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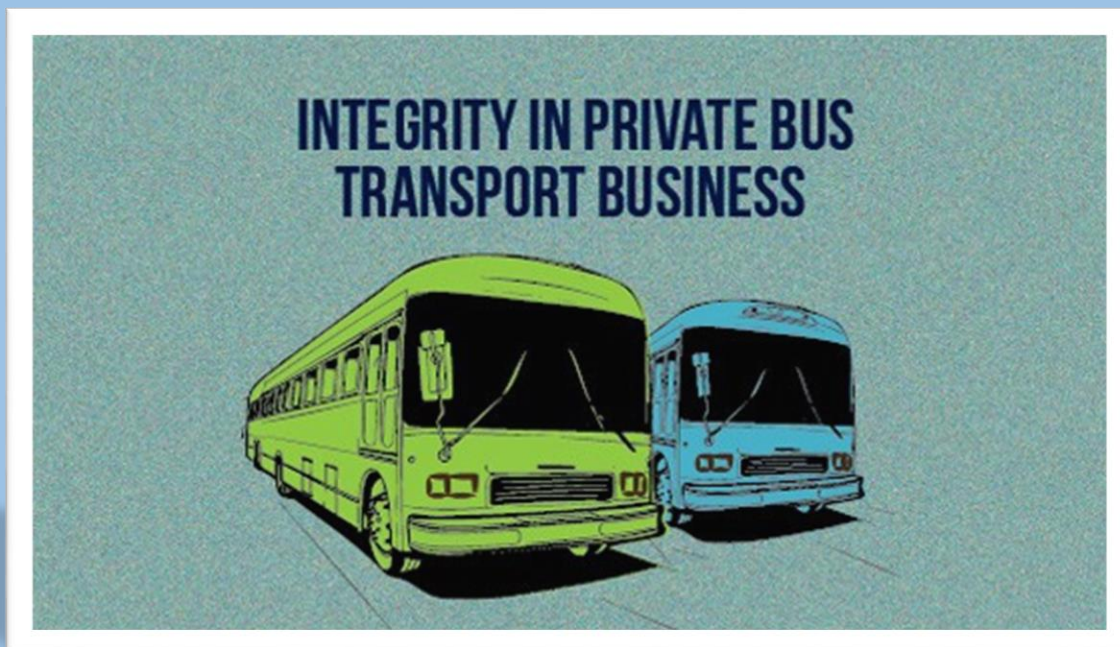
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(Research Release)
**Private Bus Transport Business: Owners, Workers Associations
More Powerful than Government**



Dhaka, 5 March 2024: The private bus transport business in Bangladesh is heavily affected by corruption from top to bottom, commented Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). The anti-corruption organization stated this while releasing its research study 'Integrity in Private Bus Transport Business' at a press conference on Tuesday.

TIB further mentioned that the sector is held hostage by the bus owner-worker associations and syndicate that are backed by the ruling political party, and in some cases, even the government seems powerless before them. To overcome the challenges in the sector, TIB presented a 15-point charter of recommendations.

Mentioning political patronage and role of syndicates as the root causes of irregularities and corruption in the bus transport sector, TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The private bus transport business is entirely plagued by irregularities and corruption. Its root cause is the collusion between bus owners' and workers' associations, empowered by political patronage. According to our research, almost 92 per cent of the bus owners are associated with political parties, of whom 80 per cent are from the ruling political party and 12 per cent are from other parties. As a result, despite expectations centering the transport sector that it would become a public-friendly one, in reality, it has been held hostage by the owners' and workers' associations, and their syndicate is taking undue advantage of this hostage situation. The hostage situation is so severe that the owners and workers, due to their collision, seem more powerful than the government. The government is failing in implementing its own laws and regulations to control corruption and irregularities in the private bus transport sector. Also, the expected services cannot

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be ensured, and at the same time, general workers in the sector are being deprived of their basic rights including a fair wage.”

Criticizing the role of the stakeholders associated with the transport sector, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman added, “Extortion and illegal transactions of various dimensions take place in bus transport. The city corporations, highway police, and owners’ and workers’ associations work in collusion in this regard. The BRTA has definitely failed to discharge its specified duties, and to mask the failures the agency is giving the excuse of manpower shortage. The corruption and irregularities alongside illicit transactions in the BRTA are taking place in collusion. The situation is becoming more critical, as all the concerned are sharing the economic benefit, made through corruption. We call for exemplary punitive measures against everyone involved in corruption and irregularities in this sector. Because, corruption thrives further when it is uncontrolled.”

