

## National News

### Illegal employment of expatriates causes billions in revenue loss, finds study: TIB calls for comprehensive strategic policy



Increasing amount of illegal remittance outflows and tax evasion by both legally and illegally employed foreigners have reached to a worrying level, depriving the government of Bangladesh significantly in revenue losses, as evidenced in a study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). According to the study, around \$3.1 billion or BDT 26.4 thousand crore is being illegally remitted from Bangladesh annually while evading BDT 12,000 crore in taxes.

The study, conducted from April 2018 till December 2019, finds that at least 2.5 lakh foreign nationals from 44 countries are currently employed in more than 20 trades in both regular and irregular ways in Bangladesh.

According to the study, there are allegations of different kinds of anomalies at different stages of the employment process of expatriates. From the stage of appointment to the extension of Visa, allegations of illegal transactions were found in most of the stages to expedite the process of employment. The study observes that expatriates, employed in Bangladesh, mostly Indians, are not engaged in specialized jobs, instead, they are involved in ordinary administrative works, for which there should not be any dearth of Bangladeshi candidates. Such unnecessary employment creates unfair competition for the local candidates, in addition to a huge draining of foreign currency for paying remunerations, adds the study.

"Corruption has become institutionalized in the expatriate employment process mainly due to a kind of multilateral collusion, lack of enforcement of relevant policies and regulations, the viciousness of the employers and the recruited, inefficiency of a section of responsible people and lack of coordination. As a result, the state and the people are not enjoying the real benefits of economic development. The benefits of our progress are being trafficked outside the country," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB on 5 February in a press conference organized at its Dhaka office to unveil the study titled 'Employment of Expatriates in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way-out'.



Manzoor E Khoda, Programme Manager, Research and Policy division of TIB presented the study findings at the press conference while Professor Dr Sumaiya Khair, Advisor- Executive Management; Mohammad

Rafiqul Hassan, Director, and Shahzada M Akram, Senior Programme Manager, both of Research and Policy division, of TIB were also present at the meet.

The study finds, many foreign nationals show lesser amounts of money than the actual amount received as wages to avoid paying tax and send their earnings to home-countries through illegal channels. Employers often deliberately hire foreign experts without following the due legal process to evade taxes and employ them with lower salaries although the employment of expatriates without legal documents is grossly illegal and punishable under law.

The study observed that usually foreign nationals enter Bangladesh on a three-month tourist visa and manage jobs soon afterward given the shortage of people with strong communication and management skills, which are in high demand in the garment sector that has gone on to become the world's second-largest supplier of apparel. When their visa is nearing expiration, they return to their home country and come back with a fresh three-month tourist visa and continue with their jobs in Bangladesh. At the same time, the government organisations that are supposed to ensure the application of related laws and regulations, have either failed to prevent so or they lacked efficiency. Several loopholes in relevant existing laws and policies concerning the employment of expatriates were also observed in the report.

According to the study, the number of foreign nationals working in Bangladesh is on the rise. According to different entrepreneurs, the RMG sector employs foreign workers citing a shortage of skilled manpower for top management posts, the poor performance of locals in managerial communication, the reluctance of local candidates, to work at the factory level or in the production plant, etc. However, the study noted unnecessary bias of local owners towards foreign workers in some cases, and few local employers prefer foreign staff believing they have a lower chance of getting involved in corruption.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman also said "Like any other country, there is a need for foreign workers to work in different sectors in Bangladesh. But it must be addressed through ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance. Besides, it has to be ensured that its benefits remain within the country in the long run."

Pointing towards grim findings of the study, Dr Zaman further said, "Recruitment of foreign nationals instead of qualified locals should be stopped. With proper visa and due work permit, foreign nationals may be allowed to work in Bangladesh, but it must be ensured that they are sending their earnings to their home country in a lawful manner after stipulated tax deduction." There is no option but to bring those involved in irregularities and illegality under accountability. To ensure the sustainable growth of the relevant sectors, a comprehensive strategic policy should be introduced to ensure the participation of all relevant authorities in the employment process of foreign workers in Bangladesh, Dr Zaman concluded.

