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## NATIONAL

### TIB calls for effective and visible role of the opposition

Despite a decreasing trend, quorum crisis still remains a concern for the 10th Parliament- a recent Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) study revealed. The findings of the TIB study 'Parliament Watch' was released on July 7 in Dhaka. Estimated money value of the quorum crisis during the first session of Parliament was BDT 8.1 million, the study found out. Only 1.8 percent of total session was spent on formulation of laws - the key role of Parliament. The study also made 18 recommendations including opposition's visible role in making Parliament more effective.

TIB Research and Policy Division's Programme Manager Juliet Rosette and Deputy Programme Manager Morsheda Akther presented the findings of the study. Its Trustee Board Chairperson Advocate Sultana Kamal; Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Deputy Executive Director Dr Sumaiya Khair and Director of Research and Policy Mohammad Rafique Hasan, TIB were also present during the release.

According to the study overall attendance rate of Members of the Parliament (MPs) was 64 percent while the Leader of

the House and the Leader of the Opposition were present respectively in 89 percent (32 days) and 39 per cent (14 Days) sessions. Highlighting positive features of the first session, the study revealed that the main Opposition had not boycotted any session, but did not also raise voice on any issues of public interests like irregularities in public sector recruitment, board question-paper leak scandal, forgery in presenting gold mementos to honour friends of liberation war, unusual accumulation of wealth by aspiring MPs, false wealth statement in submitted affidavits etc.

Besides, both ruling and opposition MPs used un-parliamentary and vulgar words in criticising the opposition of the 9th Parliament. Though all parliamentary standing (51) committees were formed in the first session, none of the opposition MP was made chair of any committee. Pointing to holding positions in different standing committees by former ministers, the study said that it might create conflict of interest and hamper investigations, if any, against irregularities in ministry matters.

While commenting on the findings Advocate Sultana Kamal said, "The key responsibility of the parliament is to enact laws for public interest but sadly, the businessmen dominating this Parliament are spending only 2 percent time for this purpose." "Matters related to business are being dealt quickly", she added.

Criticising the role of the present Opposition, Dr Iftekharuzzaman urged them to play more visible role of opposition and uphold public interests to make Parliament more effective and turn it into the centre of accountability.

The study recommended among others, reducing the length of consecutive absence from parliamentary sessions from 90 to 30 days,

easily accessible disclosure of information related to attendance of MPs in sessions and standing committee meetings, and meeting



passing of Code of Conduct Act for MPs, holding parliamentary debate on international agreements, amendment of article 70 of the constitution to promote self criticism, free expression of thoughts and independent parliamentary voting, timely, organised and

decisions, introduce provision to inform the standing committee about ministry's decision on committee's recommendations, provision of abstaining from voting in meeting decisions in case of conflict of interest etc.

### **Diplomatic efforts for disbursement of Climate Funds stressed**

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) suggested forming a high powered commission to ensure governance in climate finance in Bangladesh. It also urged the developed countries to disburse the committed funds to tackle adverse impacts of climate change. These recommendations were tabled at the consultation meeting titled "Climate Finance Governance: Institutional and Practical Advancement, Challenges and Potential" on 9 July at the BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka.

Coordinator of TIB's Climate Finance Governance Project (CFGPP) M Zakir Hossain Khan presented a working paper at the consultation. Environment and Forests Minister Anwar Hossain Manju, MP attended the programme as Chief Guest while Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of Bangladesh Masud Ahmed was present as Special Guest. Chaired by TIB Trustee Board Chairperson Advocate Sultana Kamal, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman and Deputy Executive Director Dr Sumaiya Khair were also present.

