, TIB were present. The topics discussed at the workshop were Right to Information for curbing corruption and establishing good governance, Right to Information Law and the techniques for publicity to enact the Law.
Reform of Public Service Commission Demanded

Speakers called on the caretaker government to bring reforms to the Public Service Commission (PSC) immediately through appointment of honest and competent officials as its Chairman and Members in order to bring dynamism and ensure transparency in its activities. They also called for a thorough investigation into massive corruption in the PSC and punishment to the persons responsible. They raised such demands at the roundtable titled Public Service Commission: Problems and Solutions. This was organised on the occasion of releasing a diagnostic study on the PSC on 22 March 2007 at National Press Club in Dhaka. This study was undertaken by TIB to diagnose the weaknesses, irregularities and corruptions in the PSC, and to come up with a set of policy recommendations. Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad presided over the session, and Rezaul Karim presented the keynote paper.

The research found that although the PSC is a constitutional body, it is not independent. It works as an attached division under the Ministry of Establishment, which controls key administrative and financial issues. In almost all cases, the Chairmen and Members have been appointed on sheer political consideration, which made the Commission an outfit of the ruling party. No specific accountability mechanism especially for the Chairman and Members exists.

The study revealed that a network of corrupt officials has been developed in the PSC Secretariat. It has been earning money by involving themselves in leakage of questions, contracting with the job seekers, helping ruling party supporters for getting job, and even manipulating results. The network is too strong to any disciplinary action. The examination system is archaic and outdated lacking the scope of proper assessment of the competency of candidates. There are examples of partisan recruitments in important cadres like the administration and the police. Contractual selection based on transaction of bribery is rampant in the PSC.

Neither the PSC nor the Ministry of Establishment has made the outcome of the quota policy public, through official documents and gazette notifications. Also there is no provision for discussion on Annual Report of the PSC in the National Parliament.

The report offered a set of recommendations for the reform of the PSC. Formation of a special committee to reform the PSC considering its neutrality, independence and functions, amendments of relevant laws or enactment of new laws, introduction of a system to review the assets of the PSC chairman, members, officials and staff on a regular basis, formation of a strong probe body comprising of neutral and competent persons to investigate the allegations of corruption and irregularities in the exams of Bangladesh Civil Service, and necessary action on the basis of the probe body’s recommendations are some of the important recommendations. It also recommended for allocations for the PSC in the national budget.

An effective search committee should be formed to appoint PSC chairman and members. Persons who are acceptable to all and have experiences regarding public administration should be given preference during the recruitment. A committee should be formed to reform the BCS examination system. It further recommended that at least 75% of the appointments should be made on the basis of merit, the district quota should be abolished, and the quota for freedom fighters’ sons and daughters should be reviewed.
**RESEARCH NEWS**

Former Advisers to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan, A S M Shahjahan and Sultana Kamal, former PSC Chairman Mostafa Chowdhury, former PSC Member Dr. Hamida Banu, Justice Golam Rabbani, Advocate Mahbubul Alam, Dr. Syed Giausuddin Ahmed and Prof Atiqur Rahman of Dhaka University, former IGP and Secretary Nurul Huda and former student leader Subhas Singha Roy took part in the discussion.

**CULTURAL NEWS**

**Selection of Theatre Activist:**
The selection process of Theatre activists of different CCCs were completed between February and May. The CCCs were Bagerhat, Khulna, Gazipur, Munsigonj and Natore. Theatre activists were selected by a selection team through a competitive process based on the experience and work efficiency of the interested applicants. The team was formed with the CCC Member, convener of the theatre sub-committee, APO and AAO of TIB. The processes for selecting theatre activists were completed at Bagerhat at 19 February, Khulna at 20-21 February, Gazipur at 26 February, Munsigonj at 5 March and Natore at 29 March. Among the 53 theatre activists selected from 5 CCCs, 15 were female.

**Production Based Theatre Workshop:**
Production Based Theatre Workshops were held at Jamalpur, Gazipur, Sreemangal and Chakaria. Four different anti-corruption plays were developed in these workshops.

**Jamalpur:** Theatre group of Jamalpur CCC performed a technical show of their play ‘Banchita Manush’ after completing their workshop from 23 to 27 January organized by the CCC. The theme of the production was violation of rights for education of the general people of Jamalpur and weakness of the local administration.

