

National News

Appalling corruption in recruiting technical healthcare workers to combat COVID19

TIB demands effective ACC intervention and exemplary punishment

April 21, 2021: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed its resentments over massive irregularities and corruption in the Department of Health initiated process of recruiting additional technical workforce to combat the COVID 19 pandemic in public hospitals. The anti-corruption organisation has strongly demanded that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) should quickly take effective steps to exemplarily punish the perpetrators. Moreover, TIB has its doubts over transparency in the entire recruitment process.

Based on news from media outlets, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in a statement today, “People’s lives are already unbearable amid the Coronavirus pandemic and the broken healthcare system alongside distrust over the quality of health services have intensified the crisis. The incident of irregularities and corruption in recruiting technical workforce in the hospitals at a time like this has yet again garnered public mistrust over the health sector. The incident of bribing a crore taka and proposing a lucrative promotion in an important position to a member of the recruitment committee is just another example of reckless corruption by officials who enjoy the fruits of lawlessness while being protected by long-standing accumulated irregularities. In order to overcome the situation, it is important that the authorities concerned understand the severity and take staunch actions.”

The TIB Executive Director expressed solidarity with two honest, fearless and courageous officials who requested the secretary of health to make the health sector corruption free by ensuring effective steps against the perpetrators and said, “Does removing the accused from the recruitment committee make everything alright? In the past, there were no exemplary measures taken against those involved with the mask and healthcare equipment procurement blunders. A culture of lawlessness has been established by these. Again, we have seen how many of the perpetrators continued to be involved with irregularities and corruption while being subordinates of the top nexus and whenever criticism over these incidents went out of control, then the consequences were limited to transferring the officials elsewhere. The ACC has to take effective steps in this case. How were the highest scores of the examinees in the written exam almost similar? How was the question leaked? Who were behind these? How deep were the accused in the bribery scheme involved in the process? The recruitment syndicate must be unmasked and the perpetrators should be exemplarily punished following a thorough investigation.”

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman also questioned if the Prime Minister’s statements like ‘zero tolerance against corruption’ or ‘no one will be exempted’ have any results if the quote from a jobseeker related to the irregularity saying “Are these recruitments possible without money!” is the reality.

Old Dhaka fire accidents repeat in absence of political will, accountability or law enforcement to mitigate risks

Dhaka, April 25, 2021: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed its resentments and anger over the repeated cases of fire accidents in Old Dhaka, the one in Armanitola being the most recent. Authorities have failed to relocate chemical warehouses from cramped Puran Dhaka alleyways due to the lack of political goodwill even after deadly fire accidents in Nimtoli and Churihattha. TIB has also commented that the production, stocking and selling of highly flammable chemicals are being carried on in residential areas due to collusion of vested parties that benefit from irregularities and corruption.

The anti-corruption think tank also blames the lack of coordination and accountability of associated officials that have failed to enforce the most of the recommendations of the investigation committee and the taskforce even after 11 years of the Nimtoli fire tragedy. TIB also said the precedent of impunity of perpetrators has also contributed to the repetition of fire accidents like Armanitola.

Asking if the government officials think that people's lives are worthless, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in a statement, "After every incident, a number of investigative committees are formed to find the reason behind it, but do they really work? None of the chemical warehouses were relocated even after 11 years of the Nimtoli fire tragedy. Why wasn't a permanent chemical industry zone established? How could business carry on as usual without any license? These questions have come forward again. But it's scary to even expect answers. Even after deadly incidents like Nimtoli and Churihattha, the designated destination for chemical warehouses were changed four times. That is not only an extreme example of the irresponsibility and cluelessness of government organisations, but also the reason for loss of lives. This is not expected at all. The people and authorities responsible for procrastinating the application of the recommendations from the taskforce that was formed after the Nimtoli incident have to be held accountable urgently."

Dr. Zaman also mentioned that even after the 11 years, the government has not replied to the High Court show-cause notice that asked why chemical warehouses should not be relocated from Old Dhaka. "Alongside not carrying out the decisions and directives, the government and its affiliated bodies have also committed contempt of court. Also, the cases filed over these incidents are waiting for the police report. It would not be an overstatement to say that other than failing to relocate the chemical warehouses, the government also lacked the political goodwill to make the areas free from fire hazards. On the other hand, there were no progress in developing necessary infrastructure that can put out flames quickly. Rather, some quarters are taking the chance to exploit the lack of coordination between different offices and corruption to carry on illegal and unethical storage, production and sales of highly flammable chemicals in residential areas."

