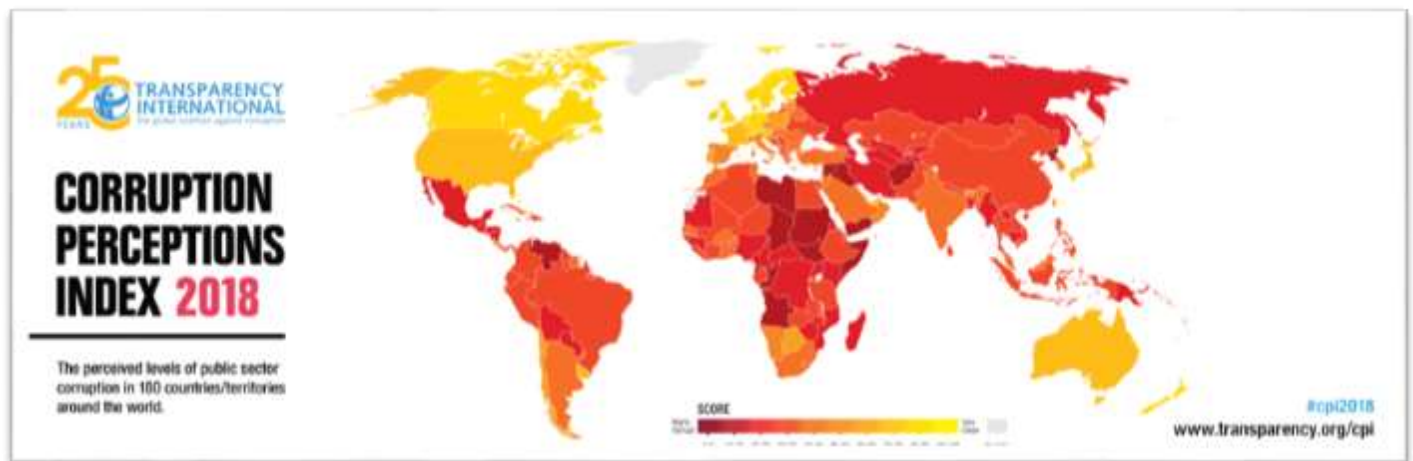


Bangladesh slips by 2 points in global corruption perceptions index, ranks 149 TIB demands a national anti-corruption strategy

Bangladesh scored 26 on a scale of 0-100 among 180 countries in Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2018. Bangladesh score has moved downward by 2 points than last year, which is much lower than the global average score of 43 and both in rank and score among eight South Asian countries, Bangladesh's position remains 2nd lowest for 6th consecutive years; lower than all except Afghanistan. With this score, Bangladesh placed 149th from the top and 13th from the bottom. In 2017, Bangladesh was in 143rd from the top and 17th from the bottom. According to TI Bangladesh, this performance portrays the prevalence of a worrying level of corruption in Bangladesh. Against this backdrop, TI Bangladesh called upon the government to take a stricter position and effective measures in realizing its political commitment to prevent corruption.



On the global release of CPI 2018, in a press conference held on 15 January, 2019 at its head office in Dhaka Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TI Bangladesh presented the global findings and explained Bangladesh's score and other matters related to it. Produced by the research team of TI-Secretariat, the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International reveals that the continued failure of most countries significantly to control corruption is contributing to a crisis of democracy around the world.

Mentioning Bangladesh's performance as embarrassing, Dr. Zaman termed it as 'steepest fall in a single year since 2008 (same as in 2014 when the score fell from 27 in 2013 to 25).' Bangladesh is positioned among more than two-thirds of 180 countries who scored below 50 and secured 4th lowest position among 31 Asia-Pacific countries. Other countries who scored the same with Bangladesh are the Central African Republic and Uganda, he added.

According to CPI 2018, among South Asian countries, Bhutan is on the top (score 64, rank 25 from top) while Afghanistan remains in the bottom scoring only 16 with 172nd position which is globally the fourth lowest, and 2nd lowest in the Asia-Pacific region. Except for Bhutan, all South Asian countries have received lower than the global average of 43. India ranked 78th with a score of 41. Sri Lanka scored 38 with 89th in the rank, followed by Pakistan that scored 33 with 117th position. Maldives and Nepal jointly share 124th position scoring 31. Afghanistan ranked 172nd with a score of 16. Denmark and New Zealand top the CPI 2018 with 88 and 87

points, respectively. Somalia, South Sudan and Syria are at the bottom of the index, with 10, 13 and 13 points, respectively.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “Bangladesh could have performed better as it has ability and efficiency enough to do so. One of the factors which might have contributed to Bangladesh's poor performance in the global index, is lack of effective implementation of the anti-corruption commitment or political will though we do have such declarations. Among others, especially factors like rarely addressed high-profile corruption, pervasive conflict of interest, political and government position perceived as means of enrichment, unabated financial and banking sector crisis including loan default and bank fraud, grabbing of land, river and water bodies, political control of contracting and recruitment business embarrassingly high and unabated illicit financial transfers; weakening institutions of accountability; deficit in effectiveness and independence of ACC; denial syndrome,



impunity, weakening rule of law; shrinking media and civil society space etc might also have contributed to the recent performance.

