

National News

Corruption Perceptions Index 2019: Bangladesh now 14th most corrupt country; TIB stressed on political integrity to ensure Zero tolerance against corruption

Bangladesh scored 26 out of 100 points and was ranked 14th from the bottom and 146th from the top among 180 countries in the Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2019. As per the latest CPI, which ranks countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption each year, Bangladesh scored far below than the global average score (43) and its position remains 2nd lowest for the 7th consecutive years among eight South Asian countries- lower than all except Afghanistan. TI Bangladesh called upon the government to take more drastic and effective steps beyond pledges and short-term operations against corruption.

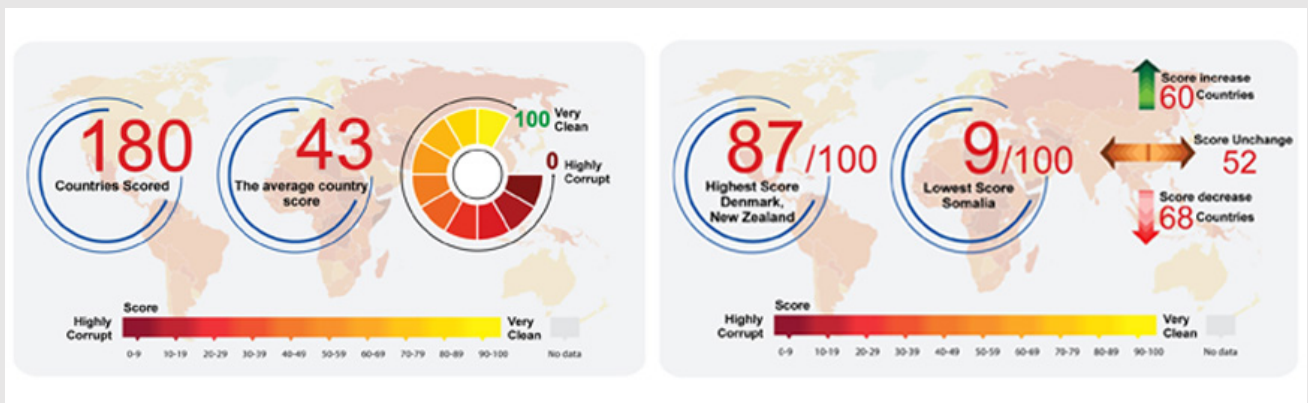
Releasing CPI 2019 findings through a press conference in its Dhanmondi office on 23 January 2020, TI-Bangladesh's (TIB) Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "Bangladesh's score is still much lower than the global average score of 43. Counting from top, Bangladesh positions itself three steps higher (146th) than in 2018 (149th) while counting from below and ranked one step higher (14th) than in 2018 (13th). Among



South Asian countries, Bangladesh remains the second worst – better than only Afghanistan, which is the fifth lowest in the global list. Also, Bangladesh is 4th lowest among 31 Asia-Pacific countries as per the index.”

Terming the performance of Bangladesh as “mixed”, Dr. Zaman observed, “the only good news is that the score remains unchanged, however, there is no scope of complaisance due to insignificant improvement in ranking. Rather, it is still embarrassing and worrying for Bangladesh as it scored far less than the global average score and continued being the second-worst among the South Asian countries.”

Expressing disappointment over Bangladesh's performance, Dr. Zaman said, “Bangladesh could have performed better if good governance was ensured through political integrity and strict enforcement of the law regardless of position and identity. One of the core factors which might have contributed to Bangladesh's



poor performance in the global index is the lack of effective implementation of the anti-corruption commitment or political will though we do have heard such declarations. Here, one of the main obstacles to the implementation of the Prime Minister's declaration of 'zero-tolerance against corruption' and 'not spearing anyone' is that the political and otherwise positions around power are considered and used as licenses for personal benefit and wealth acquisition, thus creating deficit in trust among public about end-result of high-profile anti-corruption drive."

Dr. Zaman also pointed other possible factors which might have influenced Bangladesh's position in the index, including deficit in political integrity and intrinsic linkage of politics with big money and corruption; high-profile corruption being rarely addressed; weakening institutions of accountability; impunity; deficit of effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Commission, especially in case of "big fish"; shrinking media and civil society space; lack of tolerance of dissent; political and policy decisions reflecting powerful vested groups with little reflection of public interest; and deficit in electoral integrity and transparency of political or electoral finance.