The study placed 9 points recommendations to oversee the employment of expatriates and movements of foreign nationals staying in Bangladesh, which included, among others, an integrated data management system, and a 'one-stop service' to provide services regarding documents related to visa to foreign workers. It also urged the government to update foreign workers' salary and wage scale, to assess the sector-based requirement of foreign workers and to ensure due procedure in the recruitment process. It further called upon the government to form a joint task force to avail necessary information regarding foreign workers.

## TIB assessment finds ACC Performance 'Moderate': Highlights on improving public confidence

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Bangladesh scored 60 out of 100 in an assessment that measured the autonomous institution's performance in tackling pervasive corruption in the country. The result puts the anti-corruption body into the "moderate" category as per the international standard. According to the assessment, the institution needs to improve by only a few indicators to graduate to the 'high' category as ACC's overall score falls short of 7 points from the 'high' category.



Among the 50 indicators under six dimensions of the assessment tool of the study, the ACC scored 'high' in 42% (21), 'moderate' in 18 (36%), and scored 'low' in 11 indicators (22%). The highest score was achieved in 'Prevention, Education and Outreach' (75%), followed by 'Independence and Status' (67%) and 'Cooperation and External Relations' (67%). The lowest score achieved in 'Detection, Investigation and Prosecution' (44%).

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) carried out the assessment that aimed to review the performance and opportunities of ACC for improvement and offer recommendations to overcome the challenges assessing enabling and disabling factors which affect the ACC's efficacy. The assessment, which is a follow-up study under an initiative by Transparency International (TI) aimed at strengthening anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) in the Asia Pacific Region, has been conducted in 2019 for assessing the progress made by ACC since the first assessment conducted in 2015-16.

TIB released the findings of the assessment in a press conference at its Dhaka office on 25 February where the researchers of the assessment, Shammi Laila Islam, Programme Manager, and Shahzada M Akram, Senior Programme Manager, of Research and Policy division of TIB presented the findings. Among others, Professor Dr. Perween Hasan, Chairperson, Board of Trustees; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director; and Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Adviser-Executive management, of TIB were also present at the press meet.

The assessment observes the ACC gained significant advancement in some areas, such as staff selection, accessibility to complainants/ informants, conviction rate, dissemination and campaigns, cooperation with other integrity agencies in comparison to its performance in the previous assessment. However, the ACC's performance declined in issues like political use of powers, investigation and prosecution expertise, responsiveness to corruption complaints, efficiency and professionalism, allocated budget for prevention, education and outreach activities, public confidence in Government support. It may also be noted that the ACC scored low in several indicators, like inadequate budget compared to the national budget, lack of external oversight mechanism, as it did in the previous assessment.





In the first assessment, the overall score of ACC was 61.22%, which also fell in the moderate category. Dr Iftekharuzzaman said “In some aspects, there has been a positive change in the ACC's performance this year compared to that assessed in TIB's 2015 report. However, there is no significant change. The deficit is visible on both sides, effectively controlling corruption as per ACC's core mandate being determined with courage and firmness in discharging responsibilities in one hand, and enabling political environment on the other. Although, noteworthy progress has been made in some areas, such as employee recruitment and promotion campaigns. However, in fundamental issues like investigation and filing cases, there is nothing to be hopeful about.”

According to the assessment, the complainants are unwilling to identify themselves, which may indicate a lack of trust or feelings of insecurity. The ACC is found weak in responding to corruption complaints. The prosecution rate is still poor compared to the complaints lodged. There is no mechanism to address the special needs of marginalized groups including the poor and women. Overall, the perception of ACC's performance is not encouraging and reflects a lack of trust. "It is regrettable that the ACC cannot gain the people's trust, though it has liberty and seems active on paper, but inactive practically. So, the commission has to convince the people that it will prevent all forms of corruption," Dr Iftekharuzzaman emphasized.

Appreciating the government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption, Dr Zaman said, "The people of the country desire to get the benefits of it, but an environment has been created to incapacitate the ACC, one of the core implementing institutions. Besides, there is a mentality within the ACC as if it were a government organization that relies on administration. Although established by the government, the kind of mentality and effort to bring the government under accountability independently is neither seen within the ACC nor within the government. Because of all this, no visible progress was seen in the cases of sensational and high-level corruption.”