Commenting that no country can control corruption instead of political commitment and application by the higher echelon, Dr. Zaman said, “The recent statements of the Prime Minister (PM) on zero tolerance against corruption, is a reflection of her political will. However, effective implementation of this declaration should be ensured through applying it irrespective of status or identity. For this, it is significant to formulate a national anti-corruption strategy in consultation with relevant experts and stakeholders. If such a versatile and time-bound strategy can be applied in short, medium and long term with fair monitoring, Bangladesh will surely perform well in the global ranking.”

Dr. Zaman further added that because of the lack of proper understanding about CPI people of the country is blamed to be corrupt which is not right. “Majority of the people here are not corrupt but rather victims of it and because of the failure of our leadership to fight against the corruption of the powerful echelon they can never be blamed.” Dr. Zaman concluded.

TIB finds anomalies in the Eleventh National Election

Electoral irregularities like stamping ballot papers the night before the polls and ballot stuffing by capturing booths on the Election Day took place in 47 out of 50 constituencies surveyed, says a TIB study on the 11th parliamentary polls. Other irregularities include silence of law enforcers and administrative officials, casting fake votes, barring voters from going to polling stations, forcing voters to cast vote for a specific symbol and barring polling agents from going to centers, the study found.

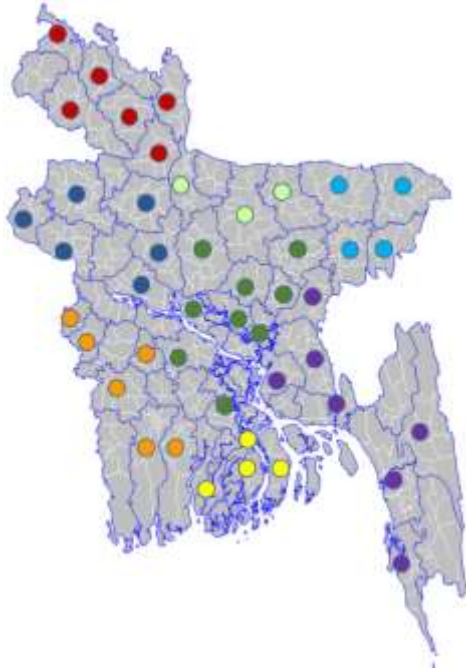


To unveil the study findings titled 'Election Process Tracking: the Eleventh National Parliament Election' Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organized a Press Conference at its Dhaka office on 15 January 2019. TIB Chairperson of the Board of Trustees Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Adviser-Executive Management Professor Dr. SumaiyaKhair, and Director-Research & Policy Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan were present. Senior Programme Manager Shahzada M Akram presented the report's findings and recommendations. Programme Manager TaslimaAkter, Juliet Rossette and Kumar Bishwajit Das; Assistant Programme Manager Nazmul Huda Mina of Research & Policy, TIB were also present at the event.

The study was conducted to review how far the election was fair, neutral and legal and how the EC, political parties and candidates followed electoral laws and code of conduct. It also analysed the claims of the candidates about spending and reviewed the role of stakeholders of the election. The study followed a qualitative method including content analysis, interviews of information providers and observations. Information providers are candidates, party activists, law enforcers, returning officers and other election officials, including Electoral Tribunal officials, local journalists and voters. The study also used secondary sources of information like laws and regulation, published and unpublished research reports as well as newspaper reports.

It termed the election "partially participatory, non-competitive, questionable and faulty" and demanded a judicial inquiry into the reported irregularities during the election. The study, based on interviews of election stakeholders including law enforcement agencies, candidates and voters, was conducted between November 10 last year and January 10 this year in randomly selected 50 out of 299 constituencies that went to polls on

December 30. Of the 50 seats, the ruling Awami League candidates won 40, Jatiya Party six, Gono Forum two while BNP and JP-Manju won one each.



Speaking at the press conference, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said, "Faulty election will hamper democracy." He added, "The Election Commission failed to act neutrally and the role of a section of polling officers and law enforcement agencies were biased." The Executive Director of TIB also said not all the candidates were allowed to conduct electioneering freely while voters faced obstacles to casting their votes. So, this election was partially participatory, he added.

The report says the "50 seats under 45 districts of nine divisions were covered in the survey. Irregularities were witnessed in at least one or more voting centres of 47 out of 50 constituencies. Ballot papers stamping took place the night before the elections in 33 constituencies, stamping ballots openly after occupying booths in 30 seats on the Election Day and non-availability of ballot papers in 22 constituencies.

