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Bangladesh’s accession to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) represents the highest government level recognition of the importance of controlling and preventing corruption. Within a few weeks of assuming power the present Government acceded to the UNCAC with effect from February 27, 2007, and thereby sent a strong signal nationally and internationally that Bangladesh was firmly committed to the cause of controlling corruption and promoting good governance, which also reflected the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh.

The move was accompanied and followed by a number of highly important institutional and policy reforms that opened up opportunities to create a sustainable basis for effectively controlling corruption in the country. These include the effort to criminalize corruption for the first time a creeping culture of impunity has been challenged as manifested by efforts to bring to justice a large number of individuals alleged to have been involved in corruption whatever levels of power and authority they may be.

Parallel with criminalization came a series of reforms and reconstitution of key institutions of democracy and national integrity system, such as separation of the judiciary, reconstitution of the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Public Service Commission. It is a common knowledge that these vital institutions were rendered ineffective not only to serve partisan political interests but also to protect and promote corruption. All these are consistent with the provisions of the UNCAC, which Bangladesh has committed to by acceding to the Convention.

While these initiatives are commendable, we are also aware that the effective control of corruption and fuller compliance with UNCAC is possible only in a long term and through a comprehensive multi-front strategy. It is not only the Government and the institutions but also the politicians, private and non-government sectors, multinationals, development partners, and the whole citizenry, that have high stakes and roles.

The politicians may have lost the incentives and scope to indulge in corruption for the time being. But whether or not this would translate into a meaningful political will against corruption beyond the elections of 2008 is not known. UNCAC gives special emphasis on transparency and accountability in the political system, parties and processes, which need to be addressed from a sense of ownership by all involved.

Nothing substantial has happened yet to curtail incentives for corruption in the public service to which the UNCAC gives special emphasis. Reforms in other sectors cannot bear fruits without effectively establishing integrity in public service, especially in appointments, promotions, postings and transfers. No less important is the issue of salaries and benefits, inconsistency of which with cost of living is one of the main factors behind corruption in public service.

In the embedded structure of corruption, a key actor in addition to politicians and public officials is the private sector. The UNCAC calls for criminalization of corruption not only in the public sector but also in private to public and private to private transactions. It is incumbent upon the Government as well the private sector itself including various chambers and umbrella bodies to initiate specific efforts to mainstream integrity in private sector.

The ultimate source of strength in corruption prevention is the people - their awareness, voice raising and participation in the form of a social movement with active support of all stakeholders. By acceding to UNCAC, in particular Article 13, Bangladesh has committed to promoting active participation of citizens at large in the prevention and fight against corruption. This commitment also implies full recognition of the importance of anti-corruption initiatives at the non-government level as complementary and reinforcing to those of the Government. It is a commonplace wisdom how challenging it has been for anti-corruption work in the non-government level in Bangladesh. Consistent with UNCAC commitment, it is incumbent upon the Government to create conditions that will ensure enabling environment for active participation of citizens, including safety and security of individuals and institutions engaged in anti-corruption movement, without which the cherished goals of UNCAC will remain beyond reach.
International Right to Information Day
Observed through joint initiative of six development organizations including TIB

The International Right to Information Day was observed through combined initiative of six development organizations including TIB with the slogan ‘Right to Information – Pledge for Good Governance’. Various programmes including press conference, discussion meeting, debates, rallies, seminars, and distribution of leaflets and stickers were organized throughout the country on the occasion. The other organizations involved were Ain-O-Shalish Kendra, BNNRC, D. Net, MMC and Manusher Jonno Foundation.

A round table discussion was held on 27 September under the aegis of six organizations on good governance and right to information. Held at the LGED auditorium in Agargaon of Dhaka, the discussants put forward strong demand for formulation and implementation of an effective Right to Information Law.

Presented over by the Chairman of TIB Trustee Board Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, the Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt. General (retd.) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury was present at the programme as chief guest. Former Adviser to the caretaker government and TIB Trustee Advocate Sultana Kamal was present as special guest. Moderated by the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Associate Professor Robaet Ferdous of Mass Communication and Journalism department of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper at the round table on good governance and right to information. The discussants who participated in the discussion included eminent journalist Mr. Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Professor Dr. Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University’s Law Department and the Coordinator (Governance) of Manusher Jonno Foundation Ms. Sanjida Sobhan.

In his keynote paper, Robaet Ferdous said, “We seek good governance. The right to information can make a direct contribution to basic elements of good governance, such as people’s participation in the decision-making process, establishing accountability at all strata of the state and ensuring transparency. In order to fully utilise the strengths of right to information in establishing good governance, a comprehensive right to information law should be framed by repealing, modifying or amending various laws which run counter to right to information at the same time a modern, scientific and effective infrastructure should be put in place for storage and supply of information and people should be made aware that right to information is a human and civic right.

In his address as chief guest, Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury said, “government, democracy, human rights and right to information fall under the same sphere. We must not abet any effort to throttle the right to information. A law for ensuring free flow of information is urgently needed for ensuring transparency and accountability of the government and empowerment of the general people.”

He expressed the hope that the nation would soon get this law. The ACC Chairman also said, “the right to information law should be viewed in an overall context. Half of the population of this country were deprived from education. Consequently, they should be empowered through providing information.”

In his speech, Professor Muzaffer Ahmad said that in order to gather information, they had to be sorted as not all information was needed. Side by side with getting information from the government, information form various private organizations should also be ensured. Free flow of information is necessary for raising quality of life, enhancing the level of people’s knowledge and installing them as the proprietor of the state.

In her address as special guest, Advocate Sultana Kamal said, “there could not be any good governance in the absence of right to information. Information has to be made free for civilization, democracy, human rights and good governance.” Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said, “people should be involved in large numbers if right to information is to be established.” Dr. Asif Nazrul said, “information needed for good governance should be made freely available.” Sanjida Sobhan said, “we have to come out of the culture of secrecy.”

Others present at the discussion meeting included the Treasurer of TIB Trustee Board M. Hafizuddin Khan, TIB Trustee Syeda Ruhi Ghuznavi, former members of Parliament Col. (retd.) Muhammad Faruque Khan and G. M. Quader, Principal Information Officer of the government Iftekhar Husain, Professor Golam Rahman and Professor Toifal Ahmed.

A press conference was held at National Press Club on 26 September to shed light on various programmes arranged for observing the day. Senior officials from the six organizations were present on the occasion. Various programmes were organized by these organizations throughout the country including Dhaka for highlighting people’s demand for an effective Right to Information Law in Bangladesh. The Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) formed under the aegis of TIB at various places of the country, including Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet, arranged a series of programmes on the day. These included discussion meetings, rallies and sticker campaigns. The BNNRC observed the day at the Rural Knowledge Centres set up at 9 places of the country between 1 and 9 October. The rural information centres of D.Net arranged rallies, open discussions and workshop between 28 and 30 September on the occasion.
International Right to Information Day observed at local level

TIB is determined to wage a movement for ensuring of peoples’ right to information in establishing good governance and curbing corruption. And the Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) are the focal points at the local level for citizens’ involvement with TIB. Considering the importance of people’s right to information as a precondition for alleviating poverty and enhancing public safety, the International Right to Information Day was observed by 36 CCCs in their respective areas on 28 September, as in the previous year. Holding aloft the slogan ‘Right to Information is a Pledge for Good Governance’, discussion meetings, debates, rallies, seminars and sticker campaigns were organised at the local level by the CCCs. Apart from the CCC and YES members, students, teachers, journalists and people belonging to various classes and professions of society participated in these programmes.

**Dhaka Division:** The CCC Kishoreganj took up four days programmes for observing International Right to Information Day with the objective of generating awareness about the importance of right to information in establishing good governance. The programmes included debate competition, bicycle rally, discussion meeting and other campaigns. The CCCs of Madaripur, Rajbari, Munshiganj, Muktagacha, Natlibari and Mymensingh organised human chains, rallies, distribution of leaflets and stickers and discussion meetings on the occasion. The CCC Faridpur arranged a discussion meeting at its office on 27 September with the participation of CCC and YES members, high officials of the district and representatives of local and national newspapers. A rally was brought out under the aegis of CCC Gazipur on 3 October morning and a discussion meeting was held at 4 p.m. in the afternoon. The CCC Modhupur organised an opinion sharing meeting and CCC Jamalpur observed the day by holding meeting, bringing out rally and launching of a magazine published by the YES members.

