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National News

Effective role of main opposition party is expected to ensure Govt's accountability

Regardless of increase of average meeting time and notable intensification of percentage of total time spent for legislative business than earlier, average upturn of member's attendance at each working day and comparative abatement of quorum crisis, shortage of expected efficiency in the parliament was observed in the research report titled 'Parliament Watch' of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), released in a press conference on 09 April 2017 in Dhaka.

13th of its kind and 3rd on the 10th parliament, the report was produced by Juliet Rossette, Programme Manager; Fatema Afroz and Morsheda Aktar, Deputy Programme Managers; and Amit Sarkar, Assistant Programme Manager of Research & Policy division of TIB respectively and prepared based on observation and analysis of the activities of 7th-13th sessions of 10th national parliament using both quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources during September 2015 – December 2016.

According to the report, the leader of the parliament was present in 86 work-days (84%) and the leader of the opposition was present in 85 days (83%). The report identified few positive changes of the current parliament that include average increase of working time of the session on each working day, increase of the percentage of the total time spent in legislative businesses, increase in the presence of the members, a little decrease of the average quorum crisis, avoidance of the boycott culture by the opposition, increased participation of the opposition in an effort to ensure the accountability of the government and constructive criticism of the government.

The primary sources of data used in the report included live broadcast of proceedings of 7th to 13th sessions of the 10th Parliament by the state-owned national television channel 'Sangsad TV' (Parliament TV Channel) and observations of parliament session by TIB research team being present at the sessions. Besides, the secondary sources include proceedings of the sessions and committee reports published by the parliament secretariat, government gazettes, parliament website, newspapers, books and articles.

According to the report, though the increase of total time spent for legislative businesses is significant, average time spent for passing a bill was not found noteworthy. On the other hand, some challenges are still prevailing. They include usage of unpalatable languages and demonstration of un-parliamentary behaviors in the

languages and demonstration of un-parliamentary behaviors in the speeches of treasury bench and the opposition towards the alliance or parties that have no representation in the house. Violations of the Rules of Procedure in the behaviors of some members during sessions were also observed.

The report also observed a lack of effectiveness from the Speaker to prevent un-parliamentary language and behaviors committed by some members in the house. International treaties and agreements that took place during the reporting period were not placed by the President for discussion. Members' participation in legislative businesses were not found remarkable.

The opinions and proposals put forward by the oppositions members were not given due cognizance. As the methods and processes to seek people's feedback on legislative processes have been quite deficient, people's participation in this regard has been limited. The recent incidences like heinous killings by terrorists, financial misappropriation and corruption taken place in different institutions were discussed in the motion of President's speech, budget discussion and point of order. However, discussions on these issues were not placed in the motion of public importance. Limited participation of female members in the meetings was observed in the motions on legislative businesses and question-answer. Besides, conflict of interest of some standing committee members, irregular meeting of the standing committees, absence of any specific timeline for implementing recommendations proposed by the standing committees, lack of disclosure and access to the information in parliamentary businesses (proceedings of the sessions) and committee information (reports) were some notable challenges prevail in the parliament.

At the press conference, Advocate Sultana Kamal, Chairperson; Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director; Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Deputy Executive Director; Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan, Director, Research and policy, of TIB along with the researchers of the report were



present. In the press conference, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, despite the issues i.e. increase of attendance of MPs in the sessions, increased amount of time spent in legislative business, comparative decrease of quorum crisis than earlier, augmented effort of women parliamentarians to play role in parliamentary programs, represent an outlook of mobility of parliamentary activities, there are prospects to progress more in each of the issues. He said, the opposition party has been failing at both inside and outside of the parliament due to its 'Dual status' as it has been a part of the government and also been playing the role of the opposition in the parliament at the same time and urged to refrain from the aforementioned role considering the real situation and the responsibility of representing people in the parliament. He further called upon relevant authorities to take the recommendations made by TIB i.e. abstain from using unpalatable languages and demonstration of un-parliamentary behaviors, consider the recommendations of parliamentary committees, reduce visible conflict of interests in the parliamentary committees and take steps to lessen deficit of parliamentary exposure.

