now become corrupt in different ways. He was speaking as chief guest at a citizens’ meeting organised by Nalitabari CCC of Sherpur district on 25 December. Presided over by the CCC Convener M A Hakam Hira and held at the Taraganj Pilot High School, the theme of the meeting was ‘human rights and corruption’. Chairman of the TIB Board of Trustees Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid and educationist Nurjahan Murshid were present as special guests at the meeting. In his speech, the TIB Chairman said that the structure of our state would be destroyed if the people lose faith in the courts.

Nurjahan Murshid said that it would be possible to achieve success if the movement for rule of law and human rights could be taken to the grassroots. Others who spoke on the occasion included Professor Prohat Chandra Paul, Enayet Hossain, Maolana Abul Mobarrak, Moshtak Habib and Zakir Hossain. The programme was conducted by Samedul Islam Talukdar.

Before the citizens’ meeting, the guests visited the ancient Saint Leo’s Church at the tribal village of Baromari, 15 kilometres from Nalitabari. There, the Garo tribal community, who are also Christians, warmly welcomed them on the occasion of Christmas. The tribal boys and girls received the guests with traditional songs and dances.

entries invited from journalists for investigative journalism award 2003

Transparency International Bangladesh has invited entries from journalists for participating in its Investigative Journalism Award-2003. The reports have to be published in any Bengali and English daily during the period 1 January to 31 December 2002. The submitted contribution will be judged on the basis of its revelation of either systematic corrupt practices or mal-administration. Each prize carries a cash award of Taka 50,000 (fifty thousand). The entries have to be sent to the TIB office (Transparency International Bangladesh, Progress Tower, House-1 (5th & 6th floor), Road-23, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212) by 31 May 2003.

the structure of our state would be destroyed if the people lose faith in the courts.

-Prof. Khan Sarwar Murshid Chairman, TIB

in Russia

The Railways Ministry in Russia illegally paid top employees nearly $15 million last year, according to the government’s budget watchdog. In October 2001, then Railways Minister Aksyonenko was charged with abuse of office and accused of misappropriating 70 million rubles ($2.33 million). The ministry had used state money to buy apartments for top ministry officials. An investigation into the case is ongoing.

Source: Saint Petersburg Times, 11 February 2003

Corruption in recruitment of manpower for the port

A huge commotion has been created due to unprecedented corruption resorted to by a top official of Chittagong port and some CBA leaders centering on the recruitment of manpower. Recently, 43 junior operators and some crane operators were recruited in exchange for one crore taka. A top official appointed to the port has already collected Taka 30 lakh through illegal incomes.

Source: The Daily Janakantha, 17 February 2003

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brokerage in passport office

A dismal situation is prevailing in the Sylhet passport office due to rampant corruption, scourge of brokers, lack of adequate space and manpower. The people who come for obtaining passports face harassment in different ways due to a powerful nexus between the officers-employees of the office and the travel agents and brokers.

Source: The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, 18 February 2003

medicine company accused of bribery

New York state legal authorities on 13 February accused the drugmakers Aventis, GlaxoSmithKline, and Pharmacia with fraud and bribery schemes to inflate prices for consumers and government health plans. Eliot Spitzer, New York Attorney-General, filed a lawsuit against UK-based GSK and US-based Pharmacia on 13 February, alleging they negotiated kickbacks with doctors and pharmacies for using their drugs. All three companies deny any wrongdoing and point to the odd complexities of the government pricing system. They vowed to “vigorously defend” themselves in court.

Source: The Financial Times, 14 February 2003

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Source: The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, 18 February 2003
A workshop on ‘Corruption and Transparency’ was held on 12 January under the auspices of a news agency called News Network. The speakers at the workshop opined that an independent anti-corruption commission must be constituted for curbing and containing corruption. Held at the capital’s CIRDAP Auditorium, the keynote paper presented at the workshop was by TIB Executive Director Manzoor Hasan.

