

Implementation of Political commitment vital to strengthen democracy

To strengthen democracy in Bangladesh, it is important to ensure transparency and accountability at all levels and implementation of political commitment can play crucial role in achieving the goal. The call was echoed and made at different meetings by local civil society members, elected representatives, government officials, journalists, teachers, multi-level stakeholders and members of Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), SHAWJON, Youth Engagement and Support (YES) and YES Friends held in Dinajpur, Rangpur and Nilphamari. CCCs of mentioned areas organized the meetings on January 29, 30 & 31, 2018 respectively titled 'Social movement against Corruption at the local level: Opportunities and Challenges'. The meetings were organised to establish good governance and amplify anti-corruption social movement engaging multi-level stakeholders and cross section people of the society.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Dinajpur District Mr. Mir Khairul Alam and Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman attended as Guests of honor at the meeting held at



Conference room of DC office Dinajpur. Presided over by CCC president Md. Shafiquel Haque Chhutu, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, in his speech as the key speaker said, corruption is not only a national problem, but also an international problem. Political commitment is needed to strengthen the social movement against corruption. It also requires accountability of the responsible persons along with the corrupts, enhancement of the effectiveness of institutions which are included in National Integrity Strategy, he added.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman further stressed on collective efforts of political parties in combating corruption.

Mr. Mir Khairul Alam said that it's possible to make our country corruption-free if we ensure the effective practice of Right to Information Act 2009, proper practice of power and ICT tools. Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman said, citizens need to fight corruption directly for reducing corruption. Stressing on the enhancement of practice of accountability, he further acknowledged TIB's activities for creating awareness among citizens about corruption. Among others, CCC members, development workers, cultural activists, lawyers and teachers also shared their ideas and experience regarding corruption in the meeting.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman at the meeting at Rangpur said that it is high time to take initiatives for increasing capacity of institutions especially which are comprised in National Integrity System. Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Rangpur district Mr. Muhammad Wahiduzzaman, as the chief guest, said "it is important to ensure transparency on allocating projects and its implementation'. He made

importance to increase awareness of mass people regarding cost of corruption.” Held at Conference room of DC office, Ms. Moshfeka Razzak, president of CCC, Rangpur presided over the meeting. Along with punishing corrupt persons, other speakers at the meeting proposed to award honest citizens who are active in resisting corruption. They also urged the service provider agencies and service recipients to be vigilant considering the aspects of liberation war.

At the meeting held at Nilphamari, Mr. Khaled Rahim, DC of Nilphamari said ‘service recipients believe some inaccurate information and concepts, which need to be corrected. The relevant authority should create opportunity for service recipients to gather proper knowledge about services.’ Presided over by Engr. S. M. Shafiqul Alam Dablu, president of CCC, Nilphamari, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman at the meeting said, combating corruption is an integral part of the manifesto of the ruling parties, 7th Five Year Plan and Sustainable Development Goals. With such capacity development, it is important and timely to advance in the fight against corruption. Held on Conference room of DC office, Mr. Md. Jainal Abedin, Chairman of Nilphamari Zilla Parishad; Mr. Dewan Kamal Ahmed, Mayor of Nilphamari Municipality; Mr. Akul Basar Mohammad Atikur Rahman, ASP of Nilphamari were also present as Guests of honor in the meeting.

Among others, member of the CCCs, locally elected representatives, journalists, doctors, teachers and civil society members were present in the meeting.

TIB sounds caution against cybercrime surveillance fearing misuse may lead to the risk of curbing freedom

Expressing concern at surveillance of cybercrime, TIB warned that misuse of the special police unit to fight cybercrimes could curtail freedom of speech and expression in the country. In a statement released on 12 January 2017, TIB stated that the initiative to form the special police unit equipped with software to check cybercrimes was timely and realistic, ‘but misuse of such monitoring can create risk of curtailing freedom of speech and expression’.

Referring to media reports that the government initiated to monitor social media for remarks or posts that were defamatory, could hurt religious sentiment or constitute an offence, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, ‘Effective surveillance is essential to control such crime and prevention. Initiatives for the formation of specialized police units for surveillance of cybercrime are timely and essential in practical context. However, If the people engaged in the monitoring lack technological skills, honesty, professionalism and neutrality, it could create the risk of curtailing freedom of speech and expression.’

