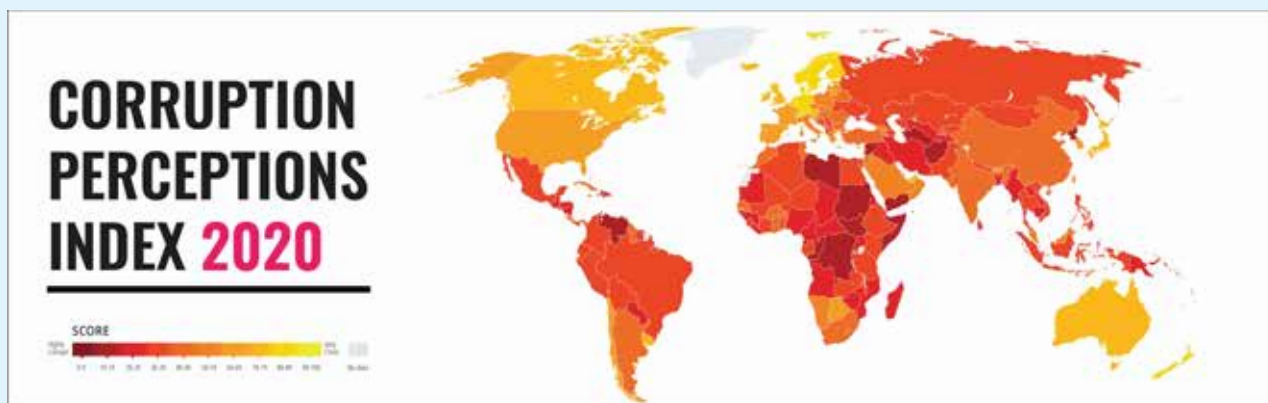


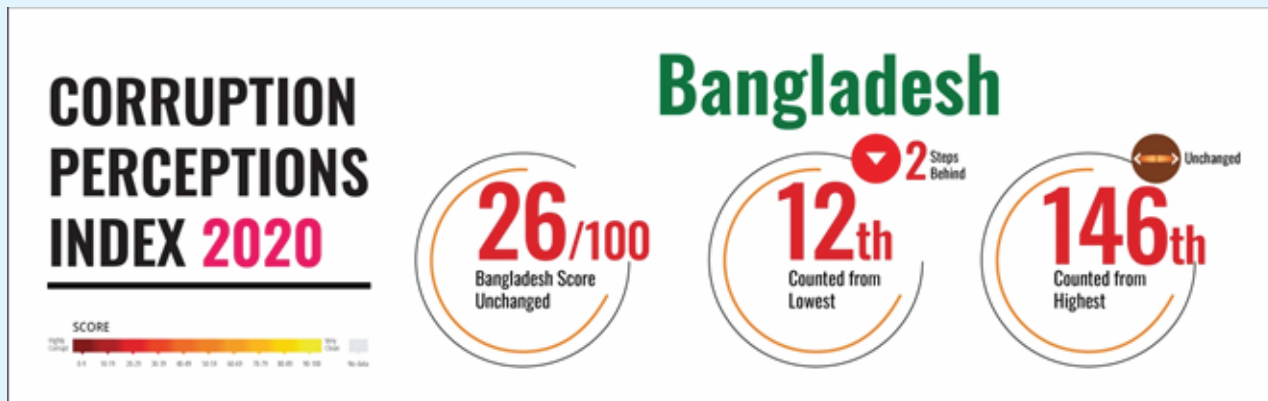
National News

TI corruption index 2020: Bangladesh's score remains unchanged for the third time



Bangladesh scored 26 on a scale of 100 among 180 countries in the Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020, while the global average score is 43.

Bangladesh is ranked 12th from the bottom; it was 14th from the bottom last year and 146th from the top among 180 countries in the 2020 index that has ranked the countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption.



Among the eight South Asian countries, Bangladesh remains 2nd lowest in score and rank – better than only Afghanistan, which has scored 19 and ranked 165th from the top. Bangladesh's ranking is the 4th lowest among 31 Asia-Pacific countries included in the index, better than Cambodia, Afghanistan and North Korea.