**Gazipur:** Gazipur CCC organized a theatre workshop from 15 to 20 March with the support of TIB. The workshop was held at Gazipur club. The newly formed theatre group performed their technical show of their play ‘Dukhinir Galpa’ at the final day of the workshop. The play reflected the agony of the local people especially the indigenous for their land, health and education related rights. The CCC Convener, member, Theater group member and Volunteer expressed their opinion about the production.

**Sreemangal:** Workshop of Sreemangal theatre group was held at CCC office from 23 to 27 January organized by the CCC. At the final day, the group performed their production ‘Aar Kotodur’. Through this production the violation of right to education of the people and the weakness of the local administration were displayed.

**Chakaria:** Chakaria CCC organized a Theatre workshop from 21 to 26 January at ICDDR,B hall room. The play was produced following participatory method comprising the issues of education, health and Union Parishad related problems. At the final day, the group performed their production ‘Dur Ha Durnity.’

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**TIB Report Rejected by the PSC**

The Public Service Commission (PSC) organised a meeting on 25 March 2007 in its Tejgaon office premises to express its reaction against the recently released research report of TIB on the Commission. The meeting turned into chaos when the invited guests started expressing their resentments by bringing allegations against PSC Members and the Chairperson. PSC Chairperson Z N Tahmida Begum claimed that she was not involved in corruption and she should not be held responsible if any member is involved in irregularities. She also rejected TIB report and said that tarnishing the image of PSC is undesirable.
YES Orientation and Workshop News

The invincible youth of this country has proved we are not defeated, we have achieved, we will achieve. Keeping this sprit in mind TIB’s YES (volunteers and theatre workers) groups have been formed to resist against corruption. Keeping up the slogan “Invincible youth shall surely resist corruption”, TIB’s volunteers and theatre workers have been organized in 36 regions in Bangladesh. For developing students-youth as an extraordinary person in the anti-corruption sprit and achieving expected and visible changes by their leadership in anti-corruption activities, YES orientations and planning workshops have been conducted consecutively in 36 regions. Below planning workshops from January to March are briefly mentioned:

Faridpur, Madaripur, Rajbari: In March 21, YES orientation and planning workshops have been arranged for volunteer groups of Faridpur, Madaripur and Rajbari at Hotel Raffles Inn in Faridpur. 100 volunteers and theatre workers prepared 2007 work plan for with enthusiasm and active participation. Planning 2007 for Faridpur YES group identified inadequate supply of medicine in hospital, irregularities in pathology examination and excessive charges; YES group of Madaripur identified improvement of quality of service in the General Hospital; and YES group of Rajbari identified irregularities in ticket sales and purchase in Rajbari Railway Station. Elimination of these problems, YES group will carry out yearlong regular sharing meeting with the respective authorities, various motivating activities, arranging show of people’s theatre groups, liftlet distribution etc. advocacy programme.

Chittagong: A daylong YES orientation and planning workshop for YES group of Chittagong was arranged on March 16 at the Regional Public Administration Training Center at Chittagong by CCC – Chittagong Metropolitan Area. In the workshop, 18 volunteers and theatre workers prepared their work plan for 2007. Corruption in ticket and medicine supply in Chittagong Medical College was identified as the problem in planning session. YES group will initiate for making and establishing an information board by discussing with the hospital authority, health service related story writing competition, observance of health service day, liftlet distribution and awareness activities in the slum areas for solving the problems in hospital and visible changes and raising awareness of service recipients. Besides, they will arrange human change and poster exhibition.

Sylhet, Srimangal, Sunamjong: In 31 March, orientation was organized for YES groups of Sylhet, Srimangal and Sunamjong at Hotel Sylhet Inn in Sylhet. In the orientation, 76 members of 3 YES groups prepared work plan for 2007. Sylhet group identified ticket fare of hospital and negligence of duties of doctors of Osmani Medical College; irregularities of medicine delivery in Srimangal General Hospital; and Sunamganj group identified absence of doctors in the General Hospital as the prominent problems. They have
planned various activities for increasing mass-awareness and elimination of irregularities. For implementing these work plans, YES groups will carry out anti-corruption poster campaign, anti-corruption songs in various spots, surprise visits, submitting memorandums to civil surgeons and arrange workshop/ seminars.