The TIB research report shows that controlling of the transport business by the ruling party members and its patronised quarter is at the centre of rampant corruption and irregularities in the bus transport sector. Most of the leaders of the owners’ associations in the sector are associated with the ruling party. The 22 companies (13.1 per cent), included in TIB’s study, own 81.4 per cent of the bus transport business. Almost 92 per cent members of the board of directors of these large bus companies are directly affiliated with the ruling party (80 per cent) and other political parties (12 per cent). They have monopolised authority in the owners’ and workers’ associations alongside creating impediments in law formulation and implementation by capturing policy mechanisms, thus taking the sector hostage.

Another example of the severity of irregularities and corruption in the sector has come up in the comments made by 40.9 per cent of the transport workers participating in the study, who alleged that one or more buses in their respective companies do not have registration or other necessary certificates. Of them, 24 per cent of the workers have mentioned that some buses of their companies do not have fitness certificates, while 22 per cent have mentioned that the buses do not have route permits. Moreover, there is a scarcity of professionally trained and licensed drivers for private buses. According to media reports, there are 63.5 per cent licensed drivers against the vehicles registered with the BRTA. Furthermore, 11.9 per cent bus owners, participating in TIB’s survey, said their companies have one or more unlicensed drivers or drivers with expired licenses. In addition, 22.2 per cent of the workers, participating in the study, said the drivers operate vehicles and conductors, helpers and supervisors discharge their duties taking alcohol or narcotics. Moreover, the drivers use mobile phones while driving, which causes accidents alongside casualties.

Lack of important maintenance, inclusion of additional seats, and overcharging fares are among other irregularities in the bus transport sector. According to 89.2 per cent workers of the city services and 60.4 per cent workers of the inter-city services, participating in the study, said their affiliated companies do not change and maintain tyres, engine oils, brakes, etc, following the rules. As the buses of their respective companies are not maintained regularly, the vehicles emit black smoke. In many cases, the bus owners change the interior design of the vehicles to add additional

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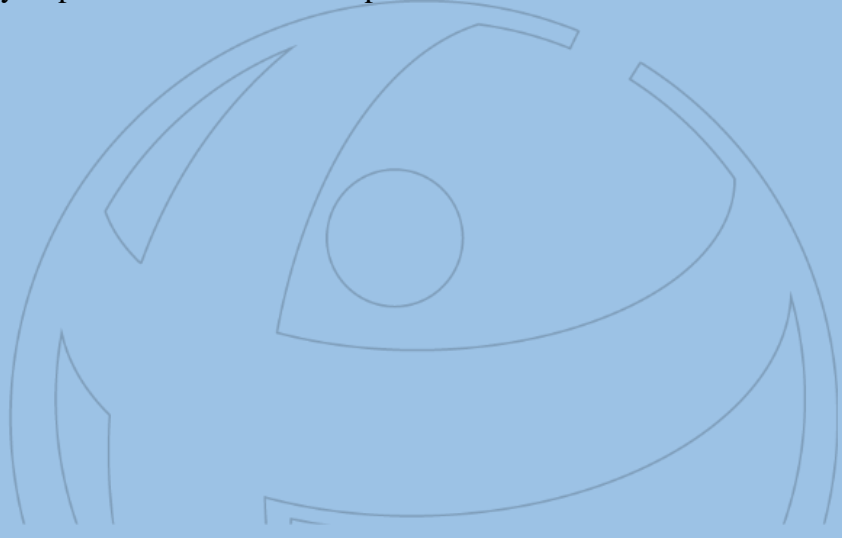
seats. Some 40.4 per cent workers of the city services said their companies changed the design of the buses to add more seats.

Another concerning information is that 35.2 per cent of the female passengers, participating in the study, said they experienced or observed sexual harassment by helpers or co-passengers. The rate of sexual harassment is 31.3 per cent for the inter-city buses, and 42.6 per cent for the city services. Of the victims, 83.2 per cent were harassed by co-passengers and 64.3 by helpers.

TIB's research report has also highlighted that the bus owners and workers have to annually pay an estimated BDT 1,060 crores at different levels as bribes. Of the amount, they pay about BDT 25 crores to the groups with political party affiliation, who extort money on roads. Moreover, bus owners and workers pay or are forced to pay bribes for political rallies, observance of various days, violating traffic rules on roads, for parking vehicles outside the terminals, and illegal 'token' based trades. The highest amount, more than BDT 900 crores, is paid to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) as bribes for registration, certification, and renewal of vehicles.