To tackle the challenges, TIB placed 16-points recommendations for the empowerment of the national anti-graft watchdog. The recommendations ranged from legal amendments to increase integrity and accountability with adherence to due process through a neutral and transparent procedure in handling corruption cases and introducing a comprehensive Code of Conduct for its staff and disciplinary procedures. The assessment also suggested amending ACC Act 2004 and Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012 with increased transparency in appointment of Chairman and other Commissioners, and inclusion of money laundering and private sector corruption under ACC's jurisdiction. Criticizing 2018 Civil Service Act, Dr Zaman said “It is based on inequality and thus unconstitutional,” he said, expressing fears that the law may curb the ACC's powers. TIB suggested scrapping provision of taking permission from the government before arresting any public servant.



The notable recommendations, among others, are enhanced budget for staff, capacity building and training of investigators particularly in inspection, investigation, prosecution and litigation; increased responsiveness to corruption complaints with transparency on what basis the complaints are scrutinised and the explanation of why a complaint is not considered for enquiry etc. Besides, the assessment further

recommended ways to strengthen prosecution and conviction rate; and excel prevention, education and outreach activities with special emphasis on addressing the special needs of different marginalised groups by ensuring for them easy access to ACC and complaint mechanisms and effective redress through affirmative action.

To ensure strengthening ACA's, TI developed the practical and comprehensive benchmarking tool aimed at highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs), where the indicators are divided into enabling factors and performance indicators.

## **Dhaka Wasa's proposal of tariff hike "unjust and unacceptable": TIB demands to set the tariff through public hearing with experts of the concerned sector**

The proposal of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to hike water tariff by 80 percent at residential and commercial levels is 'irrational, repressive and unacceptable', said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). It also has called for fixing a rational rate through public hearings involving experts after ensuring adequate supply and better quality.

In a statement, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, the proposal of Dhaka Wasa is contradictory to its own regulations. Wasa proposes to increase the price of water from Tk 11.57 to Tk 20 per unit at the residential level while from Tk 37.04 to Tk 65 at the commercial level (overall upto 80 percent), which is totally unreasonable and unacceptable. This proposal contradicts the provision of price increases of upto 5 percent annually under the Wasa Act 1996, he said.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman also mentioned that the price hike would lead to more sufferings on and irritation of the already frustrated city dwellers back on the heels of its failure to provide adequate and safe water. "In particular, unfair pressure on lower income people will increase," he added.

Referring to the data of a TIB study on Dhaka Wasa published in April 2019, the TIB Executive Director said, "The study found that 44.8 percent of the connection holders under Dhaka Wasa don't get water as per the demand, 51.5 percent of the water supplied is not clean and 41.4 percent of the supplied water has bad odour."

Overall, 37.5 percent of people are dissatisfied with the quality and irregularities of the Wasa service, he added. "Therefore, this proposal of unilaterally increasing the price of water without taking opinions of the service-seekers and without specific and timely planning to eradicate the internal corruption and system losses will impose an unfair burden on customers, which is unacceptable", concluded Dr. Zaman.

TIB called for formation of a separate regulatory framework for determining the price of water and sanitation services and set up a board with neutral and impartial persons to determine the power and responsibilities of the Wasa board.

## **Prof. Perween Hasan elected TIB Trustee Board chairperson**

Noted educationist Professor Dr Perween Hasan has been elected chairperson of the trustee board of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). She succeeded Advocate Sultana Kamal and will take charge on February 22, 2020. Besides, former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar was elected the new secretary general while Prof Tasneem Siddiqui and Advocate Sushmita Chakma were elected new members of the board. They elected during the 103rd meeting of the board at TIB office in the capital's Dhanmondi on 19 February 2020.



Central Women's University Vice-chancellor Perween Hassan is a former teacher of

Islamic History and Culture Department of Dhaka University. She obtained PhD degree in Islamic Architecture from Harvard University of United States. Professor Dr. Tasnim Siddiqui is a professor of political science of Dhaka University and working as the head of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. He received a PhD degree from Griffith University in Australia.