According to CPI 2019, among South Asian countries, Bhutan is on the top with same score and rank as the previous year (score 68, rank 25 from top) while Afghanistan remains in the bottom scoring only 16 with 173rd position which is globally the fifth-lowest, and lowest in the Asia-Pacific region. Except Bhutan, all South Asian countries have received lower than the global average of 43. India ranked 80th with a score of 41. Sri Lanka scored 38 with 93rd in the rank, followed by Nepal that scored 34 with 113th position. Then Pakistan scored 32 with 120th position and Maldives gained 130th position scoring 29, 2 points less than the previous year. Denmark and New Zealand top the CPI 2019 with 87 points, respectively. Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria are at the bottom of the index, with 9, 12 and 13 points, respectively.

Among others, Advocate Sultana Kamal, Chairperson, Board of Trustees; Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Adviser-Executive management; and Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, Director-Outreach & Communications, of TIB were also present at the event.

Stressing on the significance of creating a conducive environment for participation in anti-corruption activities by civil society and the media, Dr. Zaman said, "the countries which ensure and protect freedom of expression, freedom of information sharing, are successful in corruption control and usually perform better in the corruption index. As long as all obstacles to freedom of opinion and freedom of information, such as the Digital Security Act, etc., continue to remain in place, corruption will flourish. Therefore, It is the responsibility of the government to create a conducive environment for the participation of civil society, NGOs, media, and citizens at large in the anti-corruption movement. Drastic and comprehensive amendment of the digital security act is indispensable. The more a society considers critics as well-wishers and change agents to strengthen the scope of compliance and accountability rather than treating them as enemies, the better will be the performance in anti-corruption."

RAJUK mired in corruption, finds study: TIB urges to form a separate influence-free regulatory authority to ensure good governance

Irregularities and corruption have become so rampant in Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK) that the major body responsible for the development of Dhaka and corruption has become synonymous. Also, people do not get any service from RAJUK without paying bribe as it has become a mandatory part in all processes,



says a recent study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

"It is rare to find anyone getting services from RAJUK without bribes. Service-seekers has to get into a mandatory tripartite deal with RAJUK officials via brokers, where the bribe money changes hand at a fixed rate. The bribes too are taken in specific amounts based on contracts," said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman in a press conference organized by TIB to release the study titled "RAJUK: Governance Challenges and Way forward" at its Dhaka office on 29 January.

According to the study, bribery takes place in RAJUK based on contracts at the time of surveys as well as before, during and after the construction of buildings, and even at times of inspection by RAJUK officials although there are specific fees for approval of plans and other services. Bribe money amounting between Tk 200,000 and Tk 20 million has to be paid for building plan approval. However, the amount varies from individual service recipient to real estate developers. The amount of unauthorized payment made to the inspectors of buildings ranges from Tk 5,000 to Tk 100,000 for the service. The amount of unauthorized payment required for land clearance ranges from Tk 15,000 to Tk 80,000 for individuals and Tk 1.0 million to Tk 10 million for real estate companies.

The study, conducted between November 2018 and December 2019, aimed to identify the governance deficits, corruption, and irregularities in RAJUK, and detect legal, institutional and other challenges. In light of the overwhelming evidence of corruption and irregularities, the study also endeavored for the political economy of the corruption and irregularities persistent in the governance of RAJUK.



The study found that there are inconsistencies in different laws and rules when it comes to fixing the permitted highest height for multi-story buildings. Besides, the study found a deficiency of RAJUK's ability to

properly implement budget plans as the amount allocated is not spent fully. The study further observed that lack of transparency, accountability, participation, continued abuse of entrusted power, etc have also affected the overall governance of RAJUK severely, hampering the development of Dhaka. According to the report, since the approval of the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) in April 2010, it was revised 158 times till April 2018. It was alleged that DAP is defending the interests of developers, real estate businessmen, politicians, and other influential people by changing the class of land through a tripartite dispute. According to data obtained from the study, RAJUK has not enough manpower as 40.1 percent of its 1980 posts are vacant. The rate of working women is only 9.7 percent and allegations of irregularities and corruption also exist in recruitment, promotion, and transfer.

At the press conference, Fatema Afroz, Deputy Programme Manager; and Farhana Rahman, Programme Manager, both of the Research & Policy division and the researchers of the study presented the study report, accompanied by the research supervisor Abu Said Md. Juel Miah, Senior Programme Manager. Among others, Professor Dr Sumaiya Khair, Adviser - Executive Management; and Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan, Director - Research and Policy of TIB were also present at the meet.