The research was conducted by TIB researchers Md. Nuruzzaman Forhad, Farhana Rahman, and Mohammad Nure Alam. Adviser - TIB Executive Management Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Director of Research and Policy Division Md. Badiuzzaman, and Director of Outreach and Communication Division Mohammad Tauhidul Islam were present in the press conference, among others.

TIB has put forward a series of recommendations aimed at upholding integrity in the private bus transport business, addressing the myriad challenges currently faced by the sector. These recommendations span various aspects of operations and governance, emphasizing the need for comprehensive reform to ensure fair practices and efficient service delivery. Under the category of worker and financial management, TIB advocates for cessation of informal recruitment practices and issuance of written appointment letters to workers in accordance with the Labor Act 2006. TIB also recommends proactive measures to construct essential infrastructure and implementation of e-ticketing systems to streamline service delivery alongside necessary policies for financing and administration, human resource management, gender, grievance registration and redressing, open information, procurement, and ticketing; implementation of the National Integrity Strategy, specially by preparing and implementing a code of conduct for the bus owners and workers; and taking necessary measures to fully implement the Road Transport Act 2018.



(Press Statement)
Tragic Loss of Lives in Bailey Road Inferno
Get rid of the tendency to evade responsibility;
Ensure exemplary punishments of the real culprits: TIB



Dhaka, 14 March 2024: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) voiced deep concern over the culture of evading responsibility by the authorities concerned in the wake of frequent fire incidents and subsequent tragic deaths. Underscoring the issues like political apathy, institutional inaction, lack of coordination, rampant corruption, and absence of accountability as the factors behind the fire tragedies, TIB called for ensuring exemplary punishment of those involved in negligence of duty as well as irregularities and corruption.

On 29 February 2024, a deadly fire broke out at a building in the capital's Bailey Road area, resulting in the death of 46 persons. Following the incident, TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, in a press release, said, "The court has issued several directives to prevent fire incidents on different occasions, and the inquiry committees and taskforces formed after those incidents have also given many recommendations. However, most of these recommendations have not been implemented due to ineffectiveness, irresponsibility, lack of coordination and planning, irregularities and corruption of the regulatory and supervisory authorities as well as lack of accountability of the officials concerned."

"On the other hand, after the fire incidents, the law-enforcement agencies, RAJUK, city corporations, fire service, and other organizations concerned are conducting raids as usual and arresting people, who are not directly involved with the incidents, without focusing on the root causes of the problem. As a result, the authorities concerned are able to evade their responsibility and hide the real culprits."

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Dr. Zaman further said, “The main reasons behind these recurring fire incidents and tragic loss of lives are non-compliance with the relevant laws in building construction as well as conducting unauthorised activities in the buildings by the owners. RAJUK, city corporations, and fire service, tasked with the responsibility of overseeing these matters, are aware of these irregularities. Some officials and employees of these institutions, through approval of defective buildings without proper supervision, are helping others to conduct risky business activities, thus leading to irregularities and corruption. As a result of this collusion, the real culprits are enjoying impunity.”

Earlier, in 2020, TIB conducted a research on the challenges of good governance in ensuring fire safety in Old Dhaka, following the deadly fire incidents of Nimtoli and Churihatta. The research revealed that despite repetition of tragic fire incidents, illegal chemical warehouses were established and their businesses were conducted in the residential areas - due to lack of political will as well as collusion among the traders, building owners, public representatives, and authorities concerned.

Mentioning that the experience and results of the research on fire incidents in Old Dhaka are relevant to the recent fire incidents, the TIB ED added, “Short, medium, and long-term plans should be adopted and implemented to stop recurrence of fire incidents effectively. Besides, the supervisory system should be strengthened immediately to control operation of commercial buildings and risky business activities in the residential areas. Tragic deaths in fire incidents have become a normal phenomenon for not ensuring exemplary punishments of the real culprits. This situation reflects a pathetic example of lack of value for the lives of ordinary people to the government and others concerned. TIB demands accountability and punitive actions against all quarters, involved in negligence of duty and corruption, without harassing innocent people.”

TIB also demanded providing due compensation to the fire victims and taking steps for their proper rehabilitation through bringing necessary changes to the relevant laws.