The working paper identified some commendable steps by the government including formulation and up-gradation of

Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009, introduction of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) financed by domestic resources, introduction of Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) financed by donors etc. On the other hand the paper presented a sad picture of the fund disbursement status both in BCCTF and BCCRF. Under BCCTF--only U\$D 251.5 million against commitment of U\$D 350.60 million under BCCRF and U\$D 146.10 million against commitment of U\$D 188.20 million have been disbursed. Apart from inadequate disbursement, lack of coordination between BCCTF and BCCRF authorities, inadequate allocation for adaptation, unavailability of fund related information, political influence in selection of implementing organisation and project approval were among other challenges in ensuring governance in climate finance.

Taking part in the discussion, Project Coordinator of Community Climate Change Project Dr Fazle Rabbi emphasised on forming National Designated Authority and National Implementing Entity (NIE) for lobbying with donors to secure the committed fund. Additional Secretary of Ministry of



Environment and Forests Didarul Alom urged the CAG office to ensure more transparency in BCCTF through in-depth and proper audit. Executive Director of Institute of Water Modeling Prof Monowar Hossain said that Bangladesh had already shown its expertise in project formulation but lacks in implementation. He emphasised on extensive research to have better understanding on climate change impact. Jahangirnagar University teacher Sormindo Nilormi stressed on addressing gender sensitivity in project planning and implementation. Special Guest Masud Ahmed said that his office always puts emphasis on high risk and high value projects while conducting audit but not all climate projects need audit.

The Chief Guest Anwar Hossain Manju, MP said the ministry would do everything to ensure transparency and accountability in implementing climate projects. He added that limited domestic resource is not enough to combat climate change and therefore, coordinated efforts should be there to disburse fund against commitment made by developed countries.

Highlighting inadequate allocation for climate finance in 2014-15 budget, Dr Iftekharuzzaman urged the government to reconsider the allocation and increase it at the same time.



For better management ensure transparency and accountability in climate finance, the working paper also placed seven recommendations which include among others, a national authority to secure finance from Green Climate Fund (GCF), ensuring representation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in GCF decision making process, bringing of World Bank managed resilience fund related info under the jurisdiction of Right to Information Act and proactive and on-demand disclosure of project related information.

### **TIB for full implementation of automation in Chittagong Port and Custom House**

TIB proposed nine recommendations including full implementation of automation in export-import and duty assessment process at Chittagong Port and Custom House. These recommendations were tabled at the press launch of the study titled 'Automation of Export-Import in Chittagong Port and Custom House: Governance Challenges and the Way Forward' on 14 July 2014 in Dhaka. TIB Research and Policy Division Programme Managers Manzoor-E-Khoda and Juliet Rossette presented the findings of the study that analysed data collected during January – May 2014 period on Chittagong Port and Custom House. TIB Board of Trustees Member M Hafizuddin Khan, Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, and Deputy Executive

Director Dr Sumaiya Khair were also present.

According to the report, partial implementation of automation in Chittagong Port and Custom House marked some successes. For instance, clients now can locate a container by using mobile or internet - thanks to implementation of Container Terminal Management System (CTMS). Besides, they can submit Bill-of-Entry and Bill-of-Export through online from anywhere – thanks to the web based ASYCUDA World system. Some other positive achievements include auto generation of registration number (C number), automated duty assessment as per HS code, automated tax payment through online banking for non-commercial items, etc.

Despite these positive achievements, port users and stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction over the state of service delivery at Chittagong port and Custom House. They were skeptical about success of partial automation. One of the major objective of automation was to establish a paperless office, which is not attained and the provision of manual signatures is still mandatory at various stages of the business process in Custom House and port. Besides, the provision of online duty payment for commercial goods is yet to be placed. Around 60/70 illegally recruited personnel are working in the custom house premises as personal assistants of custom officials. In addition, lack of interest and technical knowledge of port employees on automation, provision of container stripping, unavailability of different modules of CTMS, ineffective use of CTMS modules are hampering the automation to run in full swing.