Advocate Sultana Kamal called not discussing the details of agreements signed in and out of the country in the parliament as infraction of parliamentary program. To make the parliament more effective and ensure the visible representation of people in the parliament, she urged to make clear status of the opposition party, take the recommendations of committees into considerations and diminish the predominance of government over the parliament.

To strengthen parliamentary democracy and make the parliament operative and establish it as the center of accountability, the report made 11 point recommendations including upturn member's attendance in the parliament, disclosure of information, increase of people's participation in parliamentary activities, make the parliamentary committees operative. The notables, among others, are: take initiatives to re-table and enact the 'MPs' Code of conduct Bill' with the necessary modifications in the bill, strong role of the Speaker to stop uses of unpalatable languages and demonstration of un-parliamentary behaviors, make the positive practices of the main opposition active if they correct their status from dual role, make the parliamentary committees effective, and increase public participation in parliamentary activities through seeking their opinions on various phases of framing and reforming of draft laws or bills, and take necessary steps to place the international treaties for discussion in the Parliament following the Constitution. The details of the international treaties except the issues relating to national security should be disclosed in the Parliament website. etc. In this case, the official website of the parliament can be used. Moreover, the Petition Committee should be made effective. Besides, to make the Parliamentary Committees Effective, it recommends that the committee meetings should be held regularly as per the rules and The standing committees should be free from the conflict of interest according to the rules. Regarding Proactive Disclosure of Information, it recommends to allow public access to the information related to parliamentary activities including the attendance of the MPs, committee reports and parliamentary proceedings should be published in the parliamentary website regularly. All the information of the website should be updated; yearly Calendar of the parliament should be introduced.

Call on industrialized countries to implement the commitment of compensating countries affected by climate change

TIB called upon the industrialized countries to comply with their commitment of compensating the climate vulnerable countries including Bangladesh. Along with 10 points demand including providing compensation to the climate vulnerable countries by the industrialized countries in the form of grant which will be extra to development assistance as new commitment instead of loan, the call was made in a human chain organised by TIB held in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka on 30 April.

Arranged by TIB in solidarity with Peoples Climate March, an USA social movement to pressurize the Trump government to bring justice for the climate hit countries, the human chain was attended by TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, TIB members, staff and members of TIB's Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Groups participated in the human chain. TIB's 45 Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) across the country also arranged different programmes including human chain on the day.

Criticizing some recent questionable steps regarding committed climate financing taken by Donald Trump, president of the highest polluter country, the USA, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "if the USA backtracks from the Paris Agreement, the developing countries will be in a risk of facing extensive vulnerability. The USA's absence from climate financing will vastly harm the implementation of the Paris Agreement."

"As there is no unanimous definition of climate financing in the Paris Agreement, it is not clear whether the developed countries will provide compensation in the form of only grant as an extra to development assistance and new commitment instead of loan." Dr. Zaman said. He called on the Bangladesh Government to beef up diplomatic and international efforts to get compensation from the polluter countries. Dr. Zaman also urged the government to continue the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), increase the fund and implement climate projects by ensuring transparency and accountability.

At the same time, thousands of demonstrators assembled in number of human chains all across the country organized by CCCs marking Peoples Climate March 2017. CCC, Swajan, YES, YES Friends members, journalists, students, representatives of Civil Society, NGOs representatives and local peoples were present in attended the events.

The 10 points demand included among others: all industrialized countries must continue with their commitment as main carbon emitters to implement the Paris Agreement; ensuring legal binding for the commitment of financing to Green Climate Fund (GCF) by industrialist countries according to the Paris Agreement; and ensuring spontaneous openness of information, accountability, peoples' participation and integrity in the climate change fighting initiatives especially climate financing adopted by industrialist countries in the 'transparency framework' proposed in the Paris Agreement.