**Chittagong Division:** A discussion meeting and Iftar Mahfil was organised by the CCC Patiya with the participation of teachers, journalists and members on ‘Free flow of information and religious feeling reduces corruption’. Before the meeting, a cycle rally was arranged by the YES group for raising awareness about right to information. The CCCs of Chakaria, Comilla and Chandpur organised rallies, discussions, opinion-exchange meetings and signature campaigns for observing the day. People belonging to various strata demonstrated their support for right to information by putting signatures on a 60-feet long banner. A satellite AI-Desk programme was run under the supervision of YES members of CCC Chittagong City on 27 September on the occasion of the day. Similarly, a round table discussion was organised by the CCC Brahmanbaria at Sur-Samrat Aluuddin Sangettangan for raising awareness about the day.

**Khulna Division:** The CCC Jhenaidah observed the International Right to Information Day on 28 September through the joint collaboration with non-government organizations Padma Samaj Kalyan Sangshita and Shobha-Jhenaidah. The activists of those organizations as well as members of the civil society brought out rallies on the day in support of the demand for free flow of information. Later, a discussion meeting was held on the significance of the day. Apart from rally and human chain, the Bagerhat CCC arranged a discussion programme on ‘The role of NGOs in ensuring right to information’ for observing the day. The CCCs of Khulna, Kushitia, Jessore, Bagerhat and Satkhira brought out rallies for raising awareness in addition to holding discussion meetings on the day.

**Rajshahi Division:** The CCC Chapai Nawabganj arranged a 2-day long programme on the occasion of International Right to Information Day 2007. The events included rally, human chain, essay competition, signature campaign, satellite Advice and Information Desk (AI-Desk) and view-exchange meeting. The meeting emphasised on free flow of information for making the democratic system of governance meaningful. The CCCs of Rajshahi, Kurigram, Natore and Lalmirihat brought out colourful rallies for observing the day. The day was concluded by holding discussion meeting. CCC Rangpur also held an opinion-exchange meeting in collaboration with the Press Club at its office, highlighting the significance and importance of the day. Besides, the YES members undertook various programmes including collection of signatures from students, distribution of leaflets and stickers and setting up of satellite AI-Desk in support of this demand.

**Sylhet Division:** A discussion meeting titled ‘The significance and importance of right to information’ was organised by the CCC Sylhet on 28 September for strengthening the demand for right to information. A rally was brought out in Sreemangal town while observing the day for raising awareness among the people. Besides, art competition and discussion meeting were also organised. A similar rally was brought out in Sunamganj town and a discussion meeting took place at the Public Library after the rally.

**Barisal Division:** The CCCs of Jhalakati and Pirojpur brought out rallies on 28 September for swift implementation of the demand for enacting Right to Information Law in order to establish good governance and curb corruption. Discussion meetings were also held by highlighting the significance of the day. Human chain and discussion meeting were organised by CCC Barisal with the participation of its members, volunteers, theatre activists and representatives of various organizations in support of the demand for formulation and implementation of Right to Information Law.
Although discussion on Right to Information has been going on in Bangladesh for many years, its speed has been slow. It has remained confined to writings, research or academic exercise. Not exactly as right to information, the subject has been discussed in the garb of freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, etc. and it remained stuck within the confines of academic and applied aspect of journalism and in some cases legal explanations and analyses. Much discussion, review and research on the issue of right to information has taken place during the past few years. A number of books have also been published. News could be gathered of many international organisations exerting pressure on the government on a sustained basis for formulating a Right to Information Law. It must be said that the non-government organisations have played a leading role in this area.

Various affiliates of the United Nations, Commonwealth-based organizations and different international donor agencies have been assisting in creating awareness on right to information through funding and advice. NGOs have been set up whose main focus is to establish right to information in society. As a result, numerous activists supportive of right to information have been groomsed from the grassroots up to the national level. Discussions on the subject in the academic arena have also been geared up. Significant interest has been created among the teachers and students of journalism, law, development studies, public administration, economics and the various departments of social science faculty at the university level.

The government has signed the UN Convention against Corruption, appointed a Tax Ombudsman, is endeavouring to form a Constitutional Council and give autonomy to radio and television. These initiatives would undoubtedly play a significant role in establishing good governance and right to information. The newspapers and television channels are much more vocal now on the subject of right to information compared to the past. The newspapers are regularly publishing reports, editorials and post-editorials on the theme. Because of these, the previous government became interested about preparation of a working paper on Right to Information Bill/2002. Various non-government organisations undertook different activities to overcome the limitations of the proposed bill. These organizations had exchanged views with the lawyers, journalists, human rights activists and academicians throughout the country on the proposed law. Valuable recommendations had emanated from these meetings. The core group on right to information formed by various organizations at non-governmental level even prepared a draft law on right to information on the basis of those recommendations.

Needless to say, these efforts have further strengthened the edifice for formulation of a Right to Information Law in Bangladesh. The unimaginable revolution that has taken place all over the world in the realm of information technology including telecommunication, computer and internet has also created a huge opportunity and potential for Bangladesh for storage, distribution and exchange of information. Materialization of right to information is essential for realization of its potential. Besides, the right to information law has been passed in 74 countries of the world including India and Nepal. Another 50 countries are engaged at various stages of research, opinion-exchange and advocacy for framing a Right to Information Law. Therefore, Bangladesh cannot lag behind in this visible reality of globalisation. If Bangladesh is to keep pace with globalisation, she has to share information with other countries; she has to keep her people updated and able by providing latest information.

But above everything else, the present government has the biggest opportunity to frame a right to information law. The political governments remain engulfed in corruption up to their neck. They lack of courage to implement ‘beneficial but unpopular’ deeds in order to hold on to their cheap popularity. But as the present government has no back-pulls, it can undertake welfare-oriented steps like separation of the judiciary; therefore it is the right time now to enact a Right to Information Law through convincing the government. We know that the military is assisting the present government. Therefore become optimistic when the Army Chief General Moeen U. Ahmed makes positive comment on the issue of Right to Information Law in Bangladesh. In his paper on ‘Reducing Corruption in South Asia’, he emphasized that the corrupt officials would not be able to hide and evade punishment on the plea of maintaining confidentiality, if a Right to Information Law was enacted. Citing the example of India, he said “the mass media was playing a special role in exposing the corrupt there. If they want, any government official in India can leak out corruption taking place in his department.” General Moeen said, “it is difficult to detect corrupt acts and bring the culprits to book in Bangladesh because of limited rights to information. He expressed the hope that the present government would soon enact a law on right to information. Protective measures for the private sector, ensuring accountability and involving the civil society, mass media and the private sector were the main issues here, he opined (Prothom Alo, 12 July’07). We also feel like becoming optimistic with him. We would expect that if a Right to Information Law is promulgated, then side by side with knowing information about government offices, the public should also have the right to know about the defence sector, even if partially; and this process can be started by letting the nation know about the sector-wise break-down of the budget of the defence department in the coming budget.

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(The write-up has been taken from the paper presented at the round table under the joint initiative of Ain-O-Shalish Kendra, BNRC, D.Net, MMC, ManusherJonno Foundation and TIB on the occasion of International Right to Information Day.)
Bangladesh Biman Facing Multifarious Problems: Recommendations for Reform and Modernization

Since its inception, Bangladesh Biman has been facing various problems including structural ones, institutional weaknesses, corruption, financial insolvency, poor quality of services, absence of short and long term planning, etc. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) conducted a diagnostic study on Biman Bangladesh Airlines to formulate recommendations for remedy of problems after unveiling them. It showed that Biman has become a loss-incurring enterprise because of lack of accountability and planning, politicisation and corruption, despite being a state-owned commercial entity.