The study found ballot boxes filled-up prior to the beginning of polling in 20 constituencies; voters forced to cast vote for a particular symbol

Districts where the Constituencies under this Study are located

in 26 constituencies, people barred from going to centers in 26 seats, voters were driven away from polling centers in 21 seats and beating up supporters of opponents in 11 constituencies. The survey found the casting of fake votes in 41 seats, silence of the administration and law enforcing agencies in 42 seats, obstructing, and driving out polling agents in 29 seats.

Table: Irregularities Committed on Election Day in 50 Constituencies

Nature of Irregularity	Constituency (number)
Silent role of administration and law enforcing agencies	42
Fake voting	41
Sealed ballot papers on the night before the election	33
Casting false votes by occupying booths	30
Opponent polling agents were not allowed to enter the polling centre*	29
Preventing voters from going to the centre	26
Force voters to give the vote for certain signs	26
Ballot paper finished	22
Threatening interested voters	21
Ballot boxes filled up before the beginning of the vote	20
Leaders and workers of the opposition party candidates physically assaulted	11

* In the 29 constituencies, polling agents were prevented from going to the center, there were no agents in 10 constituencies.

Since the election schedule announcement till the voting, the study found, the election-related expenditure of a candidate was Tk 77,65,085 in those seats, three times the amount fixed by the Election Commission. A candidate can spend maximum Tk 25 lakh in electioneering, according to the EC. In terms of the expenditure, the ruling AL candidates were in the top position as they spent five times the ceiling while the independent candidates were in the lowest. The study found 41 AL candidates spent Tk 1.34 crore each on an average, followed by its alliance partner Jatiya Party as eight of its candidates spent Tk 63 lakh each. A total of 107 candidates of several parties came under the survey.

The study found that AL candidates violated election code of conduct more than others. It said 95 per cent AL candidates violated election code of conduct by bringing out processions or holding “showdowns” using vehicles, while 88 per cent JP candidates and 31 per cent BNP candidates did the same offence. Eighty per cent AL candidates, 75 per cent JP and 44 per cent BNP candidates pasted posters violating the electoral code. Seventy-eight per cent AL candidates created an obstacle to street rallies, indoor meetings and other electioneering of other candidates violating the electoral code, while 50 per cent JP and 2.8 BNP candidates did the offence.



TIB in its report alleged that EC in maximum cases was unable to play a proper role during the election process. It did not take effective steps for ensuring all parties' participation in the election. No role was played to create equal scope for electioneering for all parties. The EC also failed to create an example by taking steps against electoral code violation by ruling party men. “While in one hand the EC has failed to create a level playing field for all parties and candidates, on the other hand difference of opinions of commissioners regarding it became public,” the report said. The EC also made “transparency of election” questionable by controlling the flow of information, slowing down internet speed and putting a restriction on the election observers, it said.

TIB placed six points' recommendations: Honest, capable, brave and neutral people have to be appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners. An act determining the process and eligibility of the recruitment of election commissioners must be enacted; The EC, administration, law enforcing agencies and other stakeholders have to be neutral and free from the party influences in order to ensure fair, free and fair elections held under a party government; A fair and neutral investigation must be taken in the 11th National Parliament Elections based on the multiple violations of the code of conduct including violence and use of force in elections; The EC must declare publicly identifying their failure in taking effective measures in violation of the code of conduct. On the other hand, along the steps undertaken by the EC, initiatives should be taken for judicial inquiry by the government; Digitalization should be initiated in different stages of the election process (such as updating the voter list, withdrawal and submission of application for nomination, verification of candidates' financial information, submission of return of election expenditure etc.). Political

parties also have to be encouraged for digitalizing candidates' nomination process and free environment should be ensured for election observer and mass media.

Youths are the vanguard of the anti-corruption movement

Aiming to sensitize school students of demerits of corruption, Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Muktagachha organized an orientation on Ethics Education and Social Movement against Corruption. Around two hundred students from different high schools of Muktagachha Upazila participated in the orientation held at the Hall Room of R. K. Govt. High School, Muktagachha.

Following the orientation session, Anti-corruption Quiz Completion was also arranged there and students took anti-corruption oath led by the vice-president of the CCC Md. Mukhlesur Rahman. CCC President Principal Md. AkhlasurRahaman presided over the event where MuktagachhaUpazilaNirbahi Officer SubarnaSarker was present as chief guest and Upazila Secondary Education Officer ShafiulAlam was present as special guest.



Ms. SubarnaSarker said, Success of anti-corruption movement depends on the role of youth, considering this, it is important to engage youth in the social movement against corruption. They have the opportunity and strengths to combat corruption in our society. For ensuring active role of youth, they should be prepared by getting ethics education, reading books, following role models and inspired by the virtue of anti-corruption movement.

