

National News

Bangladesh's foreign trade partners fail to enforce action against bribery, TI study finds: TI Bangladesh alerts the government calling for rigorous anti-corruption practices

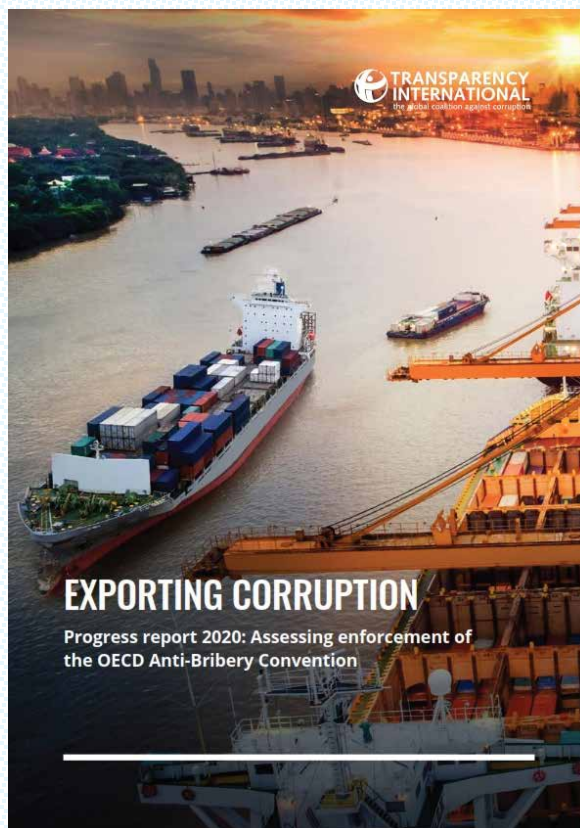
Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed grave concern that Bangladesh's leading foreign trade partners have been shockingly failing to enforce action against foreign bribery. Referring to a TI report titled "Exporting Corruption" launched globally today, TIB has alerted the government about the risks of huge losses of various types, especially increased money laundering. TIB has also called upon foreign trade partner countries to strengthen laws and enforcement systems.

In a statement issued to the media on 13 October 2020, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "It is shocking that the biggest global exporters are showing the worst track records of compliance of their own pledges against foreign bribery. Poorest performers include China, Japan, India, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, Canada and Mexico, many of whom are Bangladesh's largest trade and investment partners. We are alerting our government, foreign trade entities and other stakeholders to take rigorous corruption prevention measures in foreign trade and investment. Drawing the attention of diplomatic missions and other representatives of the relevant countries, we also call upon them to take concrete actions against foreign bribery as they have committed under UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, as applicable."

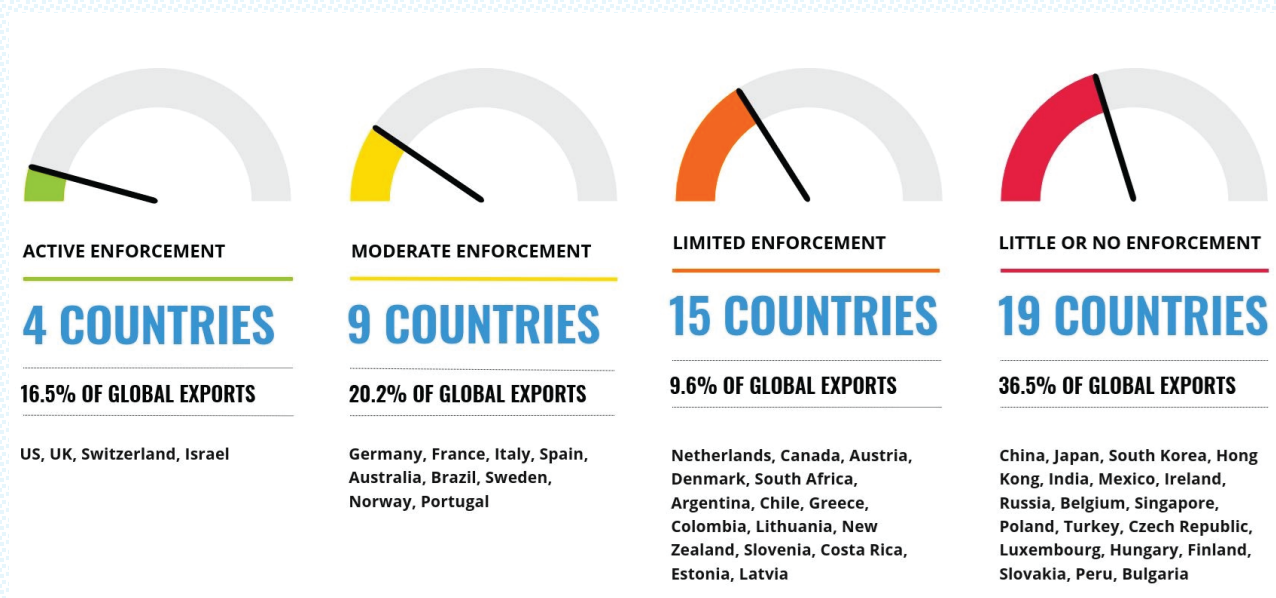
The report finds enforcement against foreign bribery shockingly low among half of G20 countries. It says that fewer of the world's biggest exporters are actively investigating and punishing companies paying bribes abroad.

The study, "Exporting Corruption 2020: Assessing Enforcement of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention", conducted bi-annually by the TI Secretariat in Berlin, finds that active enforcement against foreign bribery significantly decreased since 2018. The share of global exports from countries that actively enforce against foreign bribery and related money laundering is down by more than a third. Only four out of 47 countries, which make up 16.5 per cent of global exports, actively enforced legislation against foreign bribery, compared to seven countries and 27 per cent of global exports in 2018. In fact, most countries, 34 out of 47, covered by the study conducted practically no enforcement of their relevant laws.

China, the world's largest exporter, failed to open a single investigation into foreign bribery between 2016 and 2019, though Chinese companies have been allegedly involved in multiple scandals and



investigations by other countries. Two other non-OECD major exporters – Hong Kong and India – did not open a single foreign bribery investigation from 2016 to 2019. Singapore opened only one investigation and concluded one case with sanctions during the past four years.



“The timing of the report is particularly important for Bangladesh,” said TIB Executive Director, adding, “As we have been already struggling desperately with deep-rooted corruption from within. The problem has always been, and will now be further exacerbated by corrupt practices of foreign business and investment entities at a time when Bangladesh badly needs to expand foreign trade and investment. Time is ripe for the government and other stakeholders to mainstream anti-corruption practices in all sorts of business and investment dealings with foreign entities, the opportunities for which have been amply created by the UNCAC, of which Bangladesh is a State Party.”

About the report

This is the thirteenth edition of Exporting Corruption, which has been produced since 2005. The 47 countries reviewed are responsible for more than 80 per cent of world exports. From 2016 – 2019, these countries opened 421 investigations and 93 cases, and closed 244 cases with sanctions, including 125 with substantial sanctions.

TIB expresses concerns over leasing Harargoj Reserve Forest, calls to refrain from the decision

TIB has expressed grave concern over a government move to lease land in the middle of Harargoj Reserve Forest of Moulvibazar to a tea-growing company and over its labeling as Khas land in a controversial land survey. The anti-corruption watchdog has called on all concerned to refrain from taking such decisions which are environmentally destructive, suicidal for the country and unconstitutional. TIB has also demanded accountability of local officials who seek to destroy the reserve forest by sending wrong information to high-level officials.

In a statement issued to media on October 3, 2020, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said "Despite being recognised as a protected forest for hundreds of years, essential for the environment, labeling it as Khas land is intentional and very worrying." He further added, "The forest, known as the habitat of wildlife, is very important in tackling climate change and maintaining the balance of the environment. However, a quarter of the local government officials deliberately changed the classification of land in the digital survey as part of the implementation of this nefarious purpose – in collaboration with a seemingly influential quarter. This has led to allegations that the land could be leased on purpose, and the incident should be investigated properly and the responsible persons must be held accountable."

"Similarly, the recommendation from the Prime Minister's Office to lease the land to the tea production company while a case has been filed by the forest department against district administration, land record and survey department, and the Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Juri Upazila to collect the survey records is questionable. TIB thinks this will patronise the interests of the vested interests in settling the ongoing land dispute," added Dr. Zaman.

According to the investigation recommendation of the then-Director General of the Department of Land Records and Survey in 2014, no land in the forest can be leased. In the case, the people concerned were instructed to find those involved in this intentional mistake and take departmental punishment.

"Overall, a self-interested group is moving forward with a well-planned strategy centered on this protected forest. The whole matter has been misrepresented at the highest levels of government as a result of collusion of a section of local officials. Therefore, the authorities concerned need to proceed with utmost caution before taking any decision in this regard. At the same time, the tribunal can decide in this regard in a completely impartial manner, out of any kind of fear, pressure and apprehension, prioritising the environment and environmental interests. All concerned have to play a more responsible role in this regard," Dr. Zaman concluded.

Annual General Meeting of the TIB General Assembly held

The 4th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the General Assembly (GA) of TIB was held on October 29, 2020, through a Zoom meeting due to the ongoing pandemic. In total, 17 members of the GA attended the meeting presided over by Dr. Perween Hasan, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and member of the General Assembly of TIB.