Apart from these challenges, the study also revealed illegal transactions of minimum 3000 Tk (35 USD) per consignment in assessment, additional 4000 Tk (50 USD) per container for physical examination if needed, at least 800 Tk (10 USD) per container to release from the port. The estimated total minimum money value of daily illegal transactions in Custom house is Tk 4.75 million and Tk 1.72 million in port during cargo releasing process.

Commenting on the governance challenges Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, “A vested group in collaboration with a section of port and custom officials is active against full automation and reaping financial benefits. This is ultimately contributing to further worsening the governance situation in Chittagong Port and Custom House.” “It is high time to bring the culprits into book and ensure exemplary punishment and thus establish governance” he added.

In order to address the governance challenges TIB recommendations among others include full and effective implementation of CTMS in port and ASYCUDA world in custom house by establishing connectivity with all concerned institutions, discontinuing the provision of container stripping inside the port, performance evaluation of officials and assess the effectiveness of automation by independent and impartial third party, adoption of training programmes to enhance technical skills of officials, exemplary punishment against illegal financial transactions, introduce and implementation of code of ethics for officials and their wealth disclosure etc.

## CCC NEWS

### **Orientation programme on Climate Finance Governance held at Barisal, Barguna and Patuakhali**

With a view to introduce climate finance governance mechanism in Bangladesh as well as aware stakeholders about TIB's initiatives for ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity in climate fund management, three orientation programmes were held in Barisal, Barguna and Patuakhali on 12, 13 and 14 July 2014 consecutively. Around 350 participants consisting Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) members, SWAJAN, Youth Engagement and Support (YES) members, YES Friends and students of different universities took part in these orientation programmes titled “Climate Finance Management in Bangladesh: Challenges and Prospect of Transparency and Accountability”

President of the CCCs inaugurated the orientation programmes and M Zakir Hossain Khan, Coordinator, Climate Finance Governance of TIB made key presentation on the global and national context of climate change impacts and its implications in climate finance mechanisms. In his presentation Zakir Khan highlighted the key challenges in climate fund flow from international and national sources as well as utilization by both government and NGOs/think tanks etc.



### **Barguna General Hospital to work more on improving quality of services**

Barguna CCC arranged an opinion sharing meeting with the General Hospital authority on July 22 at the hospital with a view to improve the quality of health services. The meeting was presided over by the CCC President Advocate Md Anisur Rahaman. Various problems including over charging of fees, insufficient sitting arrangement for female patients at the outdoor, unavailability of blood during surgical operations etc. were identified in the meeting. It was also discussed that a blood bank and enquiry desk should be established as soon as possible. Civil Surgeon Dr Anisur Rahman stated that they are trying their level best to provide highest level of services as per the available resources. He informed that they have already taken necessary steps to prevent illegal transactions at the outdoor and provide free ambulance services for poor pregnant mothers. He also assured to solve the problems identified in the meeting and thanked CCC for their participation and supportive initiative.

### **Munshiganj YES installed information board on Right to Information Act**

YES group of Munshiganj CCC installed an information board on Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 in the premises of Munshiganj High School on 23 July. Convener of YES Sub-committee Jahanara Khanom, Head Teacher Alauddin Dewan, former Head Teacher Kamol Chandra Aich and other teachers of the school were present during the installation. The main objective of the initiative was to create awareness on RTI Act 2009 and to inspire people for applying the law in their practical life. The board contains information on RTI application form, process of application, appeal process etc.



### **Baria Union Parishad shares annual budget – thanks to the CCC**

Baria Union Parishad (UP) of Gazipur shared their annual budget following an initiative of Gazipur CCC. The CCC in cooperation with the Union Parishad arranged a programme on 19 July at Baria Union Parishad Complex where its Chairman Md Habibur Rahman Khan



announced the 2014-15 budget amounting to BDT 2,01,46,097. People took part in the open discussion and shared their opinion on the budget. The Chairman also addressed some questions raised by participants and promised to solve those within the shortest possible time. He thanked the CCC for organising this programme and said that such initiative will help union to practice transparency and accountability and ensure people's participation.

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