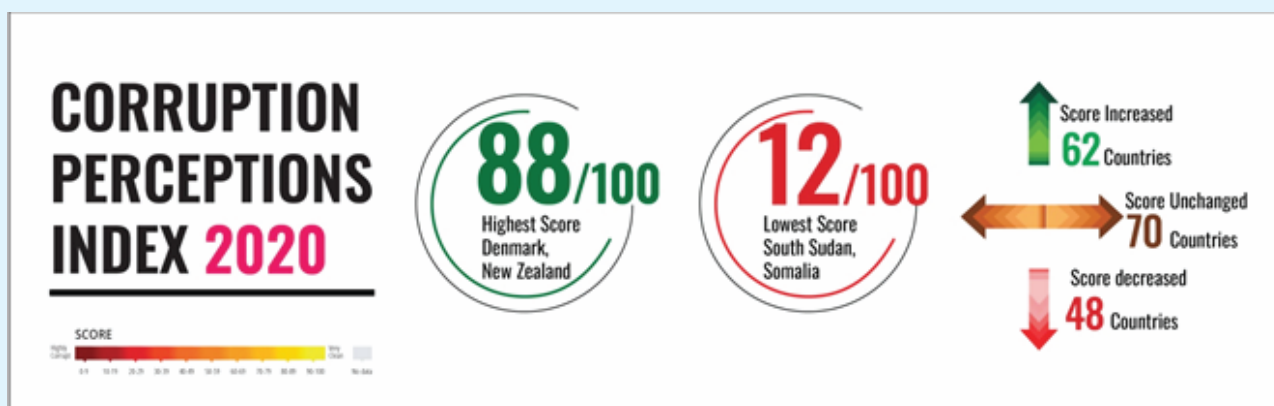
TI Bangladesh has termed the performance as disappointing and has pointed out that it depicts the prevalence of worrying levels of corruption.

“Bangladesh's score has remained unchanged for the third time in the index. Although it may seem comfortable, countries like Somalia and Afghanistan, ranked first from bottom in the Global index, have also increased their points by 3 points. So, there is no chance of complacency with Bangladesh's unchanged score,” TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in a virtual press conference on January 28, 2021, on the occasion of the global release of CPI 2020.

According to CPI 2020, among South Asian countries, Bhutan topped the rank (score 68, rank 24 from top) counting from the top while the Maldives secured 2nd place, recording the highest rise of the score by record 14 points (43) and jumped to 75th position from the top compared to 130th in 2019.

India and Sri Lanka ranked 86th and 94th with 40 and 38 respectively, emerging as the 3rd and 4th toppers among the south Asian countries. Nepal ranked 117th with a score of 33, followed by Pakistan that scored 31 with 124th position. Afghanistan, which has scored 19 and ranked 165th from the top, remains at the lowest among South Asian countries despite scoring three points higher than their last year's 16/173.

Speaking about the corruption in the health sector, Dr. Zaman said, “Explicitly exposed corruption in the country's health sector at the critical juncture of the Covid-19 epidemic has also hampered further improvement in our position. Besides, the Prime Minister's declaration of ‘zero tolerance for corruption’ is a manifestation of the highest level of political will, but its implementation is lacking.” He further added that “The prospect to improve is being lost due to ineffectiveness of the institutions responsible for implementing this declaration”.



The top countries on the CPI 2020 are Denmark and New Zealand, with scores of 88, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, with 85 each. The bottom countries are South Sudan and Somalia, with scores of 12, followed by Syria (14), Yemen (15) and Venezuela (15).

According to CPI 2020, countries with more pervasive corruption are least equipped to handle crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, corruption undermines the global health response to COVID-19 and contributes to a continuing crisis of democracy.

In his presentation, the TIB Executive Director outlined factors behind the disappointing result of Bangladesh, which included dysfunctional key institutions of accountability and sustained impunity, policies and actions increasingly detached from public interest reflecting pervasive conflict of

interest; and continued exposure of widespread corruption, especially scandalous corruption in the health sector during the Covid-19 crisis.

“Bangladesh's position has not improved due to the abuse of political power, erosion of political integrity and linkage of politics with corruption and criminality; shrinking media and civil society space, restrictions of freedom of speech, fraud in financial and banking sector and political control of public contracting,” said Dr. Zaman.

“The ACC has so far failed to hold the big fishes accountable. So, despite the highest political promises, zero tolerance for corruption has become ineffective. Besides, government institutions have been so politicised that they now operate like any other political institution,” he concluded.

The press conference also clarified that no nationally generated data, including TI or TIB’s research or that of any other national chapter of TI is considered for the CPI. Unlike TI chapters of other countries, TI Bangladesh releases corruption perceptions index only.

Produced by the research team of TI-Secretariat and launched in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International’s flagship research product, has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. The index offers an annual snapshot of the relative degree of corruption by ranking countries and territories from all over the globe.

For more information on results and analysis of Bangladesh in CPI, please click here.

<https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/index.php/en/research-policy/100-ti-reports/cpi/6244-corruption-perceptions-index-2020>

For a recorded video of the press conference on the CPI 2020 release, please visit here.

<https://www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh/videos/1065565347296708/>

For global results and analysis, please see here.

<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>

Policy Stances

TIB expresses concern and anger over the re-conviction of an innocent person in the wrong investigation of the ACC: Calls for accountability

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed deep concern over the professionalism of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) over the re-filing of charges against innocent people. After the revelation of this incident, the TIB called on the ACC to try to gain institutional acceptance by ensuring strict accountability of those concerned, calling it a meaningless attempt to avoid liability.

Observing the incident, TIB commented that if appropriate steps had been taken in the wake of the incident, it would have been possible to prevent the recurrence of such unacceptable incidents and on the other hand, the efficiency and acceptability of the ACC as an institution would not have been questioned again.

TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in the statement released on January 27, 2021, "ACC lawyer's confession in the High Court in the case of filing and convicting a person named Mohammad Kamrul Islam in a fraud case through wrong investigation and the investigation from the statement of the case was wrong at all stages. It proves that how weak and incompetent the ACC has become as an institution."

"The ACC has failed to learn from Jahalam's case. The investigation into an incident has been going on for ten years and despite repeated changes in the investigating officer, the ACC's statement in court that the complaint against an innocent person took place in good faith cannot be accepted," he said.

Questioning the efficiency and acceptability of the ACC as an institution, which may not be desirable, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman continued, "The ultimate lack of professionalism and accountability has led to a recurrence of the Jahalam incident. We did not know what action the ACC had taken against those involved in the Jahalam incident."

Dr. Zaman said, "The incident has come to light after the victim filed a writ petition in the high court as he was aware of the law and justice. If he was an ordinary citizen like Jahalam, did he have any option to be released from the court's 15-year jail term and fine?"

TIB expects the ACC to come out of self-indulgence and self-satisfaction and do justice to its own name through self-realization.

TIB urges to ensure maximum transparency in the process of collection and distribution of COVID-19 vaccine

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for ensuring maximum transparency at all levels to eliminate any kind of controversy and confusion in the procurement process, receipt and distribution of priority vaccines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to avoid the recurrence of rampant corruption in the health sector in the name of emergency procurement required for the medical activities of COVID-19, TIB has urged to follow the applicable laws and regulations to prevent irregularities and corruption in this large scale vaccination programme at any cost.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “The manner in which the Ministry of Health has tried to call the trade agreement G-to-G in the face of uncertainty over the receipt of vaccines is unacceptable. Similarly, the decision of the government to pay Beximco for their cost and commission for the directly purchased vaccines could not be clarified as to what policy or procedure was followed or what was the rationale or consideration behind it. This is contrary to the transparency of government procurement at any level. In this case, it is important for all concerned to remember that pandemic should not in any way become a festival of pocket-filling through unjust benefits for anyone.”

Highlighting the Ministry of Health’s indecision from the very beginning in getting the vaccine for COVID-19, the Executive Director of TIB said, “In the midst of the controversy over the uncertainty of receiving the vaccine, the domestic company Globe Biotech has received the necessary approval to run the vaccine trial. However, the Chinese company Anhui Jifai's idea of running a ticker trial is being criticised. Despite the complexity of its conservation, it has been decided to collect the Pfizer vaccine as part of the Covax initiative. The big question here is how effective is the decision to preserve and use the Pfizer vaccine in 56 of the 64 districts where special cooling systems need to be redesigned and special syringes need to be procured to administer the vaccine.”

Although the government plans to vaccinate eighty percent of the population free of charge, subject to adequate vaccination, there is a risk of creating more confusion about the implementation process, he said.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman added, “It was initially known that the second dose would be given one month after the first dose of the Coronavirus vaccine, but now the Department of Health says the second dose will be given at eight-week intervals, not four weeks. In this case, the big issue is why and how the decision was changed or whether the expert committee has been consulted or not.”