**Savar, Gazipur, Munshigonj:** In 1st March, a daylong orientation workshop of YES groups of Savar, Gazipur and Munshigonj have been arranged at CCDB Savar office.

YES members prepared their work plans for 2007. YES members of Gazipur have planned to address for quality education of a local government primary school. YES members of Savar taken Upazilla Health Complex and YES members of Munshigonj have planned to work for ensuring health service from General Hospital of Munshigonj.

**Kushtia:** With the initiative of CCC Kushtia, a daylong workshop of YES group has been organized at CCC office. In the workshop, 13 YES members have prepared their work plan for 2007. They have set some specific advocacy activities identifying the service delivery problems of Kushtia General Hospital as the prominent problem sector. Among these activities, mentionable are – fact sheet and flyer preparation, establishing satellite Advice and Information Desk, human chain and meeting and follow-up with hospital authority.

**Rajshahi:** A daylong workshop has been arranged with the participation of YES members by the initiative of CCC Rajshahi on 17th January. In the workshop 21 YES members prepared their workplan for 2007. YES group has adopted various activities for eliminating corruption from Rajshahi Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, among which mentionable are fact sheet preparation, people’s theatre show, establishing satellite Advice and Information Desk. Here notable, for some immediate initiative by Rajshahi YES group some significant positive changes have been occurred in Rajshahi Education Board.

**Modhupur, Muktagacha, Nalitabari:** YES members of Modhupur, Muktagacha and Nalitabari have prepared their 2007 workplan for bringing some milestone change by their own initiatives. 19 YES members have planned for various activities for ensuring quality education in a local government primary school. 22 YES members of Muktagacha and 20 YES members of Nalitabari prepared their work plan for working with Thana Health Complex respectively on 31st March and 18th March. Main objective of their activities is to ensure quality government health service for local inhabitants.

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**Post Box**

**Time has come to build social movement against corruption**

The publicized initiatives of present governments are drawing attention of our country people. It has also generated a huge reaction at every corner of the society. But it is impossible to build a corruption free society if we will not succeed for establishing a new social system by reducing rampant corruption. The common people are happy for the countrywide anti-corruption drive. In very recent, in an opinion sharing meeting at Barguna Circuit House the chief of The Bangladesh Army stated that anyone who acts any corrupt practices will not be exempted from penalty. I am hailing such statement. But it should keep neither on eye that the anti-corruption drive does not be biased nor for protecting a special group of people’s benefits. I express gratitude towards TIB for creating a social movement against corruption. But TIB has to play a pioneer role in rising awareness among mass people as well as building a social movement.

Amit Banik, Kishoreganj

**The invincible youth shall resist corruption**

The special issue of TIB newsletter Waves was awesome and well-timed. TIB has published it with the slogan ‘the invincible youth shall resist corruption. The youths were always active and aware against all sorts of agitation, war and irregularities in our country. The successes, achievements of the people and the sacrifice of the youths are going to be faded away due to only a handful of people. I think, irresistible youths shall resist corruption and will set a dream country. We are hopeful, that day will come soon.

Nabila, 152-B, Shahid Lane, Pahartali, Chittagong
Like every year, TIB has observed the International Women’s Day of 2007 with due importance and solemnity, this year also. ‘Women against Corruption’ was chosen as the theme of this year’s Women’s Day. TIB believes that women, especially those vulnerable and deprived classes are the victims of various types of torture and repression by the upper echelons of society. This is another way of corruption. Vested interests of some groups in the society deprive other people of their fundamental rights and create discrepancies giving birth to clashes and class inequalities. These reasons make women suffers from inequality, injustice and torture more than suffered by men. They suffer twice, once because they are poor and again because they are women.

TIB took up countrywise various programmes to raise public awareness about women’s freedom of expression, freedom to take decisions and the effects of corruption on them. In continuation of these programmes TIB organized a debate competition on ‘Women Against Corruption’ at the Dhaka University Teacher-Student Centre auditorium on 7th March, 2007 (same day as International Women’s Day) by a Shadow Parliament of female students. For the first time in the country’s history female student debaters from Class XI to post-graduate classes took part in the competition. The Day was all for female students – thinking about their own problems and talking about themselves only.