TIB organised a discussion meeting titled ‘Bangladesh Biman: Problems and Remedies’ at the VIP lounge of National Press Club on 8 August on the occasion of releasing that research report. Presided over by the Chairman of TIB Board of Trustees Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, the report was presented by Research Officer Md. Akter Hossain. Those who participated in the discussion included Managing Director of Biman Dr. M A Momen, TIB Trustee M. Hafizuddin Khan, Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, former MP Col. (retd.) Faruque Khan, former Secretaries Mohiuddin Ahmed and Abul Kalam Azad, former President of Biman Pilot Association Captain Nasimul Haque, Captain Maksudur Rahman, et al.

According to findings of the study, many structural problems exist in Bangladesh Biman including duplication of law, lack of authority and accountability of the executive council, shortage of specialists and political influence. Institutional problems include lack of skilled manpower, old aircrafts, excessive maintenance and running costs, apprehension of accident and absence of long-term planning. Biman is financially quite insolvent. Presently, its cumulative losses stand at 1900 crore Taka and its debt exceeds Taka 2100 crore.

The research shows that corruption is a key problem of Bangladesh Biman. It has failed to become a profitable organisation because of this. The magnitude and impact of corruption is highest in purchase and lease process of aircrafts, sale and procurement of equipment, tender process, ticket sale and reconfirmation. Corruption and irregularities worth 45 million US dollars (estimated) took place while procuring lease of aircrafts during the past five years. Biman also has to incur substantial losses due to corruption in maintenance and repairment of aircrafts. Biman’s expenditure on account of maintenance and repairment increased from Taka 215 crore to taka 489 crore over the past four years. One or two agencies got most of the repairment related jobs through nepotism or exercise of political influence. As a result, Taka 50 crore out of a total 90 crore spent on repairs has been wasted each year due to corruption. Corruptions took place in posting of officers/employees at overseas stations of Biman on political consideration, maintaining stations despite closure of routes, embezzlement by country managers, non-inquiry of irregularities and appointment of excess manpower on a routine basis. 80 percent of the income earned by Biman comes from carrying passengers. But this percentage came down to 43 percent in 2003-04 financial year due to poor quality of service. When asked, 72 percent of the passengers opined that the quality of services was very poor. Almost two-thirds of the respondents held the view that in-flight services of Biman were bad compared to other airlines.

Biman was formally converted into a public limited company on 23 July 2007. At the same time, decision was taken to reduce manpower, bringing changes to the Board of Directors, appoint foreign operator and grant autonomy. But it is doubtful how far the Board of Directors formed with six secretaries to the government can play an effective role. TIB put forward a number of suggestions to overcome the longstanding problems faced by Biman and make it a profitable organisation. Notable among these were: amending the law to remove duality in the management structure; inclusion of specialists who are efficient in running airlines commercially; making public the annual financial statements; introducing business methods similar to those followed by leading international airlines, introducing profitable flights and increasing routes after closing down loss-incurring ones; bringing changes to Biman’s purchase-sale policies; stopping political influence in administrative matters including promotions and transfers; appointing experienced and efficient personnel at officer level; purchasing modern aircrafts as soon as possible and making the process of purchase and lease-taking transparent; above all, take stringent and swift measures against the corrupt employees.
Massive Irregularities in RAJUK: Reforms and Modernisation Needed

Over 90 percent buildings of Dhaka city have been constructed by violating ‘Building Construction Regulation 1996’. Bribes worth of 20 to 25 crore taka is transacted each year at Rajuk in order to obtain permission for designs only. Dhaka is being pushed to the status of an overcrowded and unplanned city due to corruption and complex procedure for sanctioning designs, deviation from approved design during construction, changes in land-use, failure in raising institutional capacity; proper application of law; removing irregularities and corruption and for developing RAJUK as a transparent, accountable and dynamic institution. TIB has put forward a number of recommendations for this purpose. Prominent among these are: formulation and implementation of long-term urban plans; making the design approval process of RAJUK easier and more transparent; resisting changes to land-use; taking appropriate steps against the irregularities committed by private housing companies; formulation of national urbanisation policy; raising institutional capacity; proper application of law; ensuring strict accountability inside Rajuk; reconsidering organogram and increasing manpower; and implementing the provision of fines in case of defaults.

From approval of plans to implementation, corruption can be found at all levels of RAJUK. It is seen from a projection of this study that bribes worth 20 to 25 crore taka are transacted for approval of designs alone. An owner of 3-4 katha plot has to incur an expenditure of 15 to 30 thousand taka as bribe in addition to the normal fees of Rajuk. For 3-4 katha plots under ‘TI Act section 75’, the general plot owners have to pay Taka 30 to 50 thousand as additional bribe.

The research shows that the approval process of RAJUK is so complex, time-consuming and cumbersome that only a small number of customers follow these procedures. Most of the customers do the job through illegal means by entering into an understanding with the authority. Bribery and corruption is involved in the whole process of approval for land-use and building construction. The owners of land have to face many hurdles. Sometimes, it takes even one year to obtain approval. The clients hold the view that the quality of services of this department is not up to the mark. It is seen from a survey among the customers and middlemen that brokers are engaged by 53% of the customers for avoiding delays, 22% for avoiding unnecessary harassment, 7% for avoiding the need for pursuing cases and 13% for avoiding complexities involved in the approval process. Besides, the applicants also take recourse to brokers for concealing weaknesses of plots. Changing land-use is a very good business for the RAJUK officials. It appears from the study that mutual understanding between RAJUK officials and plot owners and sometimes pressures from influential quarters of the state are mainly responsible for changes in land-use.

Massive reforms and modernisation are required for removing irregularities and corruption and for developing Rajuk as a transparent, accountable and dynamic institution. TIB has put forward a number of recommendations for this purpose.
If a service-recipient of a service-delivery organisation spoke about its corruption, mismanagement and harassment, then the organisation might not take any action on the basis of what he said. But if many victims describe about their harassments to the authority collectively, then that would be more acceptable and the authority would be compelled to improve service quality while becoming accountable to the people. On the basis of this idea, TIB has released 20 report card on the opinions of service-recipients regarding primary and secondary education, healthcare, land administration, municipality, electricity office and post office at different CCC areas with the help of Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs). It may be mentioned here that work on 90 report cards covering 21 subjects at 24 CCC areas were taken up in 2006 following demands from the local population as well as the CCCs. Of these, 20 reports have been published during this period.

Healthcare: Report card surveys were carried out inside 8 public sector service-delivery organisations, namely Sadar Hospitals of Jhenidah, Satkhira, Jamalpur, Sreemangal, Sunamganj and Natore, Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and Patiya Upazila Health Complex between July and September 2007. These reports depict the harassment, sufferings, financial losses, non-cooperative behaviour of the authorities and corruption. The surveys show that the outdoor patients have to stand in queues for a long time because of late arrival of doctors. They even had to pay additional money for tickets. Additional money had to be given to hospital nurses, ward-boys and other staff for getting beds for indoor patients, for use of beds, x-rays and various tests. Many among the patients had to buy medicines from outside as they could not obtain any from hospital. It was gathered that in many instances, the physicians treated the patients at preferred pharmacies, diagnostic centres and private chambers.

Although the hospital authorities expressed their agreement about many issues, they cited various causes for non-delivery of better services in some instances. Despite that, many hospital authorities took different steps after the release of these reports. These included timely presence of doctors in hospitals, increase in availability of doctors, notice boards and sign-boards applicable ticket fees and all other fees of hospital, hanging notices about non-requirement of fees in case of free services, reduction of money-receipt for free services, returning fees taken from patients for tickets or depositing those in welfare fund, improvements in cleanliness, obtaining information from various hospital officials like Civil Surgeon and RMO, inculcating positive attitude among them for improving service-quality in hospitals, updating the list of medicines and food in hospitals and hanging the roster of on-duty doctors and nurses.

Primary and Secondary Education: Report card surveys conducted between July and September on secondary education in five CCC areas and primary education in one CCC area have now been published. Teachers of primary and secondary schools, relevant education officers, members of school management committees, journalists and representatives of civil society were present during the publication ceremonies. Various irregularities have been described in the reports related to education, including extraction of additional money on the pretext of various fees, deduction of stipend money, late arrival of teachers in schools, spending less time on classes, private tuition and non-holding of teachers-guardians’ meeting.