Advocate Sushmita Chakma received her LLB and LLM degrees from the Faculty of Law of Dhaka University. She is the first indigenous women lawyer of Chittagong Hill Tracts. She is a member of the District Lawyers Association, former general secretary of Rangamati and current member. Along with the legal profession, she has been working towards establishing human rights, good governance and women's rights, especially the rights of indigenous women for a long time.

It should be noted that the Board of Trustees is the TIB's highest policy-making forum. Other members of the board are Mahfuz Anam, Senior Advocate Taufik Nawaz, Syeda Ruhi Ghaznavi, Parvin Mahmud FCA, Abul Momen and Prof Dr. Fakhru Alam.

## TIB observe the IMLD 2020

TIB Staffs and Yes members along with family members paid respect to the language martyrs on 21 February 2020. The day started with a barefoot march towards Shaheed Minar in the University of Dhaka and laying flower wreath on the monument. TIB's executive director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman was present there. The day was commemorated by wearing black badge and singing the Amar Ekushey Anthem 'Amar bhaiyer rokte rangano Ekushe February'. Areas around the monument and Dhaka University (DU) wore a festive look with murals, graffiti and street paintings comprising Bangla alphabets and verses on mother languages.



To observe the day, TIB also published a special e-card with the message 'Corruption is antithetical to the cognition of Ekush'.

## TIB take part in the Ekushey Book fair



TIB installed its book stall at the month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2020 following the tradition. The tenth volume of 'Good Governance Challenges of Bangladesh and the Way Forward' and reprinted version of 'Barnomalay Nitikotha' by TIB were released in the fair. TIB displayed and distributed anti-corruption stickers and flyers among the stall visitors. In the month-long fair, 78 members of 14 TIB-inspired Youth Engagement Support (YES) groups attended the stall and shared their voluntary experience of the engagement in the anti-corruption social movement. Almost sixteen thousand visitors came to the stall around the month of February, TIB's record indicated.



## YES groups observed the IMLD

YES groups of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University and East West University arranged rallies to observe the International Mother Language Day on 21 Feb 2020 in their respected Shohid Minar in the university campuses. YES members, YES adviser were participated the rally.



## CCC News

### Networking Meeting with like-minded NGOs Pledge to Strengthen the Anti-corruption Social Movement

With the slogan ‘Together against Corruption’ CCC, Patuakhali on 18 February 2020 arranged a networking meeting with the representatives of like-minded non-government organizations. The meeting at the CCC



Office was aimed at accelerating the anti-corruption social movement of CCC-TIB by building mutual understanding and collaboration. The representatives pledged to strengthen the anti-corruption social movement of TIB through networking.

The meeting was moderated by Md. Obaidur Rahman, Area Manager of TIB and chaired by Pizush Kanti Hari, the Convener of CCC’s CFG related Sub-Committee. At the outset Obaidur Rahman gave a Power-Point presentation on the different activities of TIB. The presentation informed the audience that along with its current activities on ensuring good governance in

education, health, local government, climate finance and several other service sectors CCC, Patuakhali is also implementing initiatives of building awareness in order to ensure free flow of information.

In the meeting, the discussants engaged into discussion to find out how along with the government agencies non-government organizations can cooperate with CCC in their initiatives. At the same time they discussed about the ways through which CCC can cooperate with other organizations.

Representatives of CWFD, Care, BLAST, Anirban Samaj Unnayan Sanstha, SWISS Contract, Coast Trust, PASHA, Patuakhali Mohila Unnayan Samity, CODEC, BRAC, Sushilan, Adarsha Mohilla Sangstha, Sukhtara and SDA took part in the meeting. The discussants opined that development is guaranteed if everybody could work in unison through coordination and collaboration. They pledged to work together in this regard in coming days. The discussants said, in future collaborative initiatives will be taken where there are scopes.

## Discussion Meeting with Land Authority for the Improvement of Services

To enhance transparency, accountability in land services and improvement of services to the citizen CCC, Madhupur organized a discussion meeting with Upazilla Land Authority on 12 February 2020. Md. Bazlur Rashid Khan, President of CCC, Mahdipur presided over the meeting while Md. Habibur Rahman Chowdhury, the Area Manager of TIB moderated the discussion.