GoB urged not to legalize black money in the forthcoming budget

TIB expressed its grave concern in a statement regarding a demand placed by different organizations relevant to sectors including real estate to not disclose the source of invested money in any sector in the forthcoming national budget of 2017-2018 fiscal year and called Bangladesh government to refrain from providing such unconstitutional, unscrupulous and discriminatory opportunity.

In the statement released on 4 March, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB said, "Providing legality to black/undisclosed money is conflicting with clause 20(2) of constitution. This practice is also contrary to government's commitment in election and is equal to helpful in spreading corruption. Legalization of earning black/undisclosed money is not only unethical, but also it is evident from long term experiences that continuously providing such kind of unethical opportunity neither plays any positive role to country's economy nor in revenue collection. Besides, continuation of providing legality to black money is a distressing example of an effort of unsolicited influence by corruption supported quarter on Government's policy framework."

TIB believes that if current government, agreeing to such kind of unethical demand, allows such mentioned opportunity in the forthcoming budget, it will be a clear deviation from its commitments mentioned in the long term plan Vision 2021, 7th five-year plan and National Integrity Strategy. TIB urged government to announce a comprehensive declaration of prohibiting the opportunity of providing legality to black/undisclosed money forever.

Call for exemplary punishment of allegedly corrupted auditor and the perpetrators of OCAG

TIB urges to ensure exemplary punishment of the auditor of the Local and Revenue Audit Directorate of Office of the Comptroller and Auditor-general (OCAG), the constitutional institution of Bangladesh and relevant perpetrators maintaining proper process who recently along with other accomplices allegedly demanded five lac BDT bribery to Globe Soft Drinks Ltd, the manufacturer of Uro Cola.

According to reliable sources, a team of auditors from OCAG recently visited Globe Soft Drinks Ltd located at Tejgaon of the capital for inspection regarding cash incentive and the above-mentioned auditor allegedly demanded five lac BDT bribery to the company authority. Furthermore, later an internal investigation team formed by CAG in context of a complaint by the company regarding the issue came under number of resistance and compulsion by the mentioned auditor and his scheming cycle.

In a statement released on 15 April 2017, TIB expressed deep anguish and grave concern over the happening and urged the CAG to ensure the accountability and exemplary punishment through marking the mentioned auditor and his accomplices maintaining proper system. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB said, "it will be an impending disaster for the nation if constitutional institution OCAG being beyond fear or compassion fails to control such type of corruption. It will be extremely ignominious and very disappointing if such disgusting type of corruption prevails inside the institution and a pressing circle intends to dominate in defense of the corruption from within the institution which bears responsibility to play effective role in controlling and protesting corruption through auditing all the sectors and institutions directed by citizen's money."

The statement further carried, "By demanding bribery in the name of audit in one side and hampering the investigation procedure on the other side, a portion of OCAG officials is not only failing to carry on their duties, but also showing audacity to trampling the stature of this constitutional institution. TIB hopes that the Comptroller and Auditor-general will not allow any such attempt at all in any situation."

TIB thinks that the OCAG may call on assistance of relevant authority of government including law enforcement institutions and anti-corruption commission if needed. In the circumstances, OCAG requires special virtuousness activity to resist probable depletion and establish effective institutional governance, TIB Executive Director commented.

Enhancing skills of Journalists on investigative reports

TIB organized a daylong training workshop on investigative journalism on 27 April at TIB's Dhanmondi office. With participation of 15 local journalists, also Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) members of Comilla and Chittagong clusters, the training included different sessions titled 'general news versus investigative news: definition, characteristics and types', 'layers and strategy of investigative journalism', 'investigative journalism, right to know act and report corruption'.