During these publication ceremonies, the teachers and education officers acknowledged the facts presented in the reports and mentioned various reasons why the irregularities took place. A notable matter was the extraction of fees from students despite provision of free primary education. The reason cited for this by the
teachers was non-allocation of funds by the government. But it was observed after publication of these reports that the relevant authorities became very conscious about education-related irregularities. The teachers started to take classes regularly and arrived on time for raising quality of education. Members of the school managing committee also became more active on the question of improving quality of education.

**Municipal Services:** The report cards on Chakaria and Patiya municipalities were released on 5 and 6 September. They depict lack of coordination in these municipalities including absence of drainage system, mosquito menace, non-supply of drinking water, lack of cleanliness in roads and markets, lack of street lamps and public toilets, payment of excess fees for licences, political influence and irregularities in the tendering process, etc. But the municipal authorities took many initiatives to improve municipal services after the publication of these reports. These included cleaning of roads, markets and drains, changing staff duties for removing irregularities in award of licences, placement of complaint box, hanging price chart of municipal services and price list of market commodities, construction of public toilets, preparation of master plan for the municipalities, repair of street lamps, formation of committees for arbitration of cases and stopping anomalies in appointments and tendering.

**Land Administration:** Two report card surveys on land administration were released on 14 July at Brahmanbaria and on 22 August at Comilla by the respective CCCs through press conferences. Scenario of land-related corruption were depicted in these reports including showing less amounts for registration and price of land, payment of excess money for mutation and deeds from land office, irregularities in distribution of khas land, payment of less amount as land tax, etc. Deed-writers and members of Deed-writers’ Association, officers-employees and Tehsildars of sub-registry offices were involved in this corruption. But the authorities did not give any reaction to these land-related reports.

**Electricity Service and Post Office:** Besides, the CCC Jhenaidah published a report on electricity services on 11 August and the CCC Barisal on the post office on 28 July. Although the electricity authority initially acknowledged the survey findings, they later denied those. But they took some effective steps to improve the quality of services. These included reducing the nuisance of brokers at electricity offices, sending bills after regular inspection of meters, stopping bribery in the open, enhancing power supply, reducing load-shedding and increasing monitoring and supervision. On the other hand, allegations were raised against the Barisal post office regarding payment of bribes while collecting money sent through money-order, non-payment of interests against savings deposits, improper distribution of parcels, etc. The Post Master General of Barisal head post office claimed that he has taken action against all irregularities. He gave assurance that a price-chart of all services provided by the post office would be hung on the display board of all subordinate post offices.

Report card surveys have earned recognition as an important tool in the social movement against corruption being waged by the TIB. Here, the local people are directly involved alongside CCC members. Most of these service-delivery organisations acknowledge the findings of these reports and then extend a helping hand for improving services. The more recommendations of these reports are implemented at the national and local levels, the more would the services rendered by service-providing organisations improve thereby benefiting the common people.

*Dipu Roy, Research Officer, TIB.*

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**International Anti-Corruption Day**

9 December is the International Anti-Corruption Day. TIB has taken a wide range of programmes to mark the day for the fourth time. Among these; a national seminar, anti-corruption debate and cartoon competition, anti-corruption cartoon exhibition will be held at Dhaka. Different talk programmes will be broadcast on TV channels on this occasion. Various communication materials will be produced and distributed among the common people for creating awareness on this issue.

TIB is going to observe this day in 36 CCC areas along with national level activities. These activities includes; anti-corruption rally, seminar, discussion meeting, theatre show, human chain, cycle rally, cultural programme and various competitions (essay, debate, art, general knowledge, beautiful handwriting, extempore speech). TIB hopes that the government, citizens and other organisations will take initiatives to observe the International Anti-Corruption Day.
It can be said from the experience of Bangladeshi people and expressions in the mass media that corruption is the most harmful national problem for this country. There may be debates about the comparative position of Bangladesh with respect to the extent and depth of corruption. But there is no doubt that corruption is one of the main impediments to the economic development, political growth and stability, and social transformation of Bangladesh.

Multi-directional and strategic steps have to be taken for curbing corruption in order to institutionalise economic growth and democracy. It has not been possible to eliminate corruption in any country without political will. And this will should materialise not through mere election manifestos or by showing pity or deference to anyone, but through practical implementation. Besides, an environment should be created for proper discharge of duties by those basic institutions which exist as prerequisites for national integrity system and institutionalisation of democracy. On the other hand, the general masses cannot become organised mainly because of hindrances to flow of information. Therefore, just as flow of information should be ensured through legislation for curbing corruption, similarly arrangements should be made so that people can derive benefit out of that.

A new expectation has been generated among the masses after the assumption of office by the caretaker government on 11 January 2007, as it has been trying to identify corruption as a punishable offence and has been carrying out massive reforms in relevant institutions. It is for the first time in the country’s 36-year history that a government has taken such a firm stance against corruption. But a state cannot achieve success in any area, be it in political, administrative or any other field, unless participation of the people is ensured. The incidence of corruption increased in this country when the expectations of the people were not reflected in the politics of Bangladesh. And the main reason why the national integrity system could not be made effective in Bangladesh because it lacked participation of the people.

There are now grounds for hope as the civil society of Bangladesh has taken a stance against corruption. The social movement against corruption waged by TIB by involving the citizens has been playing a vital role in generating demands against corruption. Various private and international organizations have remained vocal during the past two decades against injustices for establishment of good governance. The people have been waging various kinds of movements against irregularities and corruption. That the mass media of the country have been discharging their responsibilities properly gives rise to optimism. The mass media would therefore have to work alongside the people for winning the fight against corruption.

At the same time, if we look at the positive changes in the world, we see that the youth has always played a big role in social reforms, political revolution or scientific
discoveries. These youths always come forward in disasters, in bad or good times. In case of Bangladesh, this role is even wider. The invincible youths of this country have also erected the luminous ladders of our history. They will come forward, will become vocal, and Bangladesh will emerge victorious against all injustices, irregularities and corruption. For this reason, the participation of youths in the anti-corruption activities of this country is most urgent.

A major portion of the social demand that has been generated in Bangladesh against corruption comes from the youth. Just as the youths want to see their student-life free from the harmful effects of corruption, similarly they expect their future professional life to be free of corruption. The youth themselves would have to come forward for materialising this expectation. Just as they have repeatedly proved their strength, similarly, they have to prove once again: we have succeeded, we shall prevail, and we shall not be defeated. The anti-corruption movement may not require any revolution. The youth can carry forward this movement from their respective positions. They can take up anti-corruption programmes by forming groups. They can keep their guardians with them. If these programmes are carried forward, then one day these would take the shape of a massive social movement against corruption.

However, TIB has already erected a big platform for engaging the youth in anti-corruption activities. The participation of youth at national and local levels has been ensured from the very inception of TIB’s movement against corruption by giving due consideration to the roles of the youth alongside the civil society in this movement. At the local level, the volunteers are conducting various anti-corruption activities under the guardianship of CCCs within the purview of YES. Besides, the TIB is running various programmes with the involvement of youth at the national level. The main objective of these is to make the youth conscious about the issues of corruption and good governance. The goal of these programmes is to erect a platform for the youths so that they can play an active part for carrying forward the anti-corruption movement. The spontaneous participation of the youth in the anti-corruption programmes is a source of inspiration for advancing the social movement against corruption being waged by TIB. These initiatives by the youths have set examples in many instances.

Rangpur has set an example on how the society can be benefitted from knowledge about the services rendered by service-delivery organisations. The price of ticket for outdoor patients of Rangpur Medical College Hospital was fixed at Taka 5.50. But Taka 6 used to be collected from the patients on the plea of not having change. As a result, the 50 paisa used to go to the seller. This was noticed by the YES group of CCC Rangpur. They published a fact-sheet on the subject on 30 April 2006. It provided important information about the service-fees of the medical college as well as the investigation and emergency departments. It was distributed in Rangpur town. Campaign on the issue was also undertaken at the compound of Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Through this campaign, the patients or service-recipients could get correct information. As a consequence, they protested and refused to pay extra money while buying ticket. When the matter came to the notice of the hospital authorities, they issued an order (memo no.- rachimoha/rang/rasha/06, date: 24/5/2006), which fixed the price of ticket at Taka 6 but stipulated that the additional 50 paisa would be deposited each day at Social Welfare Department through receipts, which would be used for the welfare of poor and distressed patients.