(Press Statement)

Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979 Amendment Omitting Asset Disclosure Mandate Will Encourage Corruption, says TIB



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Dhaka, 19 March 2024: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has strongly criticized the move to amend the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, which seeks to eliminate the mandatory asset disclosure requirement for the government officials. The anti-corruption organization has opined that such a move would provide impunity to around 15 lakh government officials while protecting and encouraging corruption. Expressing deep concern, TIB has stressed the urgent need to step away from the move to amend the rules.

According to media sources, the Ministry of Public Administration has commenced procedures to amend the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, with the intention of removing the mandatory requirement of asset disclosure for the public officials. After scrutiny of the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs, the draft amendment is slated for review by the secretary committee on administrative development affairs.

TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman has criticized the initiative to eliminate the mandatory asset disclosure provision, warning that it would exacerbate corruption among the government officials. He has said, "The proposed amendment in the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979 is completely against the government's election manifesto as well as its zero-tolerance policy against corruption, announced from the top brass. Initially, the rules required yearly asset disclosure, but it was later relaxed to every five years due to the officials' reluctance. Still, compliance in this regard has been poor."

"Now, eliminating this provision will encourage rampant corruption among the officials and also create ample opportunities for them to accumulate illegal asset. Without their compulsory asset disclosure, corruption within the government will proliferate unchecked, making it harder for the citizens to get due services in the government offices and also derailing the aspiration of ensuring good governance," he has noted.

The logic of taking asset-related information of the government officers and employees directly from annual income tax returns, filed with the National Board of Revenue (NBR), is practically meaningless. According to the Income Tax Act, 2023, such practice is not possible. As per its sections 309(2) and 309(3), no authority can order any public servant to present, testify or produce as evidence any tax returns, accounts or documents under this Act. It means that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) cannot access the income tax returns of any person, accused of corruption or accumulation of assets disproportionate to legitimate income, without a court order. As a result, instead of facing accountability, the corrupt employees would get new protection through the proposed amendment.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), adopted in 2003, called for annual submission and review of assets of all public servants and people's representatives. The commitment was reiterated through the country's National Integrity Strategy, 2012. In this situation, Bangladesh's anti-corruption commitment would face another round of questions, nationally and internationally, following this amendment, the TIB ED has mentioned.

“Bangladesh is a signatory country of UNCAC. But, undertaking such an initiative to amend rules for the government employees is totally in conflict with the standard global practice and basic anti-corruption principles of UNCAC. Similarly, the National Integrity Strategy, 2012, in whose formulation the government officials played a key role, will also be trampled. We urge all concerned to renounce such a suicidal initiative for the sake of protecting corruption of the dishonest government officials and providing them impunity,” Dr. Zaman has concluded.

(Press Statement)

Proposed Road Transport (Amendment) Act, 2024 is Self-Destructive; Anarchy and Insecurity Will Increase on the Roads: TIB



Dhaka, 28 March 2024: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has voiced grave concerns regarding efforts to reduce punishments and penalties within certain sections of the Road Transport (Amendment) Act, 2024. Despite the optimistic inception of the Road Transport Act 2018 following protests by young students, its implementation remains far from reality, leading to a surge in street anarchy, lawlessness, and insecurity. TIB asserts that the exclusion of public interest in the proposed amendment will steer the law away from its core objectives, weaken it further, and ultimately intensify the hostage situation regarding road management by owners and workers.

Media reports indicate that the cabinet has given approval in principle to the draft of the Road Transport (Amendment) Act, 2024, which includes amendments to at least 12 sections resulting in reduction in punishments and penalties for drivers and helpers. Media reports mentioned that penalties and punishments have been reduced in sections 69, 70, 81, 85, 86, 90, 98, and 105 of the proposed amendment.

However, the draft Road Transport Act 2024 includes provisions, such as compulsory vehicle insurance [Section 60(2)], assigning supervisors (Section 71), and displaying fare chart with penalties for demanding or collecting extra fares (Section 80). TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr.

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Iftekharuzzaman has cautiously praised these three specific amendments, as these are in line with TIB's research-based recommendations.