In the paper titled ‘A Clear Choice for Bangladesh: Transparency or Corruption’, Manzoor Hasan said that although much progress has been achieved in some areas during the past few years, Bangladesh is still one of the poorest countries in the world. We cannot change our lot for various reasons including confrontational politics, deterioration of law and order and widespread corruption. Quoting from various national and international research surveys, he said that good governance has to be ensured if we are to develop the country by keeping pace with the global scenario. Political will is essential to achieve this. He said that Bangladesh was once rich in resources, for which it could attract foreigners. There were many opportunities in the past for making progress, but nothing came out of that because of the failure of our political leadership. Eradication of poverty and sustainable economic development is not possible if we fail to remove the hindrances that stand in the way of good governance, he concluded.

Praising the keynote paper, the Country Director of the World Bank in Bangladesh Frederick T. Temple said that various reform measures would have to be undertaken to rid Bangladesh of corruption, including transferring the service organisations to the private sector, formation of an independent anti-corruption commission and separation of the executive from the judiciary. Chaired by Shahiduzzaman, Editor of News Network, the workshop was divided into two sessions. Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda was present as chief guest during the morning session while it was the turn of the workshop was presented by TIB Executive Director Manzoor Hasan.

Workshop: National Integrity Programme

A workshop on the National Integrity Programme was held at the hilly resort of Rangamati on 30-31 December 2002. All officials of TIB including the Executive Director Manzoor Hasan were present at the workshop. The Executive Director of NRT Dr. Sanaul Mostafa was present as the resource person. The main objective of the workshop was to review the successes and limitations of various TIB activities during the past three years and to determine the future direction of programmes in the light of those.

Discussion at Kathmandu

A discussion was held on the Civil Society of South Asia at the Nepalese capital Kathmandu under the auspices of UNHCR. Representatives from various human rights organisations of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and hosts Nepal took part in the 3-day deliberations between 16 and 18 January. Subjects such as ‘democracy and good governance’, ‘conflict and human rights’, ‘war against terrorism’, ‘globalisation’, etc. received priority during the discussions. The Executive Director of TIB Manzoor Hasan presented a paper on ‘Governance, Democratisation and Human Rights’.

DFID team inspection

A team from the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom visited Muktugachha to inspect the activities of the local CCC. They praised the efforts of the CCC members and the various programmes it undertakes for establishing good governance at the local level. Those present on the occasion included the TIB Executive Director Manzoor Hasan, Progranme Officer Ekram Hossain, the Convener of Muktugachha CCC Advocate Shamsul Haque, Chairman of the Municipality, various local government officials, teachers, social workers and almost all CCC members. The DFID delegation included Chief Governance Adviser Roger Wilson, Senior Adviser Leuk Mukubvu and Sector Coordinator Bea Parkes.

Group Discussion

A group discussion was held on 9 February 2003 at the TIB office in Gulshan on the Global Forum Country Study Report. Presided over by the Chairman of the TIB Board of Trustees Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, former Advisors to the Caretaker Government M. Hafizuddin Khan and ASM Shahjahan, TIB Trustee Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, former Member of Parliament Tasmina Hossain, member of the Public Service Commission Professor Mohabbat Khan, former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr. S A Samad, former Secretary Ahmed Farid and TIB Executive Director Manzoor Hasan were present during the discussion.
Meeting with railway authorities

The members of Jamalpur CCC sat at a meeting with the concerned authorities for raising the quality of passenger services at the Jamalpur railway station. Held at the office of the Station Master on 21 December, an 18-point recommendation was made on behalf of the CCC for checking black-marketing of tickets, unhygienic environment and lack of security. The authorities gave assurance that they would sincerely try to solve these problems. Officials including the Station Master Jainal Abedin were present on the occasion.

Publication of wall magazine

A wall magazine was published by the volunteers of Mymensingh CCC on the occasion of the glorious victory day. Stories, poems and articles on the liberation war and independence were included in the magazine.

Cleanliness day observed

Mymensingh: The Mymensingh CCC observed a ‘cleanliness day’ on 24 December with the objective of building a beautiful and clean town. Various programmes were taken up on the occasion. These included a colourful rally, cleaning dirty spots, distribution of leaflets, and pasting of posters on cleanliness. A colourful rally was brought out from the town hall at 9 a.m. in the morning which ended at the Amlapara municipal office.