CCC President along with the special guests also delivered their speech in the event. A. N. M. ShahnurMamun, member of CCC, Muktagachha facilitated the orientation session on Ethics Education and respective Area Manager of TIB facilitated the session. Winners of the Debate competition awarded in the event.

CCC, Madhupur advocates hassle-free land services

CCC, Madhupur organized an opinion sharing meeting with Upazila land authority of Madhupurupazila for ensuring transparency, accountability and citizens participation in land-related services. Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md. MahbubulHoque presided over the meeting while President and members of the CCC were also present. AC (Land) shared the initiatives and plan to increase the standard of services expressing his commitment.

He said, authority tries to identify the gaps and taking initiatives to fulfil the gaps. Besides this, a complaint and advice box has been set-up and Nameplate of the Designated Officer for providing information has been displayed as part of pro-active disclosure of the institution. A set of the campaign has been already driven on three unions for ensuring easy access of citizens to land-related services. Information Display Boards have been set-up at all Union Land Offices, he added. AC (Land) also said that, E-mutation has been introduced and steps have been taken to prohibit brokers. Citizens have access to apply for mutation through the internet. He urged citizens to gather proper knowledge and be aware of fees and process of land services.

A set of recommendations has been shared from the CCC for ensuring transparency and accountability in land-related services. AC (Land) assured that he will consider the recommendations positively.

Services will be delivered within seven days



District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) of Nilphamari district, Md. Osman Gani assured that Services from the District Primary Education Office including all Upazila Education offices will be delivered by maximum seven days following proper procedures. Service seekers will receive harassment-free services from these offices. He expressed such commitment at the opinion-sharing meeting with the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Nilphamari held on 09 January 2019. CCC, Nilphamari organized the meeting with an aim to

increase the level of services at primary schools. DPEO also informed the meeting that there is no allegation of irregularities on book distribution and transfer of teachers at his jurisdiction.

In the open discussion session, Education officers made importance to the awareness of teachers and guardians for ensuring quality education at primary level. CCC, Nilphamari suggested to amplify the initiatives of Balapara (South) Government Primary School, which includes formation of Active Mother Forum, organize mothers gathering regularly and updating monitoring and information display board etc. Eng. S. M. ShafiqulHaqueDablu presided over the meeting while other members of the CCC and Assistant Upazila Education Officers were present.

CCC, Sunamganj urges Health authority to replicate good practices

CCC, Sunamganj organized an opinion sharing meeting with the authority of SunamganjSadar Hospital on 22 January 2019. Speakers emphasized the need for having an adequate number of doctors for ensuring proper treatment. They also requested for an immediate arrangement of specialized doctors.



Dr. Ashutosh Das, Civil Surgeon of Sunamganj district, opened the Complaint Box in the meeting and advised the designated persons to take necessary measures. Earlier, members of the CCC visited the hospital premises and found the environment neat & clean. They expressed gratitude to the hospital authority for the initiatives. CCC opened to introduce operations at the new building, updating hospital's website to ensure transparency and accountability.

Convener of CCC Sub-committee on Health Jogeswar Das expressed gratitude and thanked them. He said, "With authority's support, service seekers have been receiving money receipts against their payments,

breastfeeding corner being operated effectively, complaint-box has been set-up and concerned recipients have been receiving the allowance from the social welfare department of the hospital.” He urged the authority to replicate these good practices to other public hospitals at Upazila levels. CCC President Dhurjati Kumar Basu said that CCC will not only criticize any institution, it will also identify the gaps and way of overcoming the gaps of the institution for increasing the level of services.

Activities of Dhaka YES Groups

To mark the International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) 2018, YES group-**East West University (EWU)** organized a study circle in its campus. They used TIB’s position paper as a source of information and exchanged views on it. As a part of its regular activities, TIB conducted an Advice and Information **(AI)-Desk** campaign at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) on 21-24 January 2019. In a motto to assist the patients, YES members from different educational institutions of Dhaka participated in the four days long campaign. A prize-giving ceremony on essay competition titled ‘Social Media and its Impact on Moral Degradation of Youth’ was held on 27 January 2019. YES Group- **Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib** Hall of Dhaka University organized the event at its hall guest room. YES group- **Stamford University Bangladesh** has organized a workshop on Consumer Rights Act and Good Governance on 31 January 2019. Mr Shafiqul Islam Laskar, DG of the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection and Mr Palash Mahmud, Founder of Conscious Consumer Society and Consumer Youth Bangladesh has conducted two separate sessions. Ms Fatinaz Firoz, Head of the steering committees and Mr Abdul Matin, Registrar, Stamford University Bangladesh were present as guest of honour.

Editor: Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam

Sub-Editor: Masum Billah, Hozzatul Islam

Write to us: Transparency International Bangladesh | email: advocacy@ti-bangladesh.org

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