Welcoming the journalists at the beginning, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman highlighted on continuous efforts of mass media and TIB in building a just society. Pointing the supplementary relationship between mass media and TIB, he stressed on continuity of the crucial role of media in reducing corruption through more investigative reports. He thanked all the trainees for their participation and wished the success of the workshop.

Robaet Ferdous, Associate professor of the department of the Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, and Dr. Rezwana-Ul-Alam, Director of TIB's Outreach and Communication division facilitated different sessions during the training. Freelance Journalist Julfikar Ali Manik, a renowned investigative reporter, shared his experienced in a session with the participants. In the conclusion, the journalists were awarded with certificates of participation.



Since 2010, as part of its capacity building goals, TIB has provided extensive number of trainings and workshops for around 450 journalists outside the Capital to produce investigative reports for making impacts in improving various governance deficits.

YES News

Daylong Programme with anti-corruption events organized by EWU-YES

Enthusiastic members and friends of YES Group-East West University (EWU) organized a bunch of anti-corruption events including seminar, cartoon and photo exhibition, game show, quiz competition and information desk on 9 April at the university premise. Dr. A Z M Shafikul Alam, Treasurer of EWU inaugurated the daylong programme in the morning in presence of groups' Adviser Engr. Kamrul Hassan, group members, friends and other students.

The exhibition and information desk were open for visitors till 6:00pm while the game show was until 3:00pm. The winners of the game show from many of the students were rewarded with TIB caps, wrist bands and calendar. Nearly 500 students visited the cartoon and game show. Almost 250 students received different kinds of information regarding TIB and its social movement against corruption.



Engr. Kamrul Hassan administered TIB anti-corruption oath taking session at the beginning of the seminar. The seminar titled, 'Role of the Youth in Corruption Prevention' held in the afternoon was facilitated by Sanaul Haque Mondol, Lecturer of the Department of Sociology, Farjana Jahan Kakon, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Applied Statistics of EWU and Mohammad Zahidul Islam, Senior Programme Manager of TIB.

Farjana Jahan Kakon made a power point presentation on 'Empowerment of Women' in the seminar and Sanaul Haque Mondol's made a presentation on 'Impact of Climate Change on Development'. Mohammad Zahidul Islam presented a power point presentation containing audio-visual contents. The title of his presentation was 'Role of the Youth in Corruption Prevention'.

A motivational documentary 'Odhinayok o Nayokera' produced by the Daily Prothom Alo was also shown before a prize giving session of the quiz competition which was followed by the closing speech by the YES Adviser.

Anti-corruption game show for street children in school

Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, Dhaka University- YES group organized an anti-corruption game show on 27th April at 'Hashimukh School' with a dream of creating an anti-corrupt future generation. Managed by some University students and young professionals, Hashimukh is a school for street children and situated at Kataban-Shahbag road of Dhaka city. About 120 street children are currently studying in the school at different classes.

With the assistance of the school teachers, student took anti-corruption oath and participated in the anti-corruption game show. Apart from giving prize to the winners of game show, all students were provided with TIB published 'Bornomalay Neetikothe' book, which will aware them about corruption at a very early age.

ULAB-YES arranges an orientation on RTI Act 2009

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) YES Group organized an orientation on Right to Information Act on 13 April at its Campus-B in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. Professor Dr. Imran Rahman, Vice Chancellor of ULAB inaugurated the event and delivered a motivational speech to the YES Members on the importance of volunteerism and the power of RTI Act. Dr. Din M. Sumon Rahman, Professor, Media Studies and Journalism and Mohammad Hasibul Hassan, Senior Lecturer, Business Studies & Advisor of ULAB YES also spoke at the event. Ms. Atia Afreen, Programme Manager, Outreach & Communication, TIB conducted the session on RTI Act. The main objective of the orientation was to inform the YES members about the RTI Act in detail which will help them to conduct a campaign to create awareness among the general students about it.

