

Research Study

Build a corruption-free, nondiscriminatory and democratic country in the spirit of Ekushey: TIB



Dhaka, 20 February 2022: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for building a corruption-free, nondiscriminatory, democratic and well-governed country in the spirit of Ekushey (21 February), the International Mother Language Day.

TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in a statement issued on 20 February 2022 that Bangladesh's glorious language movement is about emotion, struggle and rebellion.

"With the spirit of Ekushey, Bengalis have repeatedly stood up against injustice and exploitation and achieved independence. We get the motivation to resist the evil with the unyielding determination of Ekushey. May Ekushey inspire a united protest against injustice, oppression and discrimination. At the same time, may it be a unique source of inspiration to prevent corruption," he said.

"In the spirit of Ekushey, let the beloved homeland be democratic, well-governed, free from corruption, non-sectarian and non-discriminatory. We want security and justice in the practice of language and culture for all irrespective of race, religion, tribe, and caste," he added.

Stating that the anti-corruption movement and the spirit of Ekushey are inseparable, he said, "The ultimate manifestation of the spirit of Ekushey was the achievement of our independence through the War of Liberation. But that is being undermined by corruption. The vow to build a society free from discrimination, exploitation and fear was the main spirit of Ekushey. But widespread corruption is destroying that."

The declaration of 'zero-tolerance against corruption' from the highest level of the government has only remained on paper as no stern action has been taken against those involved in large-scale corruption, he pointed out.

"Bangladesh remains stuck in almost the same position for a decade on the Corruption Perceptions Index, and our second lowest position in South Asia proves that. Therefore, in addition to the declared promises, taking all-out strict measures against corruption will reflect the spirit of Ekushey," he concluded.

Call for transparency in the recruitment process of Bangladeshi expatriate workers in Malaysia

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Transparency International Malaysia (TIM) have jointly called for public disclosure of the contents of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between their Governments on December 19, 2021 on recruitment of expatriate workers from Bangladesh for employment in Malaysia.



In a media statement issued on 8 February 2022, simultaneously from Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur, the two national chapters of the Berlin-based global coalition against corruption Transparency International (TI), urged upon the two Governments to take all preventive measures against corruption in the recruitment process including potential syndicated control so that the interests of the workers from Bangladesh and their employers in Malaysia can be protected.

Referring to recent media reports in both countries about the possibility of syndicated capture of the process of recruiting the Bangladeshi nationals who could migrate to work in Malaysia by a vested group of Bangladeshi Recruiting Agencies (BRA) in collaboration with their Malaysian cohorts, TIB and TIM expressed deep concern that the two Governments have failed to disclose the terms and conditions that they have agreed between themselves on such a subject of direct public interest.

This secrecy is contradictory to both Governments' national and international commitments to control corruption and ensure public access to information, the statement said. Not only that, the lack of disclosure is creating opportunity for potential syndicated capture of the recruitment process by a handful of BRAs, as widely reported in

the media of both Bangladesh and Malaysia, thanks to collusion with powerful quarters in both the countries.

The statement referred to media reports that while there are over 1,500 interested and legally authorised BRAs, by some evil design of some powerful quarters only 25 of them may secure the Malaysian government's permit to recruit workers from Bangladesh with the provision of ten sub-agents for each of them.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman and Muhammad Mohan, executive director & president respectively of TIB and TIM said, "The scope of manipulation created by the secrecy around the contents of the MoU will not only subvert the mandatory provisions of open and fair competitive process of selection of agencies for the purpose, but also limit the scope of accountability in the process and substantially increase the cost of migration for the Bangladeshi expatriate workers and their Malaysian employers".

Recalling that in 2018 Malaysia was forced to ban recruitment from Bangladesh in the backdrop of allegation of corruption including similar syndicated capture, they said, "We urge upon our respective government to disclose the MoU in full details for public information and urge concrete actions at the respective national level as well as collaboratively to ensure that the recruitment process is not held hostage once again to such evil designs of powerful syndicates".

The statement further said that migration of Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia serves the national interest of both the countries including direct economic benefits, and hence, TIB and TIM expect that the two Government will attach highest priority to preventing secrecy and corrupt practices around this mutually beneficial sector.

ACC should clarify the termination of its official for credibility: TIB

Dhaka, 17 February 2022: TIB urged the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to clear its stance on the recent issue of suspending its official Sharif Uddin— a Deputy Assistant Director in Patuakhali.

Expressing grave concern in a press statement issued on 17 February 2022, TIB said that ACC will suffer a deep crisis of credibility if it fails to dispel doubts centering on the removal of Sharif.

The media release reads, "All honest and courageous ACC officials working to prevent and curb corruption would be demoralised which would ultimately weaken the institution's position. TIB expects the ACC leadership shall dispel the confusion created over the issue, showing prudence."

In its statement, TIB stated, "While working in Chittagong, Sharif Uddin was involved in a

number of high-profile anti-corruption drives and cases, including-- large-scale corruption in land acquisition in Cox's Bazar, NID and passport fraudulence of Rohingya citizens, and irregularities in Karnaphuli gas. The question naturally arose as to whether Sharif Uddin was transferred from Chittagong to Patuakhali and finally fired because of the pressure exerted by the influential syndicates involved in these raids and cases."

TIB also said the ACC can rightfully remove any of its officers but the ACC must make clear why, instead of protecting him, it is suspending an efficient and brave official working to control corruption in the public interest.

EC formation: Prioritise transparency and impartiality, says TIB to the Search Committee

Dhaka,5 February 2022: The Search Committee must give the highest priority to transparency and impartiality by following the law properly to form a new election commission (EC), said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

In a press release issued on 5 February 2022 following the gazette notification of a Search Committee formation recently, the organisation said that there is no scope to deviate from the constitutional spirit behind the formation of a neutral, acceptable, and efficient EC and the people's expectations around it.

TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "We respectfully request the members of the committee to consider the names of persons who are well-known as honest, non-partisan, fair, objective and courageous in their personal and professional lives. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the nominees are not involved in any form of crime such as immorality, corruption, and default."

TIB also hopes that the search committee would make the full list of proposed names public.

"The law states that the committee will carry out its duties following the principles of transparency and impartiality, which TIB considers the most important factor," said Dr. Zaman.

"We would like to believe that this six-member committee – four holding the most responsible positions in the country and two eminent citizens – will fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to them, respecting their designation and position," he added.

EC search committee should disclose names for transparency and impartiality: TIB

Dhaka, 24 February 2022: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has demanded the search committee should make public the final list of 10 names proposed for the chief election commissioner and other commissioners.

Following article 4(1) of the EC law, the committee can disclose the names legally, assured TIB.

Issuing a statement on 24 February 2022, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "We demand that the search committee, which has finalised 10 names after holding frequent meetings and based on the opinions of the people, make the list public. There is no restriction to disclose the list under the law; the very law that allows the formation of the EC search committee," he said.

Rather, the committee has been given the authority of making public the list under article 4(1) for the sake of transparency and neutrality, said Dr. Zaman calling upon them to disclose the names as a part of their responsibility.

He commended the search committee for setting 'a positive example' by making public the list of 322 persons whose names were proposed by individuals and organisations.

TIB opined that the expected transparency from the Search Committee in the formation of the Election Commission is by no means sufficient for free, fair, and participatory elections in the country. It will depend on the role of the stakeholders, including the administration, law enforcement agencies and political parties, as well as the impartiality, courage and determination of the new commission and the election-time government. Nevertheless, disclosure of the list prepared by the Search Committee would be at least somewhat reassuring to the public.

CCC News

Sharing meeting with Mymensingh Sadar Upazila education authority held

A sharing meeting with Mymensingh Sadar Upazila Education Authority titled '**The overall scenario of the primary education system: Challenges and way forward**' was held on 23 February 2022 by the initiative of TIB-inspired Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Mymensingh Sadar. At the meeting, the education authority pledged to implement new educational activities to make up for the losses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was chaired by CCC Member Professor Jamini Kant Sarkar and moderated by TIB Area Coordinator Muhammad Habibur Rahman while Mymensingh Sadar Upazila Education Officer Jiban Ara Begum was present as the chief guest.

In the open discussion, the Assistant Upazila Education Officers expressed their views regarding the barriers to teaching the primary education system. They shared their

field-level experiences and way forward plan. A set of recommendations on behalf of CCC, Mymensingh, was shared in the meeting which included--- updating the Information Board in each school to create a free flow of information, introducing Complaints and Advice Box, playing the roles of all stakeholders in preventing students' dropout rate, stopping child labor, prevention of child marriage, regular attendance of students, adequate care for students by the teachers, paying special attention to marginalised students, awareness to increase immunity to Coronavirus, adequate safety measures, and maintaining health protocol, etc.



Online meeting with Kushtia General Hospital authority held to improve the quality of health care

Aiming to improve the quality of health services CCC, Kushtia, organised a meeting with the general hospital authority in Kushtia on 16 February 2022. The meeting was presided over by CCC President Md. Rafiqul Alam while the Superintendent of the hospital Dr. Md. Abdul Momen was present as the chief guest.

Pointing out the problems and suggesting some recommendations for a quick survey in the hospital, CCC President Md. Rafiqul Alam sought the cooperation of the administration in this regard.

Assuring to look into the recommendations, the hospital Superintendent Md. Abdul Momen said, "Hospital authority is working to improve the quality of health services in Kushtia. The scope of health care in 250-bedded Kushtia General Hospital has been increased now as compared to the past. Despite having the limitations, the hospital authority is working tirelessly to ensure the health care of the patients."

UP Chairman pledges for people-friendly services prioritising transparency and accountability

The Chairman of Ranagachha Union Parishad No. 9 of Jamalpur Sadar, Alhaj Md. Abdul Jalil pledged to provide people-friendly services to the people of the union by ensuring transparency and accountability. He made this promise in a sharing meeting with the authority of Ranagachha Union Parishad held on 23 February 2022 organised by CCC, Jamalpur. The meeting was presided over by the UP Chairman while Jamalpur CCC

President Ajay Kumar Paul was present as the chief guest. Members of various wards of Ranagachha Union, CCC members and TIB staffs were present among others

Pledging for a people-friendly Union Parishad, the UP Chairman promised that ward meetings would be held to assess the needs of the people, and an open budget declaration programme will be organised accordingly every year. Steps will be taken to provide opportunities to more beneficiaries in various social safety-net programmes, the Chairman added.



Virtual meeting with Cumilla Medical College Hospital authority organised

Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Cumilla, organised a virtual meeting titled **‘Hospital’s Healthcare: Challenges and Way Forward’** on 15 February 2022 with Cumilla Medical College Hospital Authority, chaired by the Cumilla CCC President Rokeya Begum Shefali. In the meeting, CCC drew attention of the authority to the current scenario of health services of Cumilla Medical College Hospital found in the recent result tracking report.

While attending as the chief guest Cumilla Medical College Hospital Director Dr. Md. Mahiuddin, said that the manpower crisis is the main obstacle to improving the quality of healthcare. The 500-bedded hospital is run with the authorised manpower of a 250-bedded hospital. In addition, more than 1000 patients are being treated every day.

The director also sought the help of all concerned to formulate a policy for operating private ambulances in the hospital. The meeting was moderated by TIB Area Coordinator Prabir Kumar Dutta and attended by the hospital’s Nursing Superintendent, Ward Masters, TIB Officials and YES members.

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