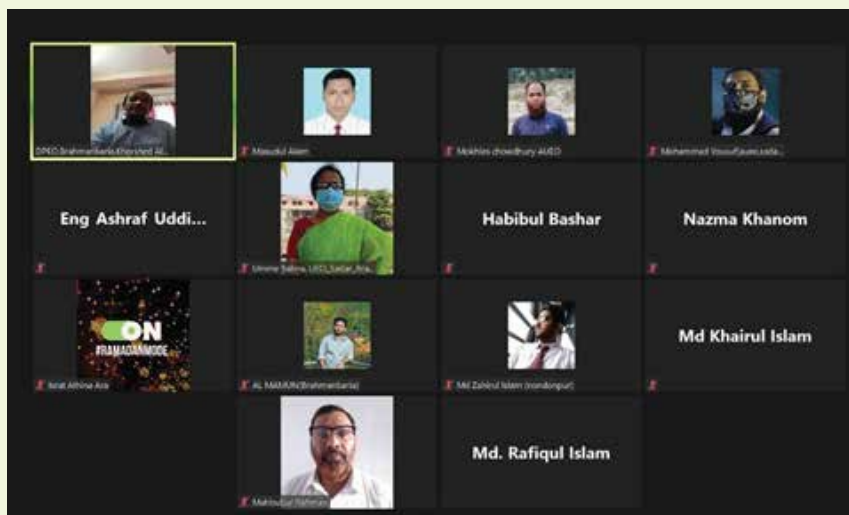
TIB has strongly demanded the quick implementation of a dedicated chemical zone, banning of chemical businesses in residential areas and the closing of high-risk and illegal factories alongside financial compensations to families impacted by the Nimtoli and Churihattha tragedies.

CCC News

Virtual Sharing Meeting on Implementation of Primary Education Activities

The Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Brahmanbaria organised a virtual sharing meeting on Implementation of Primary Education Activities during Coronavirus Pandemic on April 26, 2021 with the participation of District Primary Education Authority. District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) Md. Khorshed Alam was present as the chief guest with President of CCC, Brahmanbaria Engineer Md. Rafiqul Islam in the chair. Engineer Ashraf Uddin Ahmed, a member of CCC's Education Sub-Committee, welcomed guests and participants in the meeting.

Speaking as the chief guest, the District Primary Education Officer said that the introduction of online classrooms in Brahmanbaria has accelerated the education activities during the pandemic. The education authorities and teachers have taken various initiatives through online and mobile technology to ensure proper implementation of government directives and co-curricular education activities to the students.



Speakers at the meeting pointed out that the lack of interest in education resulted from the auto-promotion of students to the next class last year, lack of awareness of parents and the deficiency of smart phones in poor households as they are some of the major challenges of online based education activities.

The meeting focused on continuation of the education in the face of the Coronavirus crisis as well as identification of the students who were affected by economic crisis and inclusion of the dropouts during the pandemic. The meeting also emphasised on introducing online entertainment activities so that students' mental development is not hampered, taking necessary steps to bring the students of the marginal community under schooling so that students do not fall behind and fall prey to child marriage during COVID 19 pandemic, creating of an environment of good governance by preventing any kind of irregularities and mismanagement, launching online home visits etc.

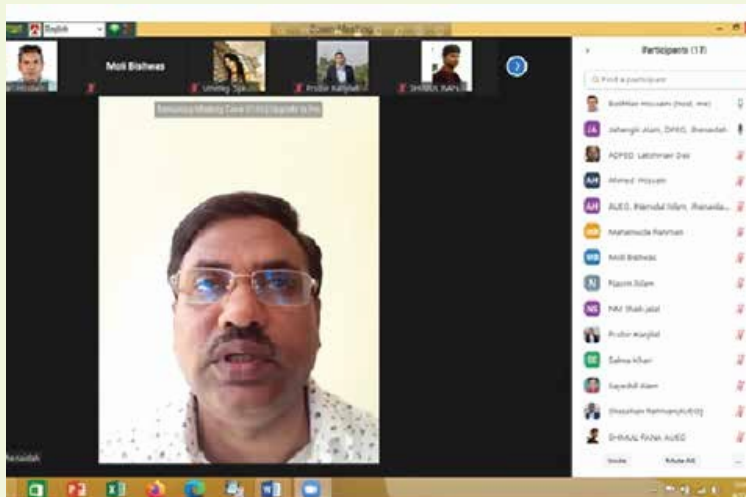
The speakers also stressed the need to form a School Management Committee (SMC). Assistant District Primary Education Officer (Overall) Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Brahmanbaria Sadar Upazila Education Officer Umme Salma and other officials, among others, involved in the implementation of primary education in Sadar Upazila, addressed the meeting.

CCC, Jhenaidah

The Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) also organised a sharing meeting education authority through 'Zoom' platform on 15 April 2021. The meeting discussed the progress, challenges, expectations and stipend activities in the Coronavirus pandemic situation.

The meeting discussed that the current ongoing primary education activities will continue through various online mediums including television, local satellite channels, community radio, online primary schools and mobile.

District Primary Education Officer Md. Jahangir Alam, President of CCC, Jhenaidah Md. Sayedul Alam, Assistant District Primary Education Officer Laxman Kumar Das, CCC's Education Sub-Committee Convener N. M. Shahjalal, CCC Member Suraiya Parveen Molly, Assistant Upazila Education Officer Prabir Kumar Kanjilal, Shimul Rana and TIB's Area Manager Bakhtiyar Hossain participated in the discussion. The meeting decided to organize a webinar for various stakeholders on the recommendation of CCC to move forward educational activities during this pandemic.



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