IER-YES organizes a seminar on cybercrimes

Institute of Education & Research (IER) YES Group organized a seminar on 'Cyber Crime' on 12 April at its campus in Dhaka University. Professor Husne Ara Begum (EA), Director of IER, inaugurated the event. Professor Dr. Mahbub Ahsan Khan; Dr. Md. Ahsan Habib, Associate Professor of IER and Mohammad Zahidul Islam, Senior Programme Manager, Outreach & Communication, TIB were present as discussants. Cyber Security Specialist & former Deputy Leader of Stamford University YES Group Tanzim Ahmed Leo presented the keynote paper. Students from different departments of IER participated the seminar. The seminar was organised to create awareness among the students about the ongoing cybercrimes and its consequences.

Quiz Competition for the Primary School kids

School kids of Ayub Ali Govt. Primary School in Dhaka New market area participated in a campaign organized by YES-1. As part of the day-long campaign, an anti-corruption quiz competition was organized on 23 April that followed by a cartoon exhibition and oath taking. Winners of the competition donated their books to build a library for the school. More than forty children from class three to five were responded to the quiz questions. Headmistress of the school administered the anti-corruption oath and awarded prizes to the winners. All Participants were provided with TIB's Bornomala Nitikotha! Energetic kids were enjoyed the programme with full of fun and school authority was also very cooperative. YES-1 members thanked to School authority and Chandrabati Academy also, who given 40% discount from all books purchased as a part of their solidarity to founding the library.

YES members join in '100 million for 100million' a solidarity campaign on education

19 YES members of TIB participated in a solidarity campaign for 100 million for 100 million on 2 April at St. Joseph School in Dhaka. Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi has expressed his solidarity along with Mr. Mostafizur Rahman, MP, Honorable Minister for Primary and Mass Education; Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud, MP, Honorable Minister for Water Resource; Md. Mujibul Haque, MP, Honorable State Minister for Labor and Employment and other renowned and eminent personalities who expressed their solidarity to the campaign theme 100 million for 100 million. TIB was one of the co-organizer of education network of this event where YES members joined and got the acknowledgement certificate signed by Kailash Satyarthi. Attending other youth groups were full of enthusiasm and committed to support the campaign. Popular band 'Joler Gaan' added some spirit at the end of the campaign.

CCC News

Display Fees of Different Services and set Citizen Charter on All Govt. Offices, ACC commissioner in Public Hearing in Chakaria

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Commissioner Dr. Nasiruddin Ahmed suggested to display fees of different services and setting Citizen Charter in the open and visible places on all government offices. The Commissioner made the call in a Follow Up Public Hearing organized by ACC and CCC, Chakaria in cooperation with Upazila Administration at Chakaria Upazila auditorium on 10 April 2017. He further urged for organizing Public Hearing at least once in a month to abide by the government circular in order to prevent harassment of mass people and to ensure transparency and accountability in all the service providing organizations, and assign designated officer to ensure right to information of citizens.

In the first part of follow up event of the October 2015 Public Hearing, Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md. Didarul Alam, Sub-Registrar S. S. M. Shamsuzzaman, Dr. Sultan Ahmed Siraji of Upazila Health Complex and DGM of Palli Biddiyut Office Md. Abdus Samad shared the progress of the steps taken by the respective authorities to prevent corruption. This was followed by a Q & A session, in which among others the citizens who came up with question in the last public hearing were also given the chance to enquire the authorities again. The respective authorities, in response, made commitments to resolve the problems. Dr. Sultan Ahmed Siraji responding to a question told that Chakaria Upazila Health Complex is providing post-natal care services. But due to lack of sufficient facilities, they are facing problems. One citizen alleged that a certain employee of Palli Biddiyut seeks speed money in return of his required signature. In response, Abdus Samad assured that stern action will be taken upon receiving specific complaint. The public hearing was moderated by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Education & ICT) Mohammad Saiful Islam Majumder.