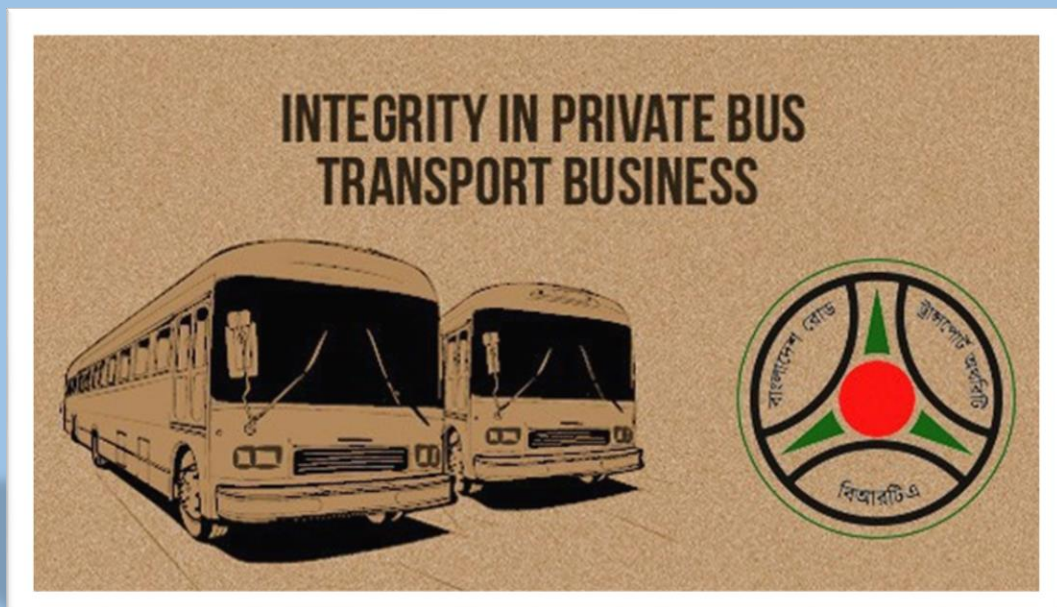
He mentioned, "While it was crucial to logically increase punishments and penalties to establish order in the road transport system and ensure citizens' safety, any decrease in penalties through the amendment will worsen chaos on the roads and pose a greater risk to the public. Furthermore, it will promote tendency to break laws among drivers and workers, leading to further disorder on the roads. Despite the government's apparent initiatives to improve road safety, the proposed amendment seems to go against these efforts. On one hand, it risks increasing irregularities, corruption, and street disorder, and on the other hand, it will further raise the number of tragic loss of lives."

A recent study conducted by TIB has underscored the gravity of the hostage situation imposed by a faction of transport owners and workers in the road transport system. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman remarked on this issue, "The move to reduce punishments and penalties through amending the law is apparently intertwined with the hostage situation. It is clear that politically-backed owners' and workers' associations wield influence over the government to push for the amendments that lessen penalties. If these amendments are approved in the parliament, it will disregard the public interests. We implore the government to veer away from this self-destructive course."

The TIB ED also voiced profound concerns over lack of transparency in the draft amendment process, as none of the proposed steps were made publicly accessible for the relevant stakeholders. TIB asserts that amending the law under pressure and influence from the very group, meant to be regulated by it, undermines its universal acceptance and effectiveness in meeting public demands and ensuring safety. Additionally, such amendments risk deviating the law from its original objectives. Therefore, TIB strongly advocates the inclusion of opinions from experts and other stakeholders before finalizing the Act.

(Rejoinder)

TIB's reply to BRTA's reaction over research on transportation sector



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Dhaka, 07 March 2024: In response to TIB's research on 'Integrity in Private Bus Transport Business', BRTA's Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder denied all the findings during a press conference. TIB expressed concerns, stating that arbitrary denial of TIB findings is an example of safeguarding corruption and irregularities, which risks undermining the government's zero tolerance policy.

TIB's Research Methodology: The TIB research rigorously followed social science methodology, interviewing relevant experts including journalists, current and former officials of the sector, representatives of civil society, and service seekers. Questionnaires were also administered to private bus owners, workers, officials, and passengers across 32 districts out of 64. The research survey was conducted maintaining high standards of statistical science, ensuring data quality through meticulous methodology and cross-checking processes.

BRTA's Remarks Regarding Key Informant: BRTA's name was falsely mentioned as a key informant in data collection, which TIB refuted. Despite TIB's efforts to interview BRTA officials, Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder did not attend the scheduled interview, leading TIB to gather information anonymously from responsible officials across Dhaka and other districts' BRTA offices.

BRTA's Response on Service Bribery and Harassment: BRTA dismissed claims of bribery and service delays post-online application, stating that vehicle registrations occur promptly on the scheduled date. However, TIB's research, based on structured questionnaires with 168 bus owners, revealed significant delays in vehicle registration (up to 30 days) and bribery incidences among 41.9% of bus owners, contradicting BRTA's assertions.

TIB's Response: In TIB's research, information was collected from 168 bus owners via structured questionnaires, highlighting issues of corruption, irregularities, and delays in vehicle registration. According to them, nearly 30 days were required for each vehicle to be registered, with 41.9% of owners reporting incidences of bribery. Thus, there is no basis to label the research as 'untrue or imaginative'.

BRTA's Remarks Regarding Fitness Renewal and Harassment: BRTA asserted that online fitness renewals since October 2020 have streamlined processes, denying allegations of bribery or harassment. However, TIB's findings from bus owners indicated average delays of 13 days for fitness renewals, with 46.3% reporting bribery incidences and license issuance without vehicle tests through unofficial channels.

TIB's Response: Bus owners reported an average 13-day delay for fitness renewals, with 46.3% citing bribery. Additionally, TIB highlighted instances where licenses were issued without vehicle tests, underscoring the need for transparency in such processes.

BRTA's Remarks Regarding Route Permit Issues: BRTA defended delays in route permit issuances, attributing occasional delays to committee meetings. Nevertheless, TIB's research indicated an average 45-day wait for new route permits among bus owners, with 42.6% citing bribery or illegal payments as commonplace.

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TIB's Response: TIB's research methodology ensured high standards and was based on structured questionnaires with various informants, challenging BRTA's assertions of presumption and intentionality in their findings.

BRTA's Overall Denial of Allegations: BRTA categorically rejected all allegations of bribery and irregularities in vehicle registrations, fitness certificates, and route permit issues as baseless and damaging to their reputation and that of the government. TIB countered, emphasizing their research's adherence to rigorous methodology and the need for BRTA to address systemic issues rather than dismissing valid concerns.

Conclusion: TIB emphasized that their research aims to support the government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption, highlighting areas for improvement within the transport sector. TIB expressed readiness to collaborate with BRTA to enhance integrity measures and thanked them for acknowledging constructive recommendations at the end of their press conference.

(Rejoinder)

Former Land Minister's Explanation Unreasonable and Irrelevant; TIB Demands Thorough Legal Investigation



Dhaka, 03 March 2024: The former land minister's explanation regarding his wealth abroad and its concealment in the national election affidavit is unreasonable, irrelevant, and unacceptable, commented Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). The anti-corruption organization highlighted that presenting false or incomplete information in the election affidavit is a punishable offence, and called on the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), National Board of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and other agencies concerned to investigate the process of his accumulating wealth abroad and its amount.

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On 26 December 2023, TIB revealed evidence suggesting that one member of the government's cabinet possessed multiple companies abroad under his name, but the wealth was not disclosed in the election affidavit. It was later revealed by multiple media reports that the minister hiding the wealth information was the former land minister, and he also admitted it in a press conference on this Saturday.

In the press conference, the former minister had also cast doubts on the motives behind TIB's revelation of the wealth abroad just before the election. TIB, in this regard, said such claims are baseless, and commented that the motive behind revealing the information was to ensure transparency and accountability of the national election candidates on their income and wealth.

In response, TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman added, "TIB has prepared a dashboard containing information of the affidavits of the candidates of the last four national elections, and analyzed the affidavits of 6,007 candidates to provide an overall, constituency-based, and party-wise analysis. The purpose is to provide information on the candidates and to present a comparative picture of the increase in their wealth and assets, stated in the affidavits. However, the discrepancies in the former land minister's real wealth and affidavit information have brought forward the issue of hidden wealth. In the press conference, the minister alleged that TIB revealed the information to embarrass the minister and the government. Although, TIB believes that any right information like this should naturally be embarrassing for the person concerned."

The former land minister's explanation that there is no separate column for wealth abroad in the affidavit form is unreasonable and unacceptable, said the TIB ED. "Firstly, the former land minister concealed information in the affidavit, even though providing false or incomplete information in the affidavit is a punishable offence. Providing information on all types of wealth at home or abroad is compulsory in the affidavit. The former minister is trying to evade responsibility for concealing wealth by ridiculously claiming that the affidavit form has no separate column for wealth abroad. The minister's claim that he provided information based on income tax returns that do not include his wealth abroad is also irrelevant," he added.

Mentioning that the former minister violated not one but several laws, related to concealing assets abroad, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman further mentioned, "According to Article 147(3) of the Constitution, eight types of constitutional office-bearers, including ministers of the country, are prohibited from holding any profitable office, salaried office, or participating in the management of any profit-making entity. Therefore, the former land minister has violated this constitutional provision after taking oath, which is utterly unacceptable."

TIB said that the former minister's claim that he did not accumulate wealth abroad by transferring money from home and his call for a committee to investigate the issue are totally irrelevant. Matters related to violation of relevant constitutional and legal provisions including money laundering are not subject of investigation committee. TIB calls for ensuring accountability through due process of investigations by ACC, NBR, BFIU, and CID.

(Event)

Third TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Competition on 6-9 March



Third TIB-DUMCS Moot Court Competition: TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Competition, a collaborative effort between Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Dhaka University Moot Court Society (DUMCS), returned for third iteration. Its grand opening took place at the Dhaka University (DU) Law Faculty on 6 March 2024 amid anticipation of excitement among law students nationwide. The preliminary round of the competition is scheduled on 8 March (Friday) and the final round on 9 March (Saturday) at TIB's Dhaka office in MIDAS Centre, Dhanmondi.

Participants in Simulated Legal Arena: Moot court is a shadow arbitration session resembling real courtroom proceedings, where aspiring law students test their academic prowess and analytical skills. A total of 20 teams from major public and private universities are participating in the 3rd TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Competition. Each team comprises three members. The event participants are set to gain practical experience of legal procedure while championing the cause of integrity in their future careers.

Inaugural Ceremony: DU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. A. S. M. Maksud Kamal, Law Faculty Dean Prof. Dr. Shima Zaman, and TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman graced the opening ceremony of the moot court competition. Distinguished guests, including TIB Adviser - Executive Management and DU Faculty Member Prof. Dr. Sumaiya Khair, DU Law Department Chairman Prof. Dr. Md. Rahmat Ullah, and DUMCS Chief Moderator Prof. Dr. M.N. Bhuiyan, also attended the event.

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Commendation and Encouragement: Commending TIB's initiative, Prof. Dr. A. S. M. Maksud Kamal said, “While academic learning enriches the students with knowledge, practical application immensely aids them in understanding real-life scenarios. The moot court competition offers a valuable opportunity for them to gain practical experience during their studies. Additionally, introducing the anti-corruption message through such events instills awareness among the students.”

Addressing the participants, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “Among our various anti-corruption initiatives, the moot court holds a unique place. It provides the law students with hands-on experience as legal practitioners, fostering their skills. The competition is a win-win for all involved, as the students gain invaluable insights and learning experiences.”

Bokul Tree Plantation: As a symbol of collaboration between TIB and DUMCS, a Bakul tree was planted on the DU Law Faculty premises after the inaugural ceremony.



Exchange of Memorials: Following the inaugural programme, the participants from 20 universities across the country received instructions regarding the moot court proceedings. Many

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of the team members joined online. After lunch, the participating teams were given memorials for their mootng process.

Down Memory Lane: The 2nd TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Competition was held at DU Law Faculty on 28-30 November 2019, while its first edition was held on 7-9 December 2017.

(Event)

3rd TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Ends, DU Champion

The 3rd TIB-DUMCS Anti-Corruption Moot Court Competition concluded on 9 March 2024 at TIB's Dhaka office in MIDAS Centre, Dhanmondi. Teams from the country's twenty public and private universities took part in the competition that centered around the spirit of anti-corruption. Of these, the Dhaka University (DU) team became the champion, while the State University of Bangladesh team became the runner-up.



(Photo: Winning team)

Runner-up: State University of Bangladesh team: The country's apex court justices graced the competition on the concluding day with their prudent judgment in the final round. The participating youths presented memorials, and gave sharp-witted arguments on the given case in front of the esteemed judges. Every participant was given a certificate, and the winning teams received crests.

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Winners of other categories:	
(Memorial Award)	
Uttara University	Best Memorial Award
Dhaka University	2nd Best Memorial Award
Jagannath University	3rd Best Memorial Award
(Oralist Award)	
Rafid Azad Saumik, Dhaka University	Best Oralist Award
Oishe Rahman, Dhaka University	2nd Best Oralist Award
Anika Tabassum Haque, The State University of Bangladesh-	3rd Best Oralist Award
Spirit & Best New Team Award	
Dhaka University	Spirit of TIB Award
East West University	Best New Team Award

About the event: Moot court is a shadow arbitration session resembling real courtroom proceedings. The students, aspiring to thrive in the legal profession in the future, test their academic prowess and analytical skill in the moot court.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), in collaboration with Dhaka University Moot Court Society (DUMCS), organized the competition for the third time. The event aims to give the country's law students hands-on experience in legal proceedings and instill the spirit of anti-corruption in them.