Modhupur: The Muktagachha CCC brought out a colourful rally in the town on 10 December. Eminent citizens of the locality participated in it. The CCC also organised a discussion meeting on 11 December on the occasion. Professor Jotin Sarker presented a paper on the day’s theme. He stressed in his paper that human rights are violated due to corruption and lack of pragmatism. The speakers at the gathering called for implementation of universal declaration of human rights in all countries affiliated with the United Nations. Those who spoke on the occasion included Sasanka Mohan Dey, Advocate Sharafuddin Ahmed, A.K.M. Mahbubur Rahman (Bulbul), Khandaker Malek Shahidullah, etc.

Kishoreganj: A similar discussion meeting was held at Kishoreganj Press Club auditorium on 12 December under the auspices of the local CCC. The convenor of the CCC M. Khurshed Uddin Bhuiyan presided over this discussion meeting on the theme ‘human rights and corruption’. Discussions were held on the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the responsibilities and obligations of the state towards the citizens according to the Constitution and how corruption contributes to the violation of human rights in the context of Bangladesh.

governance. The people of the Union Councils should have a clear idea about their own responsibilities as well as the duties and responsibilities of the Council chairmen and members, so that the people can hold them to account if they fail to provide services.

The citizens’ meeting was held at the Akua Union Council office on 17 December. Presided over by CCC member A.H.M. Khalequzzaman, Advocate Emadul Hoque Millat, Sheikh Bahar Majumdar, freedom fighter Alhaj M A Halim Suruj, Manul Hossain, Kamrul Islam Chanchal and TIB Field Assistant Karuna Kishore Chakrabarty spoke at the meeting. The local people participated during the question-answer session of the citizens’ meeting. A 12-point recommendation was placed at the meeting on behalf of the CCC and TIB to ensure transparency in the workings of the Union Council. Around 70 citizens from various classes and professions, including members of the Union Council, teachers of schools and madrasas, members of the managing committees, Imams of mosques, businessmen and students participated.

Discussion meeting on the occasion of Human Rights Day

Transparency International Bangladesh and four Committees of Concerned Citizens jointly observed the World Human Rights Day-2000 at different places in December for generating public opinion on ‘how corruption becomes the cause of human rights violations’. The day was observed through holding seminars, citizens’ meetings, processions and publication of wall magazines.

Mymensingh: A discussion meeting was held at Mymensingh on 12 December on the occasion of World Human Rights Day-2002. The meeting was jointly organised by TIB and the local CCC. Presided over by CCC convenor Professor Shamsul Islam, the keynote paper was presented by Advocate Emadul Haque Millat, a CCC member. During discussions, the speakers said that corruption is one of the main reasons for frequent violation of human rights in our country. It is possible to curb corruption and improve the human rights situation through political goodwill. The meeting expressed deep sorrow at the loss of lives due to bomb explosions at four cinema halls of Mymensingh.

Muktagachha: The Muktagachha CCC brought out a colourful rally in the town on 10 December. Eminent citizens of the locality participated in it. The CCC also organised a discussion meeting on 11 December on the occasion. Professor Jotin Sarker presented a paper on the day’s theme. He stressed in his paper that human rights are violated due to corruption and lack of pragmatism. The speakers at the gathering called for implementation of universal declaration of human rights in all countries affiliated with the United Nations. Those who spoke on the occasion included Sasanka Mohan Dey, Advocate Sharafuddin Ahmed, A.K.M. Mahbubur Rahman (Bulbul), Khandaker Malek Shahidullah, etc.

Modhupur: The CCC of Modhupur organised a discussion meeting on 15 December on the occasion of the observance of World Human Rights Day. The meeting called upon all to ensure human rights in the country by eradicating corruption and to generate a new awakening in society against corruption. The discussants included Babul D. Nokrek, Bapi Siddiqui, Tanvir Ahmed, etc.