At the end of public hearing, a discussion session was held presided over by Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Sahedul Islam where Director of Civic Engagement Division of TIB Md. Jasim Uddin Ferdous was present as a special guest. Chief guest Dr. Nasiruddin Ahmed assured to take effective measures to address the complaints raised in the public hearing. He advised the relevant officers to resolve the discussed problems within a short time and to make follow-ups. ACC Commissioner shared that every month a follow up will be made public through a Video Conference.

Among others member of Parliament of Chakaria-Pakua constituency Mohammad Ilias, Chakaria Upazila Parishad Chairman Jafar Alam, Director (Prevention & Mass Awareness) of ACC Md. Moniruzzaman, Chittagong Divisional Director of ACC Md. Abu Sayed, Deputy Director of ACC Dhaka Office Abul Kashem, Deputy Director of ACC Chittagong Division Sayed Ahmed, GM of Palli Biddiyut Noor Mohammad Ajam Majumder, Upazila Vice-Chairman Sirajul Islam Azad, President of CCC, Chakaria Alhaji Farid Uddin Chowdhury, President of Duprok, Chakaria, Chairman of different Union Parishads and the representatives of different government division/directorate were present in the program.

Pledge to Work Together to Improve the Quality of Primary Education

Head teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) Presidents of 23 Government Primary Schools under Jessore Sadar Upazila put forward a number of recommendations to improve transparency, accountability and quality of education. The recommendations were presented in a discussion meeting titled 'Measures to be Taken at the Local Level to Improve Transparency and Accountability in Primary Education Sector' organized by CCC Jessore with support from Sadar Upazila and District Education Office of Jessore on 10 April 2017. President of CCC Jessore M. R. Khairul Umam presided over the meeting while District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) Md. Jamal Hossain was present as chief guest.



Professor Dr. Mustafijur Rahman, Convener of CCC's education related Sub-Committee shared the objectives of the meeting in his welcome speech while a presentation on issues concerning education was delivered by Program Manager of TIB Rajesh Adhikary.

In the meeting, the DPEO delivered a presentation titled 'The Roles of Head Teachers and SMC Presidents for Improvement of Primary Education'. He stated that due to lack of proper knowledge of learning methods including lack of children friendly environment in many schools, quality education cannot be ensured. He praised the CCC initiatives taken for the improvement of primary education and urged to carry on the initiatives. If stakeholders related to primary education play their responsible role, there must be improvement in the quality of primary education, DPEO added.

In the open discussion, the participants shared their observations regarding primary education, most of which focused on ensuring regular and timely presence of the teachers at school, ensuring joyful learning environment in the school, making education materials available, taking effective measures to reduce dropout rate of the students, arrangement of sufficient benches, ensuring pure drinking water and sanitation, taking initiatives to disclose all relevant information of the school proactively, raising awareness among the parents, ensuring effective role of SMC, providing ethical and moral education to students, encourage citizen's initiatives and ensuring transparency and accountability in all activities.

Meeting with Union Parishad Authority for a Transparent and Accountable Union Parishad

With an aim to ensure transparency and accountability in programs and to improve the services of local government, a meeting with Boira Union Parishad authority in Mymensingh Sadar was organized by CCC, Mymensingh Sadar on 13 April 2017 at the UP auditorium. The Chairman of Boira Union Parishad Md. Nurul Amin presided over the meeting which shared the progress of initiatives in making the Boira Union Parishad transparent, accountable, corruption free and citizen friendly.

In the meeting CCC, Mymensingh Sadar representatives discussed on issues highlighting fair selection of beneficiaries in different programs (VGD, VGF, Old Age Allowance etc.) under social safety net, ensuring free flow of information, women's participation in decision making process, allocation for women and marginalized group in the budget, organizing Ward Shava and open budget program etc. Boira Union Parishad authority agreed upon the outcome of the discussions and pledged to build a citizen friendly Union Parishad. Among others, members and Secretary of Boira Union Parishad, CCC, Swajan and YES members were present in the meeting.

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