Referring to the study findings, Dr Zaman pointed towards errors made during the inception of RAJUK which eventually led to the institutionalization of corruption and irregularities through the exploitation of loopholes, mismanagement, and lack of transparency and accountability. "Besides giving the mandate to formulate plans and implement development activities, RAJUK was also given the job of a regulatory body which created a "conflict of interest" in the organization and helped grow the culture of irregularities, corruption, and mismanagement within the entity, "turning the protector into a predator," Dr Zaman observed.

Dr Zaman continued, "RAJUK has also turned into development and commercial organization as the housing sector became profitable. In doing so, one of its core mandates, the regulatory role, has been overlooked because of its other profit-making ventures". In this reality, major initiatives taken so far have done very little to overcome its challenges. The initiatives taken for the protection of the city dwellers from flood and water logging are less likely to endure effective results. Therefore, the livability of Dhaka is being hampered severely.

Dr Zaman said, "The role of the regulator to make a profit in the name of developmental activities must be separated at any cost. Since the culture of the business organization does not seem to be changed due to the prolonged practice in RAJUK, a separate, unbiased, and free from influence empowered authority should be established to ensure transparency and accountability in the overall functioning of the RAJUK. Also, RAJUK can be kept with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the housing and real estate only by making appropriate amendments."

The study placed 14 points recommendations to overcome the challenges, including, formulation of timely and comprehensive laws in coordination with existing ones with necessary policies and guidelines. The study also suggested that the DAP (detailed area plan) should be finalized immediately after doing necessary revisions with recommendations from relevant experts. Besides, a separate cell should be established at the central level to address grievances with mandatory documentation of all the complaints. A hotline may be introduced to receive complaints. Its important recommendations also included, among others, digitization of all the documents of RAJUK, including approved plans. Besides, the detailed guideline should be framed, mentioning the process of online application for land use clearance and approval of the plan for the building.



TIB concerned on encouragement of 'extrajudicial killings' at Parliament: Urged to expunge the relevant part of the speech of the MP

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed worry over a members of the parliaments' (MPs') comment in the Parliament supporting 'extrajudicial killing' of accused rapists. The anti-graft watchdog also urged to expunge the part of the speech delivered on January 14, 2020. TIB has pointed it as a clear conflict with the constitutionally recognized rule of law, human rights and justice.

Citing media reports, in a statement on January 14 Executive director of TIB Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “some lawmakers expressed frustration and resentment during a discussion in Parliament on prevention of rape incidents that have been increased recently at an alarming rate where they demanded encounters to contain the crime. Such a demand is condemnable and alarming.”

“Upholding the ‘effectiveness’ of such a method in curbing other crimes, the lawmakers vehemently demanded the same method for rape cases. This demand accurately proves the merit of long-standing allegations of extra-judicial killings against law enforcers at one hand and on the other, it upholds the encouragement and support of the lawmakers for such an illegal method, which is an ominous sign for democratic progress, transparency, accountability and good governance,” Dr. Zaman added.

Dr. Zaman said, “Such an illegal demand in Parliament is nothing but an attempt to institutionalize the inviolable barrier on the path of justice, human rights and the rule of law. We want to believe that such comments are driven by emotion. Nevertheless, being lawmakers, how can they forget their pledge to defend the rule of law, justice and human rights. It’s very painful and everyone is stunned! Such a stand would push the professionalism of law enforcers to degradation. It will decrease confidence in the judicial process among people. The tendency to break the law among law enforcers will increase the culture of ‘trigger-happy’ policing.”

Dr. Zaman also said that such an immature comment was a dishonor to the democratic values of the state and disrespectful towards the previous observations of the High Court on encounters and the signing of the international human rights conventions by Bangladesh. “Every citizen of Bangladesh is undoubtedly very unsafe and concerned about the recent increase of rape incidents. Everyone demands that such a crime has to be prevented by ensuring exemplary punishment under the purview of law, not by violating the law. We demand to ensure justice by increasing the excellence of the judicial process and by emphasizing the professionalism of the law enforcers,” added Dr. Zaman.

Lastly, Dr. Zaman added “We’d like to urge honorable lawmakers that such comments are squarely inconsistent and in conflict with the sustainable development goals (SDGs)-16 which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. We strongly demand complete expunge of all illogical speeches and their expungement immediately.”