If the matter is reviewed, it is seen that around 750 tickets are sold each day at the out-door (according to the ticket-seller). On the basis of this estimate, an additional Taka 375 (50 paisa per ticket) is deposited every day at the Social Welfare Department. In one year (except Fridays), this would total Taka 1 lakh 17 thousand 3 hundred 75. The YES members have followed it up since the decision was taken and till now around 2500 patients have received assistance from the Social Welfare Department.

The YES members of TIB took many such initiatives which are worth emulation. These may appear to be small, but a social movement is the combination of many such occurrences. TIB is always ready to provide as much assistance as possible to any such anti-corruption work of creative nature of youth. TIB believes that by removing the blemishes of the present, the youth can kindle the light of hope for the future. All good initiatives of the youth have been commended by all at all times. They received everybody’s support. We therefore should have faith that the invincible youth shall surely resist corruption. Only then would it be possible to build a corruption-free society.

Shamim Iftekhar, Advocacy Officer, TIB
(The article was read out at the seminar held in collaboration with TIB and Youth Rights Alliance on the occasion of International Youth Day.)
A discussion meeting on ‘Cartoons for raising mass awareness’ was held at the conference lounge of National Press Club in Dhaka on 22 August. Eminent cartoonist and city editor of the Daily Star Sharier Khan presented the paper titled ‘Cartoons in creating public opinion’ at this discussion organised by the TIB. At the commencement of the programme, the cover of the compilation ‘Cartoons Against Corruption’ was opened. It included some anti-corruption cartoons drawn by famous cartoonists of the country and prize-winning cartoons selected from the anti-corruption cartoon competition organised by TIB. Artist Professor Rafiqun Nabi (Ranabi) presided over the programme; cartoonist Ahsan Habib was the chief guest while Professor Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam of the English Department of Dhaka University was present as special guest. Those who participated in the discussion included renowned cartoonist Shishir Bhattacharya, Ahsan Habib, Asiful Huda, Bipul Shah, Manik-Ratan and many others.

Referring to cartoons as a courageous tool against social anomalies, discriminations and deprivations, the discussants said that many cartoonists are today considering corruption and politics to be synonymous. But the cartoons have never knocked down anybody either in the past, or in the present, rather they generated awareness. Many cartoons create sensation in society as they carry messages instead of incidents. Mentioning cartoonists as the agents of positive change in society, they further said that the main objective of cartoons was to give people pleasure. But side by side with giving pleasure, it played an important role in pointing out anomalies of society. It can be said in this context that the impact of political cartoons is maximum, because cartoons play a powerful role in the transformation of political landscape. Although a timely cartoon may not be able to bring down a government, it can go very near to it. Those who took part in the discussions included member of the advisory council of TIB Trustee Board Jahanara Nawshin, media personality Shankor Sawjal and the TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.

Words are depicted through cartoons. These can easily communicate with the uneducated people. Even for those who have less time for in-depth reading or those who are not interested to read, an easy medium for making them comprehend is cartoon. Cartoons contain a mixture of humour which people like.

Today, most of the newspapers publish cartoons on the first page. Cartoons also play a role in beautifying newspaper layout alongside providing meaningful information to the readers. This can be termed a new addition to structural improvement of newspapers. Cartoons is so much popular now that most of the newspapers have either regular workers or assistants as cartoonists.

Use of cartoons was started on a large scale during the post-independence period of Bangladesh. Various contradictions present in society were presented in a satirical form through cartoons published in some newspapers. In the absence of freedom of opinion during the autocratic rule of Ershad in the 1980s, interest was generated for satirical works. At that time, satirical essays were published only in the weekly magazines. These essays had similar conceptual framework as that of cartoons. In true sense, after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the newspapers started to publish more critical reports, editorials and commentaries than at any time in the past. This was the right time for publishing cartoons in the first page.

These cartoons are serving as inspiration during the current anti-corruption campaign. The cartoons published on first pages and accompanying reports year after year left deep imprints in the minds of the general public. The farces that the ruling party people and the powerful ones committed with the aid of legal and administrative system of the country were depicted quite well in the cartoons. The general masses would remember these episodes for a long time because of the presentation of corruption and political irregularities through humour.

Presently, a promising and young group of cartoonists as well as a readership of newspaper-cartoons have been groomed in our country. As cartoons are easy to comprehend and difficult to forget, they can provide information to the people through posters and exhibitions. The cartoonists can play an important role in reawakening of the degenerated values among the younger generation.

Sharier Khan, Eminent Cartoonist & City Editor, The Daily Star
(The article was read out at the discussion meeting on ‘Cartoons for raising mass awareness.’)
Information Flow and Women’s Rights

Shah Sajeda

In this golden age of knowledge, women are flying in the sky and crossing oceans. They are contributing to medical science by dissecting human bodies with their soft hands. They are battling on a routine basis to overcome the mountains of hindrances and to prove themselves as efficient and qualified persons. Against whom is this battle – individuals, family, society or the state? Universal and fundamental human rights are applicable for all. Even then, why do this repression and deprivation of women continue, especially in third world countries?

Darkness descends on the lives of a mother and the yet-to-be born child the moment it becomes known that the mother’s womb carries a daughter. This lady does not get any opportunity or assistance from the father, the husband or even the son for conquering her fate. She does not have the right to speak or decide on family or social matters. The organizations or mass media which are known to be progressive in this country become vocal only when International Women’s Day arrives on 8th March. They then highlight the marginalised condition of women, speak about their fundamental rights. But the subject again takes a back-seat after some time. The country has law, constitution, even the right to know. Right to know is a fundamental right of women, a human right. Despite that, womenfolk continue to slide towards the margin under the prevailing political, economic and social system of the state, because of insufficient knowledge about the laws and regulations of the country as well as their wrong application. And multidimensional repression and violence against women within and outside houses continue to rise. It is not that women have not advanced in some areas. But the degree of progress has not been sufficient in comparison to the present state of civilization. Sufficient opportunity has not yet been created for enriching womenfolk with the knowledge-base needed for effectively facing the rules and regulations of society cum state as well as prevailing social behaviour.

One of the episodes of ‘Meena’ cartoon series produced by UNESCO is ‘downy’. A girl named ‘Tara’ would be married to a nephew of a rich man of the village. The boy lives in the town – and judging from his dresses and manners, looks spoiled. The boy’s family demanded a fat sum from the girl’s father as dowry. The family-members were passing through restless and disquieting days due to this. At one stage, the boy said to his uncle, “Uncle, do you know that giving and receiving dowry were both punishable offences”? Laughing sarcastically, the uncle replied, “I know, but the village-people do not know about it. Therefore, we can demand dowry as we wish”. Oh, what an irony! One group makes mistakes without knowing, and the other group is committing crime despite knowing. Because of the weaknesses in flow of information on life, livelihood and human rights, the opportunists are deriving benefits on the one hand and the general people or the relatively poorer and weaker classes – a large segment of whom are women – are being deprived on the other.

Question may be raised, when women in a country do not have the right to speak or decide inside or outside house, or do not get the chance to do so, what would they do with the right to information? But the right to state-information is an identical right for all citizens of a civilised society. Free flow of information opens up opportunities for people to think, teaches them to consider, encourages them to establish their rights. As an extension, the intensity of violence against women can be reduced considerably through free and correct flow of information and proper application of law. In most countries of the third world, the general masses remain far away from information about legal assistance in almost all areas including health, environment, trade-commerce, purchase-sale, investment, properties, land, education, ration, marriage-divorce, repression and dowry. The situation is even more precarious for womenfolk, who are more common than the commoners, weaker than the weak.