Dr. Zaman said, Government has to fulfill the commitment made by the Law Minister and Information Minister while announcing the annulment of the provisions of article 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act where the freedom of speech and expression has been narrowed down. Before the introduction of the unit, government should prepare specific rules, strict monitoring, internal control and accountability system to ensure full neutrality, materialism and professionalism in the use of vested capacities.”

TIB realizes that experts and stakeholders in the relevant sectors should be involved in the process of formulation of the rules and to take lesson from international experience.

The 505-strong fully-fledged specialised unit -- Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau -- has already been approved by the home ministry while the import of the OSINT, software to help police find cyber offenders, is in the pipeline.

TIB concerned over Farmers Bank's cash crunch, urges to intervene immediately

Expressing deep concern over Farmers Bank's failure in keeping due functions with depositors, TIB called for taking quick and effective steps to safeguard depositors' money in the trouble-hit private commercial bank.

In a statement released on 8 January, 2017, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said "the incident of Farmers Bank's inability to refund climate fund money after maturity is not only a matter of concern but also alarming for the banking sector as a whole". Urging to formulate and implement policies for investing in the climate fund, he called on the government, especially the Bangladesh Bank and the Ministry of Finance, for incorporating quick action to recover Tk 508 crore climate fund.

He said, "There should be an investigation into why the climate fund money was invested in Farmers Bank for making profit, instead of entrusting well-reputed and credible financial institutions. People, including the former board of directors who were involved in the crisis, should be held accountable after proper investigation." If any delay emerges in releasing the funds for the implementation of climate change adaptation activities, it will further gear up the risk of climate change impact on the venerable regions and population which is not acceptable, he added.

Dr. Zaman mentioned that Bangladesh earned accolade at national and international level after creating the climate change impacts mitigation fund with its own resources.

He also said, "Customers and organizations are losing their confidence in Farmers Bank every day as they are failing to get their deposits back. It is unacceptable to put the burden of corruption and irregularities of the bank on the customers." He asked for quick intervention to recover the money, and return them to the depositors.

TIB has called upon the government to ensure the transparency and accountability of all the stakeholders involved in managing the fund. TIB urged the government to take necessary action to make accountable people involved with the bank's loan scams and other irregularities. Reshuffling the bank's board of directors and brining changes to its management is not enough, the statement said, adding that members of former board of directors and entrepreneurs, who are responsible for the current crisis, should be made accountable for the bank itself as well as the overall banking sector.

The BCCTF, a government trust formed to tackle risks and adverse effects of climate change, deposited Tk 508.13 crore in the bank's Gulshan and Motijheel corporate branches in November and December last year.

Information Fair and Public hearing organized at CCCs

Commissioner of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Dr. Nasiruddin Ahmed stressed on setting up 'Help Desk' in each government service provider institution for increasing the standard of its services to citizens. He also urged to arrange public hearing in each week with own initiative of institution to resolve the problems of service seekers. ACC will not compromise in any case of corruption, he warned. The Commissioner made these comments while addressing a follow up public hearing meeting as the Chief Guest in Kishoreganj on 30 January 2018. ACC, CCC, Kishoreganj, Durniti Protirodh Committee (DUPROK), Kishoreganj and District administration, Kishoreganj jointly organized the event.

Besides, Information Fairs and Public Hearings were also organized at Muktagacha of Mymensingh and Chandpur in January 2018. ACC, CCC, DUPROK and local administration jointly organized these events with an aim to raise awareness against corruption. ACC Commissioner and Director General, Deputy Commissioners along with other government officials were attended in these events.

Muktagacha: A two-day long Information fair was organized at Muktagacha on 23 & 24 January 2018 jointly by ACC, TIB, CCC and DUPRAK. The fair was held at Muktagacha Municipality yard supervised by Muktagacha Upazila Administration. In the first session of the fair, a discussion meeting was organized in where Director General (Prevention) of ACC Mr. Md. Zafar Iqbal was present as the Chief Guest and Director of ACC Mr. Md. Moniruzzaman and ADC (Revenue) of Mymensingh district Mr. A.K.M. Galib Khan was present as special guest. Mosammat Fojila Khanom, Senior Programme Manager - Civic Engagement of TIB also delivered her speech on social movement against corruption.