“The recent directive by the health ministry corruption-friendly”: TIB; demands retraction



TIB expressed deep concern and disappointment at the recent directive of the Ministry of Health that obligated prior permission of the authorities before publishing any news in conducting and publishing research, surveys, and any other information and news, holding photographs or videos on health services. TIB also expressed concern on collecting the consent of the authority on the objectivity before publishing the collected information. Mentioning that such directive will aid corruption in healthcare, TIB urged to withdraw it immediately.

Citing the content of the directive, in a statement released on 14 January TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, " At present, this is unthinkable and will create an irresistible hurdle against free flow of information, assured by the governments declarations and legally established civil rights, by the colonial and post-apartheid mentality of the Ministry of Health. As the obligation of the authorities to check the ‘objectivity’ of the information will not only block the door to all kinds of research and information disclosure in the health sector, as well as will act as the safeguard of all kinds of irregularities, corruption, misuse of states resources and expenditure. Although this is seemingly a ridiculous rationale for verifying information, it is not unreasonable to think that such a directive has only been issued to cover the various irregularities and corruption that have already taken place.”

Dr. Zaman said, "In recent months, information has been published in various media about the incident of corruption and incredible irregularities in the procurement by various government hospitals. In this context, it is not groundless to raise the question of whether the real purpose of this directive is to eliminate the possibility of disclosing such information and to create opportunities for corruption festivity. When the concerned authorities should initiate proper investigation of the allegations raised at various times to regain public trust, then, how this directive could be consistent with the Prime Minister's declaration of "zero tolerance" to corruption. TIB demands retraction of such directives and its controversial clauses immediately, in conformity with the 'zero tolerance' policy against corruption."



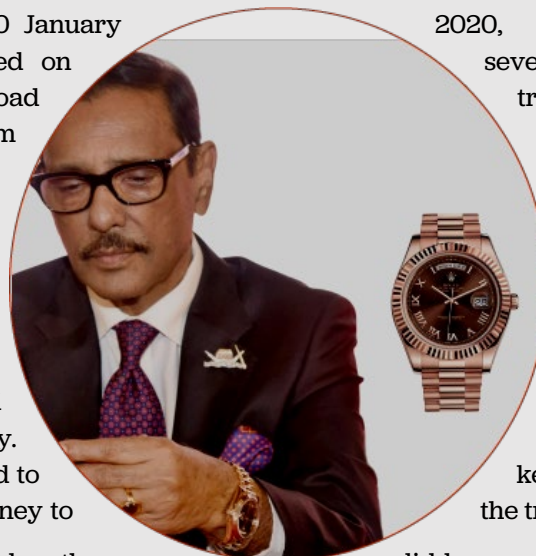
Referring to the directive titled 'Visiting Management of Government Hospital' Dr. Zaman added, "We desire that all of the essential things like patient safety, privacy, and cleanliness of the hospital will be addressed on time. However, in doing so, the prohibition on collecting data or information for conducting research on the quality of hospital's service and the prohibition on taking photographs or video of in-patient or healthcare activities within the hospital without permission is unwise."

Why did the minister's collection of the expensive watches not be stored in the 'Toshakhana'? TIB seeks governments explanation

Terming Obaidul Quaders collection of expensive watches "questionable," TIB has urged the government to reveal the countrymen that why the watches were not deposited to the 'Toshakhana' (national treasury), as per the rules, if they were gifts.

In a statement issued on 10 January Iftekharuzzaman said, "Based on watches worn by the road some reporters asked him Thursday. In response, the reporters is not only other more important

Iftekharuzzaman explained, Rules 1974, which was – Obaidul Quader, also the party, Bangladesh Awami the watches to the treasury. did not do so, or if he decided to the equivalent amount of money to



2020, TIB Executive Director Dr. several news reports on the expensive transport and bridges minister about those at the Secretariat on explanation that he gave the questionable but also raises questions."

"according to the Treasury amended in 2012, the minister general secretary of the ruling League – should have deposited People deserve to know why he keep the gifts, whether he deposited the treasury?"

Did he follow the example set by others, or might be raised, commented Dr. Zaman.

did he create one for others?- Such questions

According to media reports, the minister said that the contractors wanted to give "an amount" during the election, which he did not accept. What steps have been taken to prevent such immorality and corruption from such a position? Is someone listed? or will the list be published in the public interest at least? TIB wants to know, stated in the statement.