‘Save the environment’ is a strong movement of conscious civil society all over the world. Our country also does not lag behind. There are strict laws for saving the environment. The law for stopping violence against women is also quite stringent. But the concerned authorities are not very keen about applying this law. On the other hand, it is also true that women have an intimate relationship with nature. But in our country, a majority of womenfolk lack opportunity to gain knowledge about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of environment. Recently, various non-government organizations have undertaken some awareness-raising programmes on these subjects, especially for rural illiterate women. The families, society and state would one day derive benefit out of it. Many people already know about the harmful effects of tree-cutting and economic benefit of tree-plantation. But the women community, a large segment of our human resources, remain outside consideration.

The number of deprived women, children and mothers in our society is quite substantial. The maternal mortality rate is also quite high. The incidence of dowry is on the rise as well. Cruelties like acid-throwing are increasing. Girls and young women are being trafficked everyday. Many are being forced to engage in immoral or risky professions after falling into fraudulent traps due to poverty and uncertain future. These result in physical and mental devastations. Many are infected with deadly diseases like AIDS. Many perish prematurely due to lack of knowledge about health-awareness issues.

Health-awareness subjects should be included in the syllabuses of our text books. If people are aware about laws and punitive provisions related to education, health, environment, women and child trafficking, dowry, acid-throwing, etc., then they can become alert on the one hand and scope is created on the other for a decline in criminal tendencies. ‘Should know if you want to live’ is a popular slogan of the present times. But the conscious civil society will have to take the responsibility of creating opportunity for knowing.

The world is within our grasp today due to modern information technology. But not all ten sides are open for the womenfolk. As a result, overall social development is being hampered. The nation would get conscious, educated and responsible mothers if they can participate in free and proper flow of information. The future generation would be groomed properly under the shade of their supervision and affection. The nation would expect a corruption-free well-governed society from them.

Shah Sajeda, Convener of Gender Sub-Committee and member, CCC, Barisal
Theatre is a powerful medium for generating awareness against corruption and as an easy means for communicating with the people. The peoples theatre groups formed in CCC areas through the initiative of TIB have been staging theatre-shows regularly with the slogan 'Theatre against corruption'. They have received a very good response from the audience. Till now, 34 peoples theatre groups have been formed in 34 CCCs; 32 production based theatre workshops have been organised with the supervision of concern CCCs.

A production based theatre workshop of the peoples theatre group of CCC Comilla was held at the Comilla Rotary Club between 22 and 27 July. The production at the workshop dwelt on corruption in the health, education and police departments as well as drugs. A technical show of the production titled ‘Samayer Dak’ (Call of the time) was staged on 27 July evening. The production based workshop of peoples theatre group of CCC Brahmanbaria took place between 15 and 20 July. The theme of the play was corruption in health, education and police administration as well as drugs. A technical show of the play titled ‘Ekhon Samay’ (now is the time) was staged on 20 July. The production based workshop of peoples theatre group of CCC Satkhira was held between 21 and 26 July. The play titled ‘Banchtey Chai’ (Want to live) was staged on the last day of the workshop on 26 July. A 6-day long production based workshop was held at Kushtia Cooperative Building between 23 and 28 August under the aegis of CCC Kushtia. The issues which were covered by the drama included, corruption in the health and education sectors, corruption in police administration and drugs. The drama was titled ‘Din Badaler Pala’ (Time for changing the days). It was staged on the last evening of the workshop in presence of CCC members and invited guests. The theatre workshop of the CCC Rajshahi was held between 28 June and 3 July. The name of the drama produced at the workshop was ‘Manushrey nia manusher khela’ (Man’s game with man). It was staged on 3 July. The production based theatre workshop of peoples theatre group of CCC Chapai Nawabganj was held on 12-17 July at local District Council premises. The drama titled ‘Durnity ar na’ (No more corruption), which dwelt on the education and health sectors, was staged on 17 July on the last day of the workshop. The production based theatre workshop of peoples theatre group of CCC Lalmonirhat was held during 17-22 August at local OVA Training Centre. The drama titled ‘Banchar Larai’ (Struggle for survival) was staged on the last day of the workshop. The workshop of the peoples theatre group of CCC Jhalakati took place at Jhalakati Sports Association premises between 2 and 7 July. Dwelling on corruption in various sectors, the drama titled ‘Amra korbo joy’ (We shall overcome) was staged on 7 July. The production based theatre workshop of peoples theatre group of CCC Pirojpur was held on 1-6 September. Technical show of the drama ‘Durnitir Dushshamoy’ (Bad time for corruption) took place on 6 September.

A total of 144 theatre activists participated in these workshops. The male-female ratio was 3:1 (108 and 36 respectively).
Notable Activities in CCC Areas

**Freed from the land-robbers, Chandana River now belongs to the common people**

Once Chandana was a beautiful river of Lalpur upazilla area under Natore district. But it is now drying up in such a way that it is becoming a rice-field. Innumerable people who used to live on the banks of this river and whose livelihood depended on its flow are now struggling for survival.

Some people whose lives were threatened because of this setback for Chandana river came to the Advice and Information Centre Desk of CCC Natore for assistance. They informed the CCC that this river was declared dead and fit for rice cultivation as khas land through a land-survey of 1968. Although some individuals gave the landless people permission to cultivate in the name of assisting them for getting permanent settlement on the basis of government policy, they sold the remaining khas lands of the river through corruption and presently those persons owned those lands. As a consequence, these land-owners were stopping jute production until their dues were paid. They are not allowing the livestock of farmers to graze on a vast stretch of that land and not even allowing them to take bath.

On behalf of the victims, the CCC members took up the matter with the local administration, especially to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Lalpur upazila. He inspected the river area and reviewed the land survey documents for solving the problem. He found that the river was unfairly declared dead during the survey; this was done because of the ploys of those people who were involved with occupying much of the river-land through corruption. A decision was therefore taken to undertake a legal challenge against the individuals who were claiming ownership of the river and the process by which the land was declared as khas land. The people of Lalpur are now happy at the return of the Chandana river to the common people with the help of CCC members. They are now determined to protect the river as the centre of their livelihood and day-to-day activities and to restore its heritage.

**Exemplary joint initiative of Rajendrapur Union Parishad and CCC Rangpur**

The Rajendrapur Union Parishad arranged a Face the Public meeting with the people through the initiative of CCC Rangpur and identified their problems and expectations. Many expectations of the union inhabitants have already been realized. Now, gambling does not take place openly. Seventy percent roads of the area under the up’s jurisdiction have been repaired. The parishad has taken initiatives to save the ordinary people from the clutches of money-lenders. Exhibition of pornographic VCD has now declined. Initiative has been taken to involve the youth as volunteers for development of the union.

**Anti-Corruption Slogan and Cartoon Competition held in Faridpur**

An anti-corruption slogan and cartoon competition was held on 1st and 10th July under the aegis of CCC-Faridpur for raising involvement of the local people in anti-corruption activities and generating demand against corruption. More than 137 students of nine secondary educational institutions of Faridpur town took part in the competition. Of them, ten were awarded prizes. Intense hatred against corruption was expressed from the depths of their minds by those who participated in the anti-corruption slogan and cartoon competition. After the conclusion of the competition, initiative was taken to exhibit the slogans and cartoons in various schools on 24 July. Exhibitions were held on the premises of Sarada Sundari Girls High School, Sarada Sundari Women’s College and Faridpur Zilla School.

**‘Shawjan Sabha’ of CCC Chapai Nawabganj**

Our dearest motherland has been overwhelmed by limitless corruption. The CCC Chapai Nawabganj has therefore formed ‘Shawjan’ (citizens for transparency) consisting of 36 honest, transparent, renowned and anti-corruption well-wishers with the pledge of ‘we shall free this country together from the clutches of corruption and make it a cherished island of integrity’. The first meeting of ‘Shawjan’ took place on 29 September in its office located at Bara Indira Corner. The CCC convener Adv. Abu Md. Saiful Islam Reza chaired the meeting. Those who took part in the discussion included CCC Chapai Nawabganj Adviser Alhaj Dr. Sirajuddin and Principal Sairdur Rahman, Humayun Kabir, Naimul Bari, Walil Azim, Rahima Khatun, Monowara Khatun, Golam Sarwar Pintu and others from among ‘Shawjan’ members.