In the meeting, among others Mohammad Abdul Karim, Assistant Commissioner (Land), Alhaji Abdus Samad Talukdar, Convener of CCC's land related Sub-Committee and Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Member of CCC delivered their speeches.

At the outset, AC (Land) Mohammad Abdul Karim highlighted the steps his office has taken to enhance services along with further plans that are on the pipeline. He promised to take steps required to enhance



service to the citizens. AC (Land) shared that he had already identified a number of gaps and had taken steps to address them. He also informed that there was an initiative of arranging citizen meeting at Union levels in order to raise awareness on land services. Steps to raise awareness of the citizens will be taken to check the reign of middlemen. E-mutation service is already being delivered, he added. Citizens have started dropping mutation application through internet. The use of information technology will reduce corruption, he hoped. He also pledged to work on the problems that still remained.

A number of recommendations on behalf of CCC were presented to the meeting. Among others CCC Member Md. Abdul Latif, Rokeya Begum and Assistant Manager of TIB Mohammad Jasim Uddin took part in the meeting.

## Sharing Meeting for the Improvement of Union Parishad's Services

CCC, Chakaria organized a sharing meeting at the 16 No. Dulahazra Union Parishad's hall room on 13 February 2020 in order to improve the quality of services of the Union Parishad. A G M Jahangir Alam, Area Manager of CCC, Chakaria moderated the meeting which was chaired by Alhaji Nurul Amin, UP Chairman and Alhaji Farid Uddin Chowdhury while Principal of Dulahazra Degree College and former President of CCC, Chakaria was present as the chief guest.

In the meeting, Runendu Bikash Dey, CCC's Vice-President and Head Teacher of Malumghat Christian Memorial High School delivered welcome speech. Secretary of the UP Humayun Kabir outlined the activities of the Union Parishad. Among others CCC Member Mohabbat Chowdhury, Panel Chairman Shawkat Ali, Members of Union Parishad, SWAJAN and YES Members were present in the meeting.

The meeting focused on the initiatives to transform the Union Parishad into an ideal, corruption free and citizen-friendly body. The meeting also discussed that pre-budget discussion meetings at the ward level and open budget discussion sessions will be arranged this year by the Union Parishad itself in order to ensure its transparency and accountability. The meeting stressed the need to bring out a magazine that would highlight the track of development works of the last four years. UP Members vowed to work for improving the quality of education at all the primary schools and the quality of health services at Union Health Center.





## Orientation on Right to Information Act, 2009

Youth Engagement and Support (YES) group of CCC, Kishoreganj arranged an orientation program titled 'Implementation and Campaign on Right to Information Act, 2009' was held at the Deputy Director's Office of the Women Affairs Department in Kishoreganj. Advocate Maya Bhowmic, Member of CCC, Kishoreganj in her welcome speech outlined the necessity of the act and CCC's role in ensuring its implementation. Harun Or-Rashid, Deputy Director of Women Affairs Department while inaugurating the workshop thanked TIB and CCC for taking such an initiative. Md. Fazle Elahi, Area Manager, TIB discussed the Right to Information Act in detail. He outlined the application process of seeking information.



In the orientation, hands-on training on the process and strategies of seeking information under the act was imparted. 63 applications seeking information was filed with the office of the Women Affairs Department. In the workshop 84 persons got a clear understanding of the process of using RTI act, 2009.

In closing remarks Member of CCC M M Jewel said, "RTI Act is the most effective tool in empowering the citizens. We need to get hold of this act for our own sake." Advocate Maya Bhowmic said, TIB and CCC can only make people aware and lead them towards using the act, but it can't take punitive actions against anybody. The Deputy Director in his closing speech said, Right to Information Act is indispensable in making organizations accountable to public. The orientation program was attended by 100 people comprising 80 trainees along with trainers and CCC, YES Members and TIB Staff.

**Editor: Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam**

**Sub-Editor: Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, Shakil Md. Faisal, Barkat Ullah Babu, Yasmin Ara**

**Write us: Transparency International Bangladesh | email: [advocacy@ti-bangladesh.org](mailto:advocacy@ti-bangladesh.org)**

**Join us: [www.ti-bangladesh.org](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org); [www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh](https://www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh)**