Is this consistent with the promise of zero tolerance against corruption by the Prime Minister as well as with the declaration of punishing every corrupt including own party members? He added that it would not be unreasonable to recall at the beginning of the Bangandhu Centennial Celebration, that the Toshakhana Rule was formed by the government led by the father of the Nation, updated during the current government, and the Toshakhana Museum was inaugurated in November 2018.

Dhaka YES Activities

Workshop on Video Documentary Making organized by the YES Group- Department of Development Studies, DU

A Workshop on the technique of Making Video Documentaries was organized by the YES Group- Department of Development Studies on 27 January 2020 at the University of Dhaka. Mr.



Imran Hossain Bhuiyan, assistant professor of the Department of Development Studies and Adviser of the YES group has inaugurated the workshop. The YES members who got training earlier from TIB on video documentary making and video editing conducted the training. Forty participants attended the workshop and gathered knowledge of

theoretical and practical aspects of making video documentaries and editing. Following this training, an anti-corruption video documentary competition will be organized in the near future.

Orientation held for the newly recruited members of the SAU YES

YES group – Sher-e-Bangla A University organized an orientation program for the new YES members and friends on 26 January 2020 in TIB office. On the 1st session, TIB staff Mr. Masum Billah shared TIBs Mission, Vision and activity as well as the code ethics and YES activities. YES Adviser and Coordinator were present at the session.



On the 2nd part, YES members shared their idea about engaging youth against corruption. At the end of the program YES adviser, make a speech to motivate the members to work against corruption.

Campaign on 'Consumers Right Protection Act, 2009' at DITF



Four Dhaka YES groups (YES-2, Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University, Asia Pacific University and Stamford University Bangladesh) jointly organized an awareness campaign on the Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009 at Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) 2020 on Friday, 24 January 2020. 43 YES members including 33 males

and 10 females participated in the event. The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) supported them during this campaign through providing leaflet and poster. YES members distributed thousands of leaflets and stickers on the Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009 among the visitors, stall owners and sellers of the fair.

They informed the visitors about the process of filing up the consumer complaint form and where and how to submit it as well. Besides, they pasted relevant posters and festoons in the walls. About 5,000 people were aware about the Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009 through this campaign. Monjur Mohammad Shariar, Deputy Director of DNCRP, Dhaka Division visited the campaign. He concluded the event appreciating the YES members for organizing such a successful campaign.



Study Circle of Anti-corruption and CPI organized by the different Dhaka YES groups

Members of Dhaka YES-1 organized a study circle on January 1, 2021 to promote youth patriotism, social awareness against corruption, and freedom from cultism and vulgarity. They engaged in discussions, questions and debates on 'Anti-corruption conscience of youth about Tyranny Resistance Day' at Meghomala conference room of TIB.

Members of Bangladesh Kuwait Maitree Hall, DU YES group participated in a study circle held on 27 January 2020. The topic of the discussion was 'Corruption Perception Index 2020 (CPI)'. Members discussed about the CPI 2020 findings and its measurement methodology. Total number of participants of the study circle were 1and all of them are female.

CCC Activities

Workshop with judicial stakeholders held in Khulna



A workshop titled 'Lower Judicial Court System in Bangladesh: The Challenges of good Governance and way forward' was organised by Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Khulna and TIB on 18 January 2020. Issues regarding challenges of good governance in judicial courts at local level were discussed in

the workshop and participants recommended suggestions to overcome the challenges.

Mr. Mashiur Rahman Chowdhury, honorable District and Session Judge of Khulna attended the event as the chief guest in the workshop, held at CSS Ava Center, Khulna. Prof. Anwarul Quadir, president of CCC, Khulna, presided over the programme.

At the workshop, Dr. Iftekhharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB, shared the perspective and objectives of the workshop while Md. Shahidul Islam, honorable Metropolitan Session Judge of Khulna delivered the welcome speech. Sheikh Muhammad Manjur E Alam, Director of Outreach and Communication division, TIB presented the brief report of a TIB study titled 'Lower Judicial Court System in Bangladesh: The Challenges of good Governance and way forward'.

Chief Guest Mr. Mashiur Rahman Chowdhury said, having a lot of limitations regarding manpower & logistics, courts try to resolve the cases within shortest possible time. We should try to take initiatives for overcoming the challenges, so that courts can provide smooth, fair and frequent judgments. Some corrupt persons involved in the whole system create obstacles in delivering services properly, he mentioned.