**Hundred percent registration of births completed at Bagerhat**

One Hundred percent birth-registration has been completed at ward no. 4 of Karapara union under Sadar Upazilla through the YES group of CCC Bagerhat. The programme was conducted between 14 and 17 July. The YES group members went to each of the houses, filled up birth-registration forms and then handed those over to UP chairman Rafiqul Islam Rumi. Through these birth registrations, 18 citizens’ rights of the ward-inhabitants have been ensured. Notable among these are admission of children in schools, opening of bank account, issuance of passport, taking utility connections, trade licence, driving licence, etc. The citizens of ward no. 4 expressed their gratefulness to the CCC Bagerhat for this programme of the YES group.

**Human chain programme at Jhenaidah**

A rally and human chain programme was held under the aegis of CCC at Jhenaidah on 27 October for protesting corruption and generating awareness on the issue. The rally went round important thoroughfares of the town carrying festoons inscribed with anti-corruption slogans. The human chain was formed at post-office corner of the town after the rally. The members of the CCC, YES group and eminent persons participated in the programme. An anti-corruption
Chairman face the people in Sylhet

The Chairman of Khadimnagar Union Parishad of Sylhet Md. Sirajul Islam attended Face the Public Programme on 12 September. The CCC Sylhet organised this exceptional programme with the goal of ensuring transparency and accountability in the local government system. People of the area highlighted their problems to the Chairman and wanted to know about future development plans. The Chairman listened to them and gave answers to their queries. He highlighted the successes achieved in the past and explained the reasons for previous failures. He sought the opinions of local people about future development programmes and role of the union parishad. He assured them about solving their problems on a priority basis. Chaired by the CCC Convener Advocate Emad Ullah Shahidul Islam, the address of welcome was delivered at the meeting by the former president of Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry Faruk Mahmud Chowdhury. CCC member Lakshmi Kanta Singh also spoke. Held at the office of Khadimnagar Union Parishad, all walks of people including a large number of women were present along with the others.

Blood Bank at Sunamganj Sadar Hospital through the initiative of YES

There is no blood bank at Sunamganj. The patients have to face problem in case of urgent need for blood. To solve this problem, the YES members of CCC Sunamganj have set up a mobile blood bank, so that the poor patients can get blood free of charge. Notable improvements have now taken place in the quality of hospital services after release of a report card by the CCC on healthcare services of the hospital through effective role played by YES members. The hospital authorities have now fixed the time for entry of medical representatives in hospital after 1 pm. Initiative has been taken for setting up an information board and a list of doctors in order to provide information about services to be received by the recipients.
Anti-Corruption Programme at Kishoreganj

An opinion-exchange meeting dubbed ‘Role of women in curbing corruption’ was held on 6 September under the aegis of CCC Kishoreganj for raising involvement of women in the anti-corruption movement. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahnawaz Dilruba Khan was present in the meeting as Special Guest. Another view-exchange meeting titled ‘Views of the present generation on curbing corruption’ was arranged on 7 September for motivating and initiating the youth of Kishoreganj town in anti-corruption ideals. Chaired by the CCC Convener Advocate Ashok Sarkar, Additional Police Superintendent M. Mustafizur Rahman was present at the meeting as Chief Guest. The opinion-exchange meeting styled ‘Role of SMC in improving the quality of primary education’ was held on 8 September. Former Adviser of the caretaker government and the Treasurer of TIB Trustee Board M. Hafizuddin Khan was present at the meeting as Chief Guest. The Principal of Kishorganj RS Ideal College Gulshan Khan was present at the meeting as Chief Guest. The Principal of Kishorganj RS Ideal College Gulshan Khan was present at the meeting as Chief Guest. The Principal of Kishorganj RS Ideal College Gulshan Khan was present at the meeting as Chief Guest. The Principal of Kishorganj RS Ideal College Gulshan Khan was present at the meeting as Chief Guest.

‘YES group set up AI - Desk at Patiya Health Complex

YES group of CCC Patiya hs set up Al-Desk on 8 and 9 July at the premises of Patiya Health Complex. The objective of this programme was to provide information and advice on various healthcare issues. The YES members informed the patients about fees for x-rays and various pathological tests, fees specified for use of ambulance, etc. Besides, a leaflet was distributed among patients on the basis of information obtained from hospital authorities.

Advice and Information Desk set up in Mymensingh

A Satellite Advice and Information desk was set up for publicising and distributing fact-sheet about the services rendered by school health clinic located on Boundary Road of Mymensingh town. The YES group of CCC Mymensingh undertook this initiative on the compound of Muslim Girls School and College on 13 September. The Principal assembled all students of school and college branches during Tiffin time and explained to them about the purpose of this campaign. Later, the YES members gave an explanation on why and how of school clinic and who can obtain services from it.

Findings of Report Card Survey on ‘Secondary Education in Chittagong City

The findings of the report card survey on secondary education in Chittagong City was released on 11 August at Engineer Abdul Khaque auditorium of Chittagong Press Club by CCC Chittagong City. It was aimed at putting forward effective recommendations at the level of relevant authorities, policy-makers and specialists for improving overall services and facilities after examining the management and quality of education of schools located in Chittagong City. Chaired by the CCC Convener Begum Mustari Shafi, findings of the survey was presented at the programme by the CCC member Dr. M Q Ohidul Alam. Apart from journalists, teachers of various schools and people from different walks of life were present. During the open discussion, the teachers made valuable suggestions for improving the quality of secondary education.

People’s Representatives Face the Public at Nalitabari

A ‘Face the Public’ programme on accountability was held at Muktijoddha High School of Char Ali Bazar with the participation of citizens belonging to various professions aimed at improving the services of union parishad at No. 4 Nalibab Union. Those present on the occasion included Upazila Nirbahi Officer Giasuddin Mogal, Officer-in-Charge on the police station Mortuza Ali Mia, CCC and YES members. The citizens wanted to know from the union parishad about mismanagement and lack of initiative by the union parishad on various services delivered by it and associated problems like cleanliness, drinking water and sewerage system, distribution of licences, mosquito eradication, controlling quality of food, lighting of lamp-post, etc. The UP Chairman replied to these queries. The speakers called for taking steps by the union parishad for resolving the problems and to discharge responsibilities with honesty and dedication. Emphasis was placed on solving the problems by collecting money for the purpose. In this regard, they called for collecting taxes from the local population and utilising them properly.

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On September 26, 2007 the Berlin-based international anti-corruption organization, Transparency International (TI) has released its annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2007. In a scale of 0-10, the index provides international ranking of countries in terms of perceived degree of prevalence of political and administrative corruption. The results show that Bangladesh has scored 2.0 points and has been ranked 7th from below, which is 162nd among 180 countries included in the index this year.

In the same position with the same score as Bangladesh are five other countries - Cambodia, Central African Republic, Papua New Guinea, Turkmenistan and Venezuela. TI organized a press conference at National Press Club for releasing the report.

It may be recalled that Bangladesh was earlier placed at the bottom of the list for the fifth successive year from 2001-2005. Last year Bangladesh was ranked in no 3. Notably, while most low scoring countries continued downward trend, and even many high-ranking countries also received lower scores in 2007, Bangladesh was successful in resisting this and has remained steady in score at 2.0. In this sense, Bangladesh has shown improved performance compared to 9 countries that formerly scored better.

This year Somalia and Myanmar have been ranked at the bottom of the list implying that in these two countries corruption is perceived to be highest, followed by Iraq and Haiti in the 2nd and 3rd positions respectively. In the 4th position jointly ranked are Uzbekistan and Tonga, followed by Sudan, Chad and Afghanistan in the joint 5th position while Democratic Republic of Congo, Equitorial Guinea, Laos and Guinea have been ranked in the 6th position.

At the other end, among countries where corruption is perceived to be lowest are Denmark, Finland and New Zealand sharing the top position with each scoring 9.4. Immediately following them is the highest ranking Asian country, Singapore, scoring of 9.3 jointly with Sweden.

Bangladesh’s ranking has improved from last year’s 3rd to the 7th this year, but the score achieved has remained steady at 2.0. This may be because of the following reasons.

Firstly, in terms of score, the index gives a 2-year rolling average. Data collected till the end July 2007 was included in this year’s index, which means that CPI 2007 was relatively more influenced by data from 2006.

Secondly, the index draws on corruption related data from expert and business surveys. Hence it is quite likely that a perceived sense of insecurity and uncertainty that is widely believed to have prevailed among the business community in the wake of the post 1/1 anti-corruption drive in Bangladesh may have prevented the possibility of a better score.

Finally, it has also apparently been too early for institutional reform measures initiated by the present government to influence CPI. Initiatives such as separation of the Judiciary, reform of the Election Commission, Anti-corruption Commission and Public Service Commission as well as making corruption punishable and ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption are likely to impact CPI only in the years to come when positive impact of such reforms would be more clearly discernible.

In any case, it should be emphasized that while other poor scoring countries continued downward spiral, Bangladesh was successful in remaining steady. As a result, Bangladesh beat 10 other countries that formerly scored better.

**Corruption, Poverty and Institutions**

The CPI presents a measure of perceptions of public sector corruption. It is a composite index that draws on 14 expert opinion surveys. Countries are scored on a scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating high level of perceived corruption and ten indicating low level of perceived corruption.

A strong correlation between corruption and poverty continues to be evident. Most of the countries belonging to
the low-income category have scored below 3, indicating that rampant corruption in such countries continues to increase poverty and prevent development.

On the other hand a number of relatively poor countries have managed to contain corruption to a degree, scoring well on the CPI, including Botswana, Cape Verde, Chile, Dominica, Estonia, Ghana, Samoa, Senegal, St. Lucia, and Uruguay. They prove that it is possible to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty and corruption. At the same time, troubled states such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, and Sudan remain at the very bottom of the index.

Low scores in the CPI indicate that public institutions are heavily compromised. The first order of business is to improve effectiveness of the institutions, especially transparency in financial management, from revenue collection to expenditure. Equally important is to put an end to the impunity of the corrupt.

**Corruption is a problem with global roots**

According to the index the divide in perceived levels of corruption in rich and poor countries remains as sharp as ever. The top scores of wealthy countries and territories, largely in Europe, East Asia and North America, reflect their relatively cleaner public sectors, enabled by political will, well-established conflict of interest and freedom of information regulations and a civil society free to exercise oversight. However, CPI's top scorers are also implicated in widespread corruption in developing countries. Bribe money often stems from multinationals based in the world’s richest countries. In addition, global financial centres continue to play a pivotal role in allowing corrupt officials to move, hide and invest their illicitly gained wealth. The CPI 2007 once again reiterates that the developed and developing countries must share responsibility for reducing corruption, in tackling both the supply and demand sides.

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**Table: Comparison of 17 Countries According to the Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2001 (91 Countries)</th>
<th>2002 (102 Countries)</th>
<th>2003 (133 Countries)</th>
<th>2004 (146 Countries)</th>
<th>2005 (159 Countries)</th>
<th>2006 (163 Countries)</th>
<th>2007 (180 Countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2.7 71</td>
<td>2.7 71</td>
<td>2.8 83</td>
<td>2.8 90</td>
<td>2.9 88</td>
<td>3.3 70</td>
<td>3.5 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2.7 71</td>
<td>1.2 102</td>
<td>1.3 133</td>
<td>1.5 143</td>
<td>1.7 158</td>
<td>2.0 156</td>
<td>2.0 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2.8 90</td>
<td>2.5 117</td>
<td>2.5 121</td>
<td>2.5 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2.3 79</td>
<td>2.6 77</td>
<td>2.5 92</td>
<td>2.1 129</td>
<td>2.1 144</td>
<td>2.2 142</td>
<td>2.4 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.7 53</td>
<td>3.4 66</td>
<td>3.5 67</td>
<td>3.2 78</td>
<td>3.1 84</td>
<td>3.2 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>6.0 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.3 84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**South Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2001 (91 Countries)</th>
<th>2002 (102 Countries)</th>
<th>2003 (133 Countries)</th>
<th>2004 (146 Countries)</th>
<th>2005 (159 Countries)</th>
<th>2006 (163 Countries)</th>
<th>2007 (180 Countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.6 129</td>
<td>1.7 142</td>
<td>1.8 155</td>
<td>1.9 160</td>
<td>1.4 179</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>1.9 122</td>
<td>2.0 133</td>
<td>2.2 137</td>
<td>2.4 130</td>
<td>2.3 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1.9 86</td>
<td>1.9 96</td>
<td>1.9 122</td>
<td>2.0 133</td>
<td>2.2 137</td>
<td>2.4 130</td>
<td>2.3 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>5.0 36</td>
<td>4.9 33</td>
<td>5.2 37</td>
<td>5.0 39</td>
<td>5.1 39</td>
<td>5.0 44</td>
<td>5.1 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>2.9 65</td>
<td>2.6 77</td>
<td>2.5 92</td>
<td>2.6 102</td>
<td>2.5 117</td>
<td>2.5 121</td>
<td>2.5 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>3.2 64</td>
<td>3.3 70</td>
<td>3.6 64</td>
<td>3.8 59</td>
<td>3.6 63</td>
<td>3.3 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>9.2 4</td>
<td>9.3 5</td>
<td>9.4 5</td>
<td>9.3 5</td>
<td>9.4 5</td>
<td>9.4 5</td>
<td>9.3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>7.9 14</td>
<td>8.2 14</td>
<td>8.0 14</td>
<td>8.0 16</td>
<td>8.3 15</td>
<td>8.3 15</td>
<td>8.3 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>5.9 27</td>
<td>5.6 29</td>
<td>5.7 30</td>
<td>5.6 35</td>
<td>5.9 32</td>
<td>5.9 34</td>
<td>5.7 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
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<td>4.5 40</td>
<td>4.3 50</td>
<td>4.5 47</td>
<td>5.0 40</td>
<td>5.1 42</td>
<td>5.1 43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not Included in the Scale
Members’ Day

‘Members’ Day - July 2007’ was held at TIB on 19 July. This event, held with the participation of TIB members and moderated by the Executive Director, was an open-house programme. At the beginning of the meeting, the TIB Executive Director made a short brief on the ongoing programmes of TIB for promoting good governance, transparency and accountability. He informed about the release of a number of investigative reports on organizations which are part of the national integrity system and the initiatives taken by the present caretaker government for institutional strengthening of these organizations in the light of those research. He also informed that the TIB and ACC (Anti-Corruption Commission) will work together for strengthening the movement against corruption. The members presented their well-considered opinions on the role of TIB in curbing corruption and establishing good governance from the policy up to the local levels as well as on the anti-corruption programme. Besides, spontaneous discussion took place on how the members could actively participate for gearing up TIB activities. A recently produced documentary film on the AI-Desk was screened after this meeting, which took place at the TIB office.

Post Box

Participation of the youth

‘Our student community is harmed most due to corruption. So the time has come now to combat it; to resist it. The student community has to come forward in this resistance, because the blight of corruption has not yet touched their intellect. I convey my sincere thanks to the chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Lt. General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury for making such a comment about the student community. I believe, alongside guardians, text-books of schools, colleges and universities can generate awareness against corruption. So, let ‘Invincible youth shall surely resist corruption’ be our only pledge. TIB has created unique opportunities for involving the country’s youths in anti-corruption activities, inculcating anti-corruption values, generating awareness and ensuring their active participation in anti-corruption movement. I thank TIB for that.

Amit Banik, YES Member Kishoreganj

Drive Against Corruption

The ongoing drive against corruption has brought relief to the countrymen. The institutions which were supposed to play an active role in curbing corruption were mostly ineffective in the past. The people were expecting a well-governed Bangladesh. An active Anti-Corruption Commission, effective parliament, neutral Election Commission, independent Public Service Commission etc. were needed for this. The present caretaker government has taken various steps for reform of these institutions. They are waging a campaign against corruption. I extend my thanks for writing about these in the cover-story of April-June’07 issue of TIB Newsletter.

Farhana Azad, Golapbag, Dhaka

Executive Editor : Mohammed Imam Uddin