Kishoreganj: A similar discussion meeting was held at Kishoreganj Press Club auditorium on 12 December under the auspices of the local CCC. The convenor of the CCC M. Khurshed Uddin Bhuiyan presided over this discussion meeting on the theme ‘human rights and corruption’. Discussions were held on the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the responsibilities and obligations of the state towards the citizens according to the Constitution and how corruption contributes to the violation of human rights in the context of Bangladesh.
Another anti-corruption meeting was held at ward no. 1 of Mymensingh municipality on 23 December. Chaired by the Headmaster of Haji Usman Ali High School M. Ziaul Haque, a total of 80 citizens from various classes and professions participated in the meeting. Discussions were held on the functions of the municipality, duties and responsibilities of the chairman and ward commissioners, mass awareness and good governance at the local level.

Mass contact

The Modhupur CCC conducted a public relations exercise to inform the ward-level people about the huge losses incurred due to corruption. Held with the participation of eminent inhabitants of ward no. 4 at Modhupur, it reminded everybody about the harms caused by corruption to the state and the society as well as highlighting the duties and responsibilities of the state and called upon all to remain united against corruption. This meeting was held on 25 December 2002 at Charaljani government primary school, and was presided over by the ward commissioner. Local elite, teachers, politicians, public representatives, and many other people including members of the CCC and its convenor Professor Golam Samdani were present.

Conference of CCC volunteers

TIB has formed teams of volunteers in the CCC areas with the objective of motivating the youths against corruption. A conference of volunteers was organised by TIB on 13 December for introducing the teams of volunteers to each other, and for exchanging views and experiences regarding the activities they carried out in their respective areas as well as their future plans and programmes. Held at a place called ‘Jaloikot’ in ‘Dokla’ range of Modhupur forest, a total of 121 members including 84 volunteers from various CCCs participated in the conference. 21 CCC staff, 5 CCC members including the convenor of Modhupur CCC Professor Golam Samdani and the convenor of Nalitabari CCC MA Hakam Hira, and TIB Programme Officer Ekram Hossain participated in the proceedings. The CCC convenors delivered addresses of welcome for the attending volunteers. After the conference was over, the teams of volunteers put on a colourful cultural function that included rendering of anti-corruption songs in chorus. Assistant Programme Officer of TIB Samapika Haldar acted as the coordinator of this programme. The CCC convenor of Modhupur extended special assistance for the holding of the event.

Health-care services

Modhupur: The Modhupur CCC held a meeting with the authorities of Modhupur Health Complex with the objective of overcoming various irregularities including those related to services of physicians and nurses as well as the quality of tests and medical examinations. The authorities mentioned their limitations and various problems they themselves face. The citizens’ committee put forth some recommendations in this respect to improve the quality of services.

Kishoreganj: An exchange of views meeting was held on 21 December under the aegis of Kishoreganj CCC with the goal of improving the quality of health-care services. A 7-point recommendation was made at the meeting on behalf of TIB and the CCC to raise the quality of health-care services at Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital. Civil surgeon Dr. ABM Azizul Islam sought the cooperation of the citizens as well as the government for building a modern hospital. Those present at the meeting included among others Principal Jalal Ahmed, Advocate Bhupendra Bhounik Dolan, Amirul Islam and Nasiruddin Faruq.

Nalitabari People’s Theatre

Acclaimed by Chittagong Audience

Around a thousand spectators assembled at the Chittagong Shilpakala Academy auditorium to enjoy the presentation of an anti-corruption play staged by the Nalitabari People’s Theatre of TIB on 22 December. This captivating performance by the theatre group was presented on the last evening of the 2-day conference on ‘rights and development’ organised by the local NGOs of Chittagong. Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury of Chittagong was present as chief guest on this last day of the conference. The People’s Theatre received adulation of the spectators by performing both at Chittagong University and at Patenga sea-beach. The TIB officials and the artists of the theatre group sat at a meeting with the members of Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA) on 22 December to exchange views. Held at the BITA office at Mehdiabagh of Chittagong City, discussions were held during the meeting on future cooperation in addition to sharing experiences. BITA gave assurance of all-out cooperation in this regard. Akbar Reza and Saiful Islam of BITA, Media Outreach Relations Officer of TIB Mohammad Imam Mintu, member Md. Hamidul Islam and Drama Director Jewel Kabir were present.