Dr. Iftekhharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, moderated the sessions and presented the summary recommendations that came up during the discussion. He said that recommendations gathered from this workshop will be forwarded to national level so that the proper initiatives can be taken.

In open discussion session, judges from different tribunals and courts, administrative officers, senior lawyers, legal aid based development workers and representatives from other organizations were participated in the sessions.

Information fairs held at 08 CCC areas

Different initiatives to popularize Right to Information Act 2009

To popularize and effective implementation of the Right to Information Act-2009, 08 CCCs organized Information Fair in collaboration with respective District and Upazilla Administration. A total of 229 government and non-government institutions set-up their stalls and disseminated their service related information in these fairs. Rallies, discussion meetings, talk shows, face the public programs, cartoon exhibitions, quiz and debate competitions, anti-corruption signature campaign, cultural programs etc. were organized at the fair premises.

Youth Engagement and Support (YES) and YES Friends members of the CCCs carried out Satellite Advice and Information Desk campaigns in the fair and oriented the visitors about how to apply for information under the Right to Information Act, 2009.



In collaboration with district administration, information fairs were organized by CCC, Pirojpur on 01-02 January, Kushtia and Khulna on 14-15 January, Brahmanbaria on 21 January, Madaripur on 21-22 January, Chandpur on 27-28 January, Faridpur on 29-30 January and Sreemangal on 30 January 2020.

Chief Information Commissioner Mr. Martuza Ahmad was present at the fair held at Sreemangal and Talukder Abdul Khaleq, Mayor of Khulna City Corporation, was

present at the fair held in Khulna as chief guest. Among others, mayor of different municipalities, senior govt. officials i.e. Additional Police Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Civil Surgeons, Superintendent of Police (SP), Deputy Directors of different departments, Superintendent of

different hospitals, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, locally elected representatives, members of CCCs, SWAJONs, YES & YES Friends Groups and senior officials from TIB attended at the local celebrations. Different awareness raising materials like issue based leaflets and flyers were distributed among the participants and visitors of these fairs.

CCC assists UP to strengthen transparency & accountability

CCC, Jamalpur organized an Opinion Sharing Meeting with 09 No Ranagacha Union Parishad of Jamalpur Sadar Upazilla to increase the quality of its services. Alhaz Md. Abdul Jalil, chairman of the union parishad, presided over the meeting held on 21 January 2020.



CCC, Jamalpur stressed on updating the Information Display Board of the union parishad, preparatory works on open budget declaration, Social Safety Net programmes of the union parishad and women's participation in the decision making process of the union parishad. Chief guest and president of the CCC Prof. Meer Ansar Ali said, CCC will always provide supports to the UP authority for increasing the quality of its services. UP authority should practice the transparency and accountability

on all of its activities and development projects. Ms Shamima Khan, member of the CCC, delivered the welcome speech in the meeting.

UP chairman Md. Abdul Jalil said, union parishad is trying to make it accountable so that it may become citizens-centric parishad. He sought supports from the CCC to practice transparency and accountability.

Among others, elected members from different wards, elected female members, Secretary of the union parishad, members of the CCC and YES group were present at the meeting.

CCC's support to increase the quality of education

Upazila Education Officer (UEO) of Mymensingh Sadar Upazila said that CCC activities play effective role to increase the quality of primary education. With the support from CCC, Mymensingh Sadar, the level of transparency and accountability will be increased at primary schools at the upazilla. Ms. Jibon Ara Begum, UEO of Sadar upazila, said this in an opinion sharing meeting with the CCC held on 14 January 2020.



CCC, Mymensingh Sadar organized the meeting held at Mymensingh Sadar Upazilla Education Office. A report of observation on 20 government primary schools of the city corporation area has been shared to the authority in this meeting. YES group of CCC, Mymensingh Sadar conducted the field based observation on services of primary schools.

Speakers at the meeting made importance to organize Mothers Gathering and Parents Gatherings more frequently, regular and timely attendance of teachers at classes, strengthen monitoring, effectiveness of School Management Committees, ethics education of students etc. Assistant Upazilla Education Officers of the upazilla were present at the meeting and shared their opinion regarding different challenges they faced.

Editor: Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam

**Sub-Editor: Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, Shakil Md. Faisal, Zafar Sadiq Akond, Md. Hozzatul Islam,
Yasmin Ara**

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

Join us: www.ti-bangladesh.org;

www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh