

eWaves

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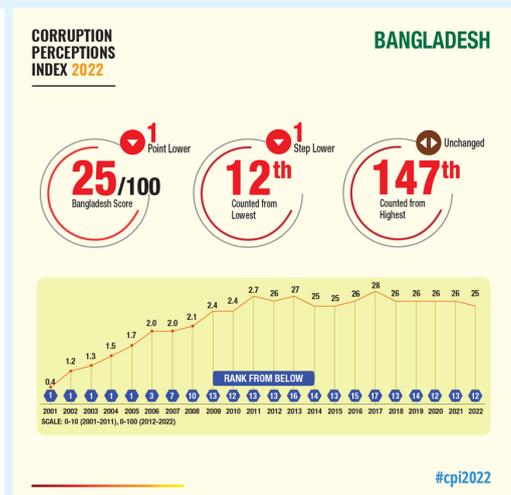
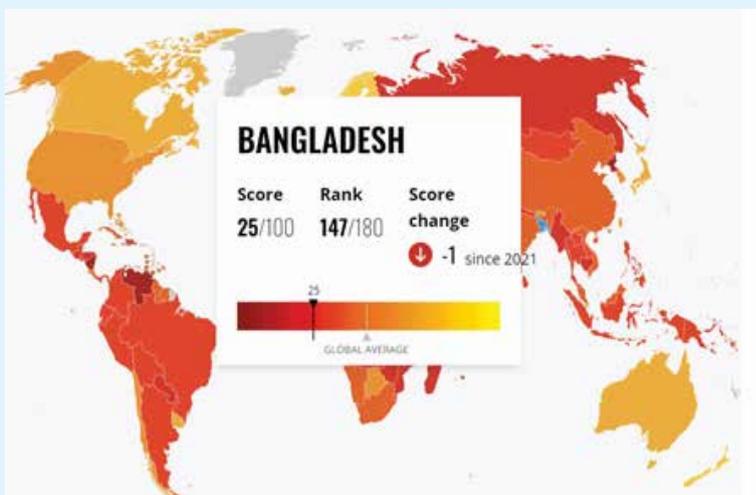
CPI-2022: Bangladesh continues to struggle with corruption



Dhaka, 31 January 2023: Transparency International (TI) released its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2022 on January 31. Compared to 2021, the overall situation in Bangladesh and globally have worsened. Bangladesh has scored 25, the 12th global lowest score and position, and remains second lowest in South Asia, above only Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has consistently scored an average of 26 on the index, and this year's score of 25 is even lower than the previous four years. The country's performance has been described as disappointing by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), as it has again fallen well below the global average score of 43.

South Asia has a worrying trend of corruption, with Bhutan being the best performer in the region with a score of 68 out of 100, which places it 25th in the world. Maldives, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan all scored lower than the global average of 43.



Transparency International considers countries that score less than 50 to have "serious corruption problems"; globally, 122 countries scored below that threshold. On the other end of the scale, Denmark scored 90, making it the least corrupt nation in the world, while Somalia scored 12, the highest.

Reasons for Bangladesh's poor result

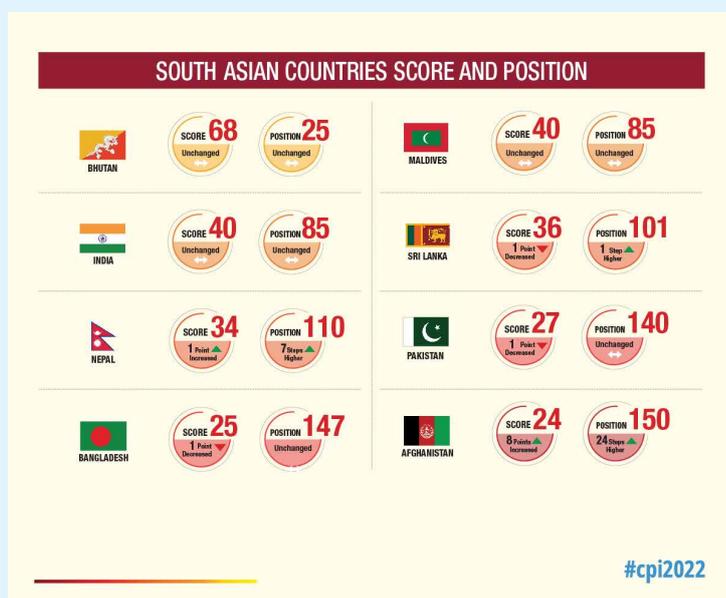
TIB attributes Bangladesh's disappointing score to multiple factors, including a lack of follow-through on the government's zero-tolerance against corruption rhetoric. Other factors, such as loan defaulters, money launderers operating with impunity, and a culture of fear for those who dare to speak out against corruption, including journalists, have also contributed to the perception of corruption in the country.

TIB's Executive Director, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, warns that if the current situation remains unchanged, Bangladesh could fall behind Afghanistan. He states that corruption is perpetuated by those in political, administrative, and financial power who abuse their positions to accumulate illegal wealth.

CPI 2022 highlights

This year, Transparency International emphasises that corruption and conflict go hand-in-hand, creating a sense of insecurity among citizens. Not surprisingly, most countries that rank low on the CPI experience extended conflict and social grievances. Corruption often leads to higher levels of organised crime and security threats, particularly in countries that score low on the index.

- No strategy for curbing corruption
- Corruption in the COVID-19 response
- Extensive money laundering and loan defaults
- Ineffective Anti-Corruption Commission
- Political and bureaucratic dependency
- Suppressing media and civic spaces
- Abuse of power and repressing whistleblowers
- State surveillance and overreach



TIB joins the 32nd APR & 11th National Scout Jamboree; thousands vow to fight corruption

25 January 2023: Thousands of jubilant scouts from Bangladesh and other Asia-Pacific countries have transformed the lush forests of Gazipur into camping sites where they sing, dance, talk, dine and take on challenges collectively. Early morning assemblies at the camps have also echoed with thousands vowing to fight corruption.



“...I shall strive to resist discrimination and exploitation against people. I shall always try to actively participate in all initiatives aimed at mobilizing anti-corruption social movements in Bangladesh.” (A line from TIB’s Anti-Corruption Oath)



Thousands of scouts took TIB’s anti-corruption oath during their morning assemblies in multiple phases, in unison with trainers, camp chiefs, teachers, volunteers and foreign guests. Many took home copies of the oath to spread it among their peers.



As part of the programmes, TIB also provided ten thousand wristbands with the slogan “Together Against Corruption” to scouts participating in the Jamboree. Scouts stationed in



four villages spread across the training grounds received wristbands in four different colours – orange, red, green, and blue. The scouts have proudly displayed wristbands daily during their regular activities, which is an encouraging reminder that corruption can only be uprooted if the youth raise their voices against it.

Additionally, TIB has set up an interactive stall at the Jamboree’s Global Development Village (GDV), where trainers, scouts, volunteers, and locals can visit the makeshift Anti-Corruption Cartoon Exhibition. The anti-corruption message of the exhibition attracts many to the stall, and it has turned into an attractive location for taking photos. Young scouts have reached out to know what TIB does and how it helps solve governance challenges in Bangladesh. Young children visiting the stalls have also gathered to take pictures with the TIB scout mascot cut-out, where the tiger proudly displays the message – STOP CORRUPTION NOW!

The 32nd Asia-Pacific and the 11th National Scout Jamboree is hosting 11,000 people, including 8,000 scouts, 1,000 unit leaders, and International Service Team members from India, Nepal, the Maldives, the Philippines, Scout China (Taiwan), Thailand, South Korea, USA, UK, Germany, and Canada.

The massive gathering of scouts from home and abroad started on 19 January and will continue till 27 January with the theme ‘Sabash... a fountain of energy’. The Scout Jamboree is held every four years at the national level, and international gatherings are held in phases across the globe.



The Netherlands Signs Grant Agreement with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

Dhaka, 19 January 2023: The Kingdom of the Netherlands, represented by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bangladesh, signed a Grant Agreement with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) on 19 January 2022. This is the first time that the Netherlands has partnered with TIB to support the social movement against corruption.



The grant agreement was signed at the Embassy of Netherlands in Dhaka by Ambassador H.E. Mr Anne Van Leeuwen and Executive Director of TIB, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, as respective signatories. Mr Cor Stouten, First Secretary of the Political Wing, Mr Jasper Kort, Financial Officer, Mr Jager Folkert, First Secretary Water Management and Food Security, and Namia Akhtar, Policy Advisor on Political Affairs and Public Diplomacy of the Netherlands embassy were also present.

Under the grant, TIB will implement its core 5-year project, Participatory Action Against Corruption: Towards Transparency and Accountability (PACTA), which has been ongoing since January 2022. In addition to the Netherlands, the other development partners of the project till date are the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK, the Swedish Embassy, and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) of Switzerland. Netherlands will contribute BDT 42.5 million to the project.

The PACTA project aims to contribute to promoting better governance and curbing corruption towards a more inclusive, equitable, and non-discriminatory society consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to research-based policy advocacy and stakeholder involvement, the project will deepen and widen participation of people, especially the youth, in the social movement against corruption supported by data-driven community monitoring to identify and amend governance deficiencies, promote transparent and accountable public service delivery.

Spytech purchase by Bangladesh govt raises privacy concerns

12 January 2023: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed concerns over the alleged purchase of spytech by the Bangladesh government, which can potentially violate citizens' fundamental constitutional rights, including freedom of speech. The anti-graft watchdog has called for formulating a specific policy framework before implementing the technology.