"If this immunization programme is not successful the return to normalcy and the economic recovery process will be hampered and the purpose of spending more than Tk 4,000 crore on free immunization programme will be defeated,” concluded Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.

CCC News for e-Bulletin on events of January 2021

CCC continues support to increase transparency and accountability in health services

Faridpur General Hospital is trying to deliver health services to the citizens but the manpower is not sufficient. The hospital authority sought support to increase the number of manpower from higher authority through an online meeting organised by the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC),



Faridpur. Aiming to improve health services, the CCC organized the opinion sharing meeting on January 26, 2021 where Superintendent of the hospital and Civil Surgeon of Faridpur district Dr. Md. Siddiqur Rahman was present as chief guest. CCC President Advocate Sipra Goswami presided over the meeting.

The meeting discussed various issues including providing health services during COVID-19 pandemic, effectiveness of Breast Feeding Corner, availability of medicine, display of medicine list, prohibition of brokers and the preparation for vaccination programme of COVID-19 to improve health services at the locality.

The Superintendent of the hospital Dr. Md. Siddiqur Rahman said, “The hospital has been serving citizens for 103 years. We have only 12 doctors against 37 sanctioned positions and two of them are dedicated for serving at the local prison. There is no doctor in cardiology, orthopedics and eye unit. The hospital authority is struggling and trying best to meet the expectations of its service recipients.” He requested the higher authority to deploy more doctors in this hospital through this online meeting.

The Superintendent informed that several initiatives have been taken to prohibit brokers in the hospital premises. The authority sought support from the Superintendent of the local police to drive against brokers. He said that the situation has now improved. Dr. Md. Siddiqur Rahman said the local health authority is fully prepared to implement the COVID-19 vaccination programme of the government.

The Residential Medical Officer of the hospital Dr. Gonesh Kumar Agarwala said, there is no person at the Radiology department which hampered its X-ray and ultra-sonogram services. CCC President Advocate Sipra Goswami said, the authority’s effort to ensure delivery of services is more appreciable. She asked the relevant higher authority to deploy sufficient manpower in this hospital. CCC will continue its support to increase transparency and accountability to the authority of the hospital, she added.

Convener of the CCC sub-committee on health issues Monowara Morsheda Chowdhury delivered the welcome speech in the meeting. Among others, doctors, nurses and other officials of the hospital along with the Vice President of the CCC Prof. Sipra Roy, other members of the CCC, coordinator and members of SWAJAN were connected in the meeting.

UP authority takes measures to curb corruption

With an aim to increase transparency and accountability at local government institutions, Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Sreemangal organised an opinion sharing meeting with No. 5 Kalapur Union Parishad under Sreemangal Upazila of Moulavibazar district titled 'Challenges and way forward of union parishad's activities during Coronavirus pandemic'. President of the Sreemangal CCC, Dwipendra Bhattacharjee presided over the meeting held on January 21, 2021.

Chairman of the union parishad Md. Mozibor Rahman Muzul said that Kalapur Union Parishad took different initiatives among its citizens to fight against COVID-19. He said that the authority tried to ensure proper delivery of government services and stimulus packages to the respective citizens and special monitoring activities have been implemented to curb corruption in the social safety net programmes and packages.



The chairman informed that the beneficiary lists of social safety-net programmes including VGD have been displayed in the notice board of the UP so that everyone becomes aware about the names. Vulnerable women were added as beneficiaries on priority basis in these lists, he mentioned. The chairman expressed his gratitude to the CCC for its support to uphold transparency and accountability in the union parishad.

CCC members asked the union parishad authority to ensure citizens participation on its decision making process through ward meetings and standing committee meetings. They urged to increase budget for the welfare of women and children.

Among others, elected members and secretary of the union parishad, members of SWAJAN and Youth Engagement & Support (YES) Group were also delivered their speech in the meeting. TIB's respective Area Manager of the CCC moderated the programme.

IER-YES arranged a discussion on 'Career Planning During the Pandemic'

YES Group of Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka organised a discussion on Career Planning during the Pandemic on January 23, 2021. Dr. Md. Khairul Islam, Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka was the keynote speaker. Professor Dr. Md. Abdul Maleque, Director, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka graced the event as Chief Guest and Sheikh Manju-E-Alam, Director, Outreach and Communication, TIB also joined as a guest. In total, 190 students from CCCs and Dhaka YES Groups had registered in the event where speakers talked about contemporary employment sectors and emphasized on acquiring skills that are fit for the current marketplace.

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