After the discussion meeting, the public hearing was organized in which representatives from Upazila Land Office, Sub-Registry Office, Mymensingh Palli Bidduyut Samati-1, Upazilla Education Office, Upazilla Secondary Education Office, Upazilla Health Complex participated in Question and Answer session and committed to resolve problems raised by local citizens. Mahbubul Alam Raton, member of CCC, Muktagacha moderated the sessions of the fair and public hearing. YES group of CCC, Muktagacha oriented visitors of the fair about application of Right to Information Act 2009 and staged an anti-corruption drama and presentation of songs and during the fair.

Kishoreganj: Anti-corruption rally and human chain was organised on 30 January 2018 in Kishoreganj in where representatives from ACC, DC office, TIB, CCC and DUPRAK along with other government institutions and education institutions participated. Following the rally, a discussion meeting was held at District Shilpakola Academy moderated by Mr. M.M. Juwel, vice president of CCC, Kishoreganj and presided by DC of Kishoreganj Mr. Md. Azimuddin Biswas. DUPRAK President Prof. Pranesh Kumar Chowdhury and CCC President Prof. Abdul Gani delivered welcome speech in the discussion meeting.



In second session of the day, a follow up public hearing was held in presence of ACC Commissioner Dr. Nasiruddin Ahmed which was jointly moderated by DC Md. Azimuiddin Biswas and ACC Director Mr. Nasim Anwar. Representatives from Upazila Land Office, Sub-Registry Office, Palli Bidduyut Samati, Upazilla Primary Education Office and Upazilla Secondary Education Office participated in the public hearing and answered the questions of citizens. A total of 32 complaints raised in the public hearing.

Chandpur: A two-day long information fair was held in Chandpur on 24 & 25 January 2018 organized by District Administration and CCC of Chandpur. The Information Fair was inaugurated through a colorful rally on 24 January 2018. An inaugural discussion meeting was organized followed by the rally in which Acting Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur district Mr. Md. Masud Hossain was present as the Chief guest. Among others, Chandpur Municipality mayor Mr. Mr. Nasir Uddin Ahmed, ASP Mr. Mizanur Rahman, UNO of Chandpur Sadar Upazilla Ms. Kaniz Fatema also spoke while ADC (General) of Chandpur Mr. Mohammad Shawkat Osman presided over the meeting. President of CCC, Chandpur Kazi Shahadat delivered welcome speech in the discussion meeting.



A total of 28 government and non-government institutions participated in the fair and disseminated their service related information and services to visitors of the fair. Debate competition, documentary exhibition, Question & Answer session on government services, quiz competition, cartoon and art competition, Mother's Dialogue on prevention of corruption, anti-corruption signature campaign and cultural campaign were arranged in occasion of the information fair.

Workshop organized to achieve the SDG Goals

To understand Sustainable Development Goals 1,3,5 and 16, and include them with current development action plans and implementation process, Pirojpur Sadar Upazila Administration organized a workshop on Sustainable Development Goals with the theme 'Leaving no one behind' on 24 January 2018 with assistance of CCC, Pirojpur and TIB



at Machimpur, Pirojpur. Government officials of Upazila Administration, chairman of Union Parishads, local journalists and NGO workers participated in the workshop.

Presided over by Advocate Mr. M A Mannan, president of CCC, Pirojpur, Advocate Shahidullah Khan, Vice President, CCC shared the goal and objectives of the workshop while delivering the welcome speech. Mohammad Jamal Hossain, Upazilla Nirbahi Officer of Pirojpur Sadar Upazilla discussed the SDG goal 1 & 3 among the participants and Dr. S. M. Rezwan Ul Alam, Director of Outreach and Communication division of TIB, highlighted on SDG goal 5 and 16. Participants of the workshop developed plan of their own institution for implementation of SDGs and discussed their points in open discussion session. YES and YES Friends group members of CCC, Pirojpur provided necessary assistance in organizing the workshop.

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Editor: S M Rezwan-ul-Alam

Sub-Editor: Mohammad Zahidul Islam, Shakil Md. Faisal & Md. Hozzatul Islam

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