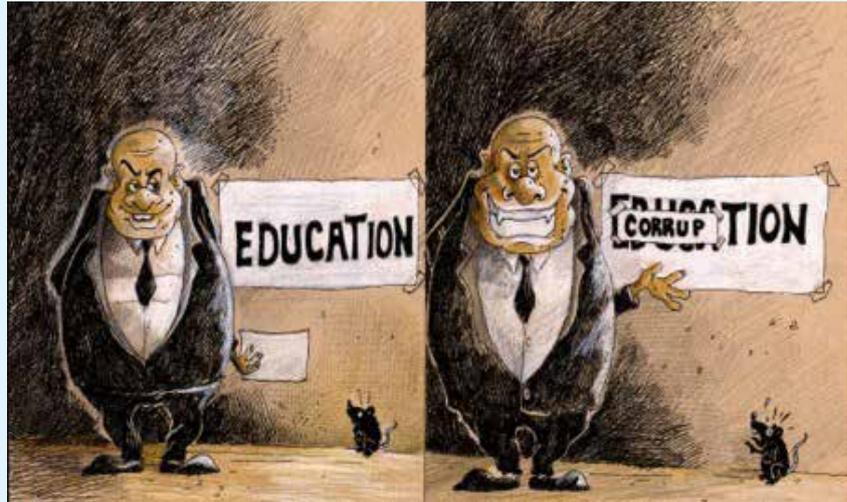
According to media reports, the controversial spytech, purchased from a company controlled by a former Israeli intelligence commander, can break into mobile phones within a radius of about half a kilometre. It was sold to the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center, a department of the home ministry.

TIB Executive Director, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, emphasised that the people have the right to know about the purchase of the spytech and its usage, as applying such spyware on civilians undermines their privacy, security, freedom of speech and threatens their lives and livelihoods. He also pointed out that there have been incidents of eavesdropping in the past, indicating the use of such technology by law enforcement agencies without proper legal policy.

Dr. Zaman also said that the government must prove the claims made in the report false, as phone conversations of politicians, ministers, business people, media personalities, and dissidents have been leaked in the past. He emphasised the importance of formulating a specific policy framework to protect citizens' privacy and ensure that the technology is used properly.

School holiday for a wedding reception; a shameless display of politicisation and abuse of power: TIB

12 January 2023: Teachers and education officials attended the wedding of the son of the State Minister of Primary and Mass Education, Md. Zakir Hossain, by declaring a holiday at 265 schools across 3 Upazilas in Kurigram district. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has commented that the incident is disgraceful and demanded exemplary measures to hold the perpetrators to account.



Following the “invitation” from the state minister, teachers from the 265 schools had to pay BDT 500 each to gift the newlyweds a fridge, a washing machine, and a gold ring. TIB has called for investigations into why the education officials and school teachers felt compelled to attend a wedding by closing down schools. The anti-corruption organisation has said it is another dangerous example of degrading the education system by politicising it and abusing power.

As per media reports, all primary schools in Chilmari, Rowmari, and Charrajibpur Upazilas were on a “forced holiday” as education officials, headmasters, and teachers attended the state minister’s son’s wedding on 8 January 2023. TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman has termed this a distasteful breach of conduct by the state minister and education officials and a shameful negligence of duties towards students by the teachers. He further said that this incident in Kurigram was a concerning example of how the country’s education system had long been held captive by politicisation and abuse of power. “The state minister, education officials, or teachers cannot shrug off their liability,” said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.

TIB has said that teachers have abused their authority over 3-days of reserved holidays under special circumstances and used it for attending a wedding reception. The government must clearly explain if there is any provision for using such special holidays for personal invitations. TIB ED said that closing so many schools and collecting BDT 500 from each teacher for gifts for the newlyweds would be impossible without the active participation and collusion of the District and Upazila education officials. “What is the explanation for the state minister’s family disgracefully receiving this gift? We have to know what the future of our education system will be if accountability is not ensured over this incident. For the sake of the students, the government must explain why this incident happened in the first place,” said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman.

TIB mourns the loss of Syeda Ruhi Gaznavi

Dhaka, 15 January 2023: TIB mourns the loss of Syeda Ruhi Gaznavi, a founding member of the Board of Trustees and an influential figure in the handicraft movement in Bangladesh. In a statement, TIB's Executive Director praised her role in establishing the organisation and her dedication to anti-corruption efforts and good governance.



Syeda Ruhi Ghaznavi played an active role in advancing anti-corruption and good governance initiatives in Bangladesh until her resignation in 2020. TIB credits her policy advice and guidance with inspiring their continued work in these areas.

TIB and its various committees and groups, including SANAK, ACG, and YES, are also deeply saddened by the passing of Syeda Ruhi Gaznavi. As a founding member of the Board of Trustees and a champion of good governance and anti-corruption efforts, she will be remembered as an inspiration to all who knew her.

Nationwide programmes mark the International Anti-Corruption Day

11 January 2023: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has commemorated this year's International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) by carrying out various programmes across the country at local and national levels. In line with the United Nation's theme 'Uniting the World against Corruption', TIB has engaged people in Dhaka and 45 working areas with the slogan "United Against Corruption".



TIB's Civic Engagement division worked alongside local government administration, law enforcement agencies, and civil society leaders to spread the anti-corruption message.



Anti-corruption activists participated in human chains organised jointly by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and TIB. The human chains also chanted slogans calling for the end of irregularities and corruption in all sectors. The social movements against corruption also involved school children from different localities.

TIB's YES volunteers, Active Citizen's Group (ACG), and Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) from 45 areas also participated in rallies, discussion sessions, and information fairs.



A group of volunteer cyclists also carried the anti-corruption message across their Upazila to make people aware of the unity against corruption.

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