People’s play ‘Caricature of Corruption’ staged

Two performances of the people’s play ‘Caricature of Corruption’ were presented on 25 December at Dapunia Bazar and Chukatala village of Mymensingh. Staged by the Muktagachha People’s Theatre group of TIB, this play depicted the irregularities, mismanagement and corruption of the police, education, health and forest departments as well as the chairmen of union councils. Around a thousand spectators enjoyed the shows.

Citizens’ meeting at Nalitabari

A citizens’ meeting was held on 20 December at the Zainuddin Para Government Primary School of Nalitabari Sadar union. Presided over by the retired headmaster of the school Shamsul Alam, a number of citizens belonging to various professions, including the CCC convenor M A Hakam Hira, participated in the meeting. It was arranged to provide a detailed idea about the responsibilities of the people living under the jurisdiction of the Union Council and the duties and obligations of the Council Chairman and members, so that people could demand services if the Union Council failed to deliver.
Global Corruption Report 2003
The corrupt are running out of places to hide from courageous whistleblowers and journalists

The Global Corruption Report (GCR) 2003 of Transparency International (TI) says, “The corrupt are running out of places to hide from courageous whistleblowers and journalists”. This report was formally released on 22 January 2003. It is the second of its kind published by the TI. The first report was published in 2001. In his introduction to the GCR, TI chairman Dr. Peter Eigen writes, “Freedom of information is not enough; however professionally and accurately information is processed, corruption will continue to thrive without the vigilance of the media and civil society, and the bravery of investigative journalists and whistleblowers.”

In his article ‘Access to Information: Whose Right and Whose Information’, Executive Director of TI Jeremy Pope writes, “Ordinary citizens need access to information. Without their access, however professionally and accurately information is not enough; however effectively it is disseminated. There is no one who can defend the people from the corruption of the government.”

An investigative report of the C&AG
Huge amount of audit objections cannot be met due to negligence of the government

The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) plays an important part in identifying the administrative and financial irregularities and corruption. But a huge number of audit objections cannot be resolved due to obsolete auditing process of the CAG, limitations of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament and negligence of the government. Although according to rules, the concerned ministry is supposed to submit their opinion within 90 days after the completion of audit, they invariably resort to procrastination. This fact has emerged from an investigative report on the office of the C&AG published in December 2002. Divided into 8 chapters including the working paper, this report discusses in detail the profile of the CAG office, legal obligations, main functions, linkage of the office with the parliamentary committee, reform measures, performance, budget and problems faced. The CAG office audits 22,885 administrative units of various ministries and divisions of Bangladesh government according to priority through its ten audit departments. But there is a dearth of skilled, experienced and trained manpower here, as a result of which it is not possible to prepare effective and good quality reports after auditing such a huge number of organisations each year. Due to a lack of qualified and experienced trainers and weak audit training curriculum, the Financial Management Academy (FIMA) cannot provide good quality training according to the requirements of the CAG office. This office is dependent on the Finance division and the Establishment Ministry for budgetary allocation and recruitment of manpower.

This audit institution not only unearth financial irregularities and corruption through audits, but the very existence of an auditing mechanism also acts as a deterrent against corruption in government offices. The idea that one has to face audit acts as a psychological barrier against committing corruption, as a result of which many people refrain from indulging in such acts. The report highlights these issues in detail.

TIB has published a working paper on how to infuse dynamism in the workings of the CAG office based on its investigations, which has been included in the last part of the report. It includes various recommendations on how to make the activities of the office of Comptroller and Auditor General more dynamic.

The Executive Director of TIB had written in the preface of the report, “We believe that this report conducted on the office of the CAG would help all quarters to know about the CAG office. We hope that all sections of people including the policy-makers of the government would give it careful consideration and utilise it to make the role of the CAG office more effective in order to ensure more transparency and accountability and curb corruption.