The champion’s position in the mock parliament debate of student’s went to Kuasha Paul of Rokeya Bitorko-Angon of Dhaka University. Junanjina Ahmed Trina volunteer of Faridpur CCC won the position of first runner-up. ‘We have arranged this time our Women’s Page on the basis of our conversation with them’ declared TIB. First runner-up Junanjina Ahmed Trina thinks that generally two types of people become victims of corruption. Those who tolerant the corrupt and those who are weak. Those who remain silent help the corrupt indirectly. For those who commit injustice and those who tolerate injustice are equally guilty. Kuasha Paul added one more point to this view. She thinks that there are some cases where women themselves get mixed up in crime. But such cases are very few in number. Women suffer much more by corruption than the corruption they commit themselves. Both Kuasha and Trina are in agreement in thinking that the voice of a successful debater and that of a responsible citizen could not be different. Today’s expectations are that everybody suffers from corruption, loudly against all the traditional and worn out values, systems and prejudices that create divisions between men and women and weakens the foundation of society. Women should also be empowered, they should be given scopes to take the position of leadership in the society. Only then they will be able to play their successful roles in fighting corruption.

Asked whether the TIB-initiated debate on ‘Women Against Corruption’ was a success, Trina said, ‘whether the initiative was successful or not could only be judged when we could utilise its achievements for further positive actions.’ But this type of arrangement should not only be limited to the women. Men should also be involved. Kuasha thinks that the initiative is timely and useful. Although everybody suffers from corruption, but this initiative by TIB pinpointed separately the extreme injustice and repression suffered by women, thus making it possible to analyse the effect of corruption on women. This initiative must be continued. Any social and cultural movement, for that matter, must involve human rights activists, women’s organizations and media to succeed. There is no alternative. Women’s involvement with media has increased. They should now find out areas where women are discriminated and report them on facts-based stories.

Kuasha assessed the slogan, ‘invincible youth shall surely resist corruption’ and said that youth means power, youth means dreams and the expectation of a better future. But the present sick politics has directed a large section of young people taking the wrong path. Values have eroded as a consequence. TIB’s initiatives at this stage and the participation of young people in them, have shown the young generation a new ray of light. Trina thought that TIB’s initiatives, the experiences of CCCs and the involvement of youth with them were something great. To save the nation from the enormous black cloud of corruption everyone must tell the truth. Honesty and awareness, therefore, are needed first.

Kuasha thought that the initiative to prevent corruption against women must begin at home and within the family. In many families a boy-child gets all privileges from the day of his birth as the successor to the family-power structure. The girl-child, on the other hand, lives a life of deprivation. This drives the girl live her entire life in a psychological sense of weakness. Such weak people cannot protest. But women’s empowerment is really important in all sense. She hoped that her own and her organisation’s support would always remain with TIB’s social movement against corruption.

Trina thinks as an active member of TIB’s volunteer that in the next five years the number of CCC’s committee members and volunteers would grow to 14 crore and 67 lakh. The word ‘transparency’ rings a bell to the ears of all men in the country. A time will come when TIB would not require to carry its research on corruption. The day is not far when the roots of corruption will be destroyed totally.
Annual Meeting of Members Held

Annual Meeting of Members (AMM) held on 3 February at BRAC Center Inn at Mohakhali in the city. A large number of members were participated in the meeting. TIB members strongly reiterated its demand that the government make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) active and ratify the UN Convention Against Corruption immediately in the annual meeting. The members also expressed deep concern over the pervasiveness of corruption in the country.

They, however, welcomed the initiatives taken by the Caretaker Government to root out corruption. It is possible to contain corruption through making the ACC active, they said.

They also underscored the need to enact and enforce the Right to Information Act in order to ensure free flow of information. They also called for implementing legal reforms to eliminate the influence of black money in the election and strengthen the Election Commission.

The meeting reviewed the activities of TIB during 2006 and held detailed discussions on future strategies including action plan for the year 2007. The speakers said, citizens belonging to various classes and professions, especially students and youths, will have to be involved in the social movement against corruption initiated by TIB for making it more effective.

Mr. A M Ahsanullah member of TIB presided over the meeting. TIB Trustee Board members, Executive Director and officials were present at the meeting. The meeting ended with an anti-corruption cultural show where a theatre group of Sreemangal CCC staged a play titled ‘Jago Manush’.