Adopting the agenda of the meeting, participants reviewed the draft proceedings of the last AGM held on October 22, 2019. Executive Director of TIB Dr. Iftekharuzzaman delivered the summary of

the actions taken by TIB based on the decisions and suggestions made by GA members in the last AGM.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman also gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the TIB implemented activities both in national and CCC level during the period of September 1, 2019- September 30, 2020 including research, outreach and communication and youth engagement. The participants noted with appreciation the robustness of activities and expressed the expectation that the momentum TIB created against corruption would be taken to a higher level in future.

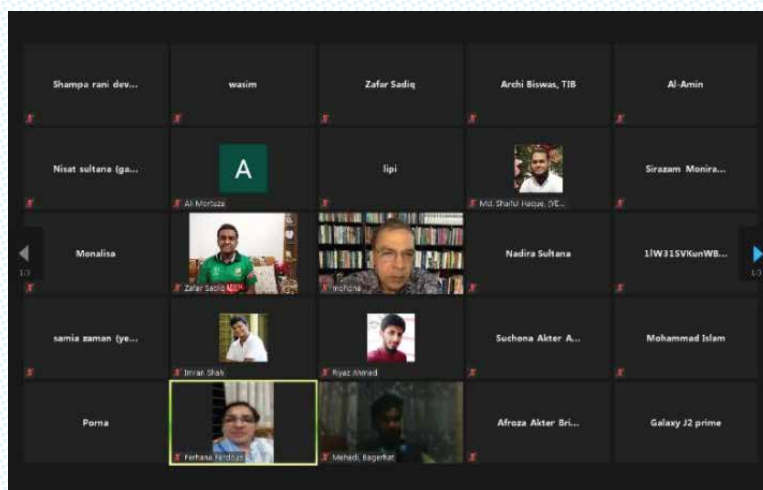
Parveen Mahmud, member of the Board Audit Committee, formally introduced the 2018-19 Audit Report of TIB. She reported to the meeting that the audit report was a clean report with some minor observations. The Executive Director briefly discussed the management responses on the minor observations in the report, most of which occurred due to COVID-19 crisis. Later, Director of Finance and Administration of TIB presented the salient findings of the audit report in details.

Members of the General Assembly actively participated in an open discussion and made suggestions on ways to strengthen and enhance the quality of implementation of programmes and projects. Dr. Perween Hasan, at her closing remarks, thanked all members of GA for their active participation and valuable suggestions.

Webinar on “E-watch: Activism against hate speech & misinformation” by YPAC

In the context of tackling fake news and hate speech in an age when digital media has become the new norm and has presented itself with numerous social, political and psychological challenges, the Young Professionals against Corruption (YPAC) platform of TIB took an initiative to make the members of Dhaka and CCC YES groups aware about how they can keep themselves safe from fake news, online hatred and misinformation. YPAC organised a webinar on “E-watch: Activism against Hate Speech & Misinformation” via Zoom on October 20 & 22, 2020. Shah Md. Imran, YPAC member and Policy Expert, LICT Project, Bangladesh Computer Council and General Secretary was the key presenter of the event. A total of 122 YES members from CCC and Dhaka based YES members joined this webinar.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director, TIB inaugurated the webinar. In his welcome speech, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said that the social media has significant and positive impact on social change and development but it has an opposite side where false information on social media is often putting people's lives at risk. Remarking this initiative of YPAC as a very timely step, he hoped that through this webinar YES members would be able to learn how to practice truth and integrity while using social media.



In his presentation, Shah Md. Imran shared the facts about how rumour or fake news spread like wildfire through fake websites and fake profiles of social media. He said it is the responsibility of a user of social media to identify which news are real and which are fake before sharing with others. He shared a number of ways to recognise a fake picture, news, website or social media profile. He also demonstrated the strategies to maintain personal security and safety in social media. In the concluding session, YES members participated in an open discussion and shared their questions and experiences with the speaker.

Among others, Director, Civic Engagement, Ferhana Ferdous; Director, Outreach and Communication, Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, and Senior Programme Manager of Outreach and Communication, Mohammad Tauhidul Islam attended the webinars.

YES group organised training on video editing-part II



 **TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
BANGLADESH**
Social movement against corruption

Training on The Basics of Video Editing- Part II

Date: 08 October 2020
Time: 3:00pm
Platform: Zoom

Facilitator
Md. Barkat Ullah Babu
Programme Manager, Outreach and Communication
Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

Organized by: Dhaka YES-2 Group

Dhaka YES group-2 organised the second session of the 'Basics of Video Editing Training' on October 8, 2020 via Zoom platform. Earlier, they also organised a session on the same topic on July 26, 2020. The participants also expressed their interest to have an opportunity to attend another session. A total of 21 members from different Dhaka and CCC based YES groups participated in the training.