The second part contains 16 articles on access to information. The first part puts special emphasis on ensuring access to information. The second part contains specialist reports and articles on access to information. The second part contains 16 regional reports and evaluation of various countries of the world based on these reports. The third has analysed corruption at national level in the lights of local circumstances.

Professor Gurharpal Singh of Birmingham University has written the report on corruption in South Asia. Regarding Bangladesh, the report says that the present government published a white paper on the corruption of the previous government in 2002. The white paper has presented 40 major cases of corruption. But the present government kept the corruption and irregularities committed during its previous tenure out of the purview of the white paper. All cases pending against the politicians of the ruling party were also withdrawn. Although Bangladesh parliament had passed the Ombudsman Act in 1980, no appointment has been made to the post till now.
LETTERS

Reforming the police administration

The government had reposed the responsibility of combating terrorism on the joint forces due to the failure of the police. The police administration has much responsibility including maintenance of law and order in the country. The police force needs to be modernised in the light of existing socio-economic realities. Arrangements should be made so that people’s confidence in the police increases, and the government and the people can rely on them. For this, the police administration needs thorough reform. The editorial on this theme in the December 2002 issue was timely.

Abdul Matin
Poragagon, Nalitabar, Sherpur

When would the pledges materialise

Autonomy of the courts is required for ensuring good governance in the country; but we do not know when that would be possible. But the pledge that this government has made for separation of the judiciary from the executive, why has that faded now? When would the pledge that was made to the people be implemented? Would the present government give a transparent answer to this question?

Ashraful Haque Setu
Dhup, Khalifapara, Rangpur

Implementation of pro-people education policy

The rights of all people of the world has been recognised in the universal declaration of human rights, which is a milestone in the progress of mankind and an outstanding document of civilisation; it has placed emphasis on the need to make all segments of the country’s population educated. Immediately after independence, a pledge was made in the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh for free and compulsory education through establishing a pro-people and universal education system. It is a matter of great shame for us that half of the country’s population could not be educated in planned basic education even after three decades of independence. Many plans were adopted on paper, thousands of crores of taka were spent. But the darkness that pervaded the educational arena still remains.

Samon Saha
Ukilpara, Narayanganj

Reform of the judiciary

The country’s judiciary cannot ensure the rule of law spontaneously and neutrally. The integrity of the judicial system, especially of the lower courts is now being questioned. There is almost no supervision of the lower courts. The establishment of good governance would remain a mere dream if the whole system is not overhauled including the separation of the judiciary.

Kamrunnabar
Mirpur-11, Dhaka

Investigative report

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) makes necessary recommendations after examining the reports submitted by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, in accordance with section 233 of the Rules of Business of Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad. The activities of this committee are very important as action is taken after it reviews the irregularities and audit objections of various government offices in order to ensure accountability and curb corruption. TIB has recently released an investigative report on the Public Accounts Committee. The investigative research conducted by the TIB on the Public Accounts Committee has analysed the functions of the committee and its role in ensuring transparency and accountability and curbing corruption. At the same time, some recommendations have been made in the report in the form of a working paper with the goal of making the body more effective in the light of information gathered from the report.

The PAC lacks research facilities and a modern approach. Even when important recommendations of past reports are accepted, no result is ultimately achieved. There is also no arrangement for handing over charge to a new committee by the old. The committee can give recommendations after reviewing the audit reports, but does not monitor the implementation of those recommendations. As a result, even when recommendations are made regarding anomalies, effective steps cannot be guaranteed due to the callousness of the concerned ministries. It is not compulsory for the government to implement the recommendations and these are also not discussed in Parliament. The TIB report says that presently collections/adjustments are made to the tune of Taka 200 crore annually as per the recommendations of the government audits. 988 audit objections were resolved during 65 meetings of the PAC of the Seventh Parliament, as a result of which Taka 227 crore were deposited to the government exchequer and elaborate decisions were given regarding various audit objections.

It is expected that this report would be very helpful for the politicians, journalists, researchers, students and other interested people in knowing about the PAC. The price of the report is Taka 200.