Md. Barkat Ullah Babu, Programme Manager, Outreach & Communications of TIB facilitated the training session. He reviewed the topics covered in the previous session and then demonstrated how to do video editing on the Inshot and Openshot software.

CCC News

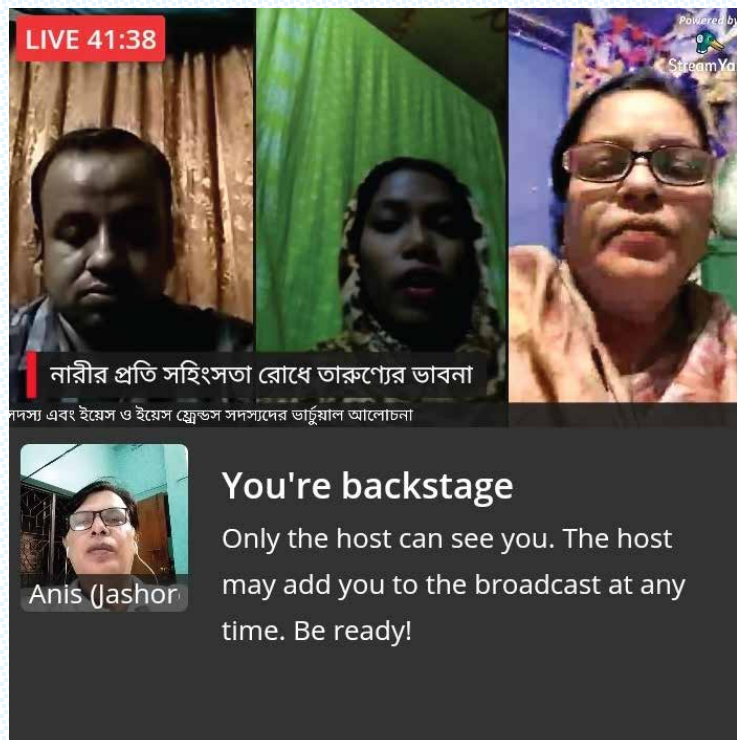
Demand of exemplary punishment for rape incidents across the country

Exemplary punishment for those involved in rape incidents across the country was demanded in a webinar held in Jashore on 31 October 2020. The webinar titled ‘Exemplary Punishment for Rape Incidents across the Country and Thoughts of Youth to Prevent Violence against Women’ was organised by Citizens for Transparency (SWAJAN) jointly with Youth Engagement & Support (YES) group of Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Jashore. YES group of CCC, Jashore shared the webinar (live) in their Facebook page namely ‘Dreamy Invincible Youth’.

Coordinator of SWAJAN, Jashore Mamunur Rashid conducted the webinar while CCC, SWAJAN and YES representatives of CCC, Khulna, Jashore, Satkhira, Bagerhat and Jhenaidah under Khulna cluster took part in the live discussion. President of Bagerhat CCC, Professor Chowdhury Abdur Rob, President of Jashore CCC, Professor Sukumar Das, Vice-President of Khulna CCC, Shamima Sultana Shilu, Convener of Gender Sub-Committee Jhenaidah CCC, Suraiya Parvin Moly and Convener of YES & YES Friends Sub-Committee of Satkhira CCC, Bharateshwari Biswas spoke at the webinar.

Prof. Chowdhury Abdur Rab pointed out that ensuring education of youth on violence and discrimination against women in families and educational institutions will reduce the tendency of violence against women. Prof. Sukumar Das said, “If the maximum punishment for rape and oppression of women is ensured, the incidence of rape and oppression of women will go down.” Shamima Sultana Shilu said, “Due to the influence of the ruling party’s identity, power and money, it is not possible to ensure maximum punishment for those involved in violence like rape.” On the other hand, Suraiya Parvin Moly said, “Violence against women is on the rise due to fear and unawareness to filing complaints.” Bharateshwari Biswas also said, “Stopping crimes like rape is not possible by law enforcement alone. Along with this, it is imperative to change the attitudes and raise awareness of people at all levels.”

Among others, Co-Coordinator of Jashore SWAJAN, Swapna Debnath, YES member of Bagerhat CCC, Humayara Khatun, YES member of Jashore CCC, Sabrina Afroz Meghla, YES Leader of Jhenaidah CCC, Umme Saima Joya and YES Leader of Satkhira CCC, Sakhina Khatun took part in the discussion.



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