This year, the moot court was inaugurated on 6 March, while its preliminary round took place on 8 March, and the finale on 9 March. The first TIB-DUMCS moot court was organized in 2017, and the second in 2019.

Inspiring words: At the award giving ceremony, Supreme Court Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed encouraged the students to observe court proceedings to know more about the legal process to enrich themselves.

Encouraging the students, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said all the participants of the moot court were winners, as the competition was an opportunity for them to learn, make network, and develop friendships. He also told them to remember that they should take the value of anti-corruption from the competition and practice it in their lives.

Expressing optimism, DU Law Faculty Dean Dr. Shima Zaman said the students would learn a lot from such a competition, and it would also instill the spirit of anti-corruption in their professional lives.

Adviser Executive Management of TIB and Professor of DU Law Department Dr. Sumaiya Khair said such events provide the students with an opportunity to make friends and learn about the road of legal process.

CCC News

CCC Regional Convention in Khulna Demand to Build a Corruption-free Bangladesh Through Effective Implementation of Laws

On 01-02 March 2024, the Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs), inspired by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), gathered at a regional convention in Khulna under the theme "Corruption, Poverty, Injustice: Citizens' Thoughts." The event saw around two hundred members from 14 CCCs across Khulna, Barishal, and Dhaka divisions, rallying for a corruption-free Bangladesh through political will, effective institutions, transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.



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Keynote Address and Speeches: Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB, highlighted the severe impact of corruption on Bangladesh's economic growth, noting that the country could increase its growth by 3% if corruption were mitigated. He also pointed out the staggering annual loss due to money laundering, estimated at \$12-15 billion. Drawing on Bangabandhu's 1975 call for a social movement against corruption, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman emphasized the necessity of political will and robust institutional action.

Discussions and Resolutions: The convention featured discussions from CCC leaders from various districts, who shared their experiences, challenges, and successes. Notable speakers included Advocate Kudrat-e-Khuda, President of CCC Khulna, and Ferhana Ferdous, Director of TIB's Civic Engagement Division. They stressed the importance of a strong social movement against corruption, supported by effective governance and political commitment.



Focus on Action: Participants highlighted the need for:

- **Political Will:** Strong commitment from political leaders to combat corruption.
- **Effective Institutions:** Strengthening bodies responsible for law enforcement and service delivery.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Ensuring these in all sectors.
- **Citizen Engagement:** Encouraging public participation in anti-corruption efforts.

Conclusion: The two-day convention concluded with a renewed commitment to mobilize an anti-corruption movement inspired by the spirit of the liberation war and the vision of Bangabandhu. Participants resolved that through collective effort and strong institutional integrity, a corruption-free Bangladesh can be achieved.

Youth Pledge to Fight Corruption at Khulna YES Camp

Around three hundred young individuals gathered at the CSS Ava Center in Khulna from 02-04 March 2024 for a three-day anti-corruption Youth Engagement & Support (YES) Camp. Themed "Corruption, Poverty, Injustice: Thoughts of Youth," the camp aimed to empower youth to build a prosperous and well-governed Bangladesh by combating corruption, irregularities, poverty, and discrimination.



Keynote Address: Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), emphasized the broad impact of corruption, including the abuse of power, and called for strong political will, institutional reforms, accountability, and social movements to combat it. Highlighting Bangabandhu's 1975 speech, he noted the crucial role of youth in anti-corruption efforts and pointed out that 71% of Bangladeshis have to pay bribes for services.

Activities and Discussions: Participants took an anti-corruption oath and engaged in sessions where Dr. Iftekharuzzaman answered their questions. The theatre group BotTala performed "Aar Noi Chup Thaka" to open a session on gender sensitization and violence against women, followed by a discussion featuring advocates like BotTala actors and Dhaka University teacher Samina Lutfu Nitra.

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Panel Discussions: The panel discussion “Durjoy Tarunya: Volunteering, Morality and Leadership” included speakers like Osama Bin Noor, founder of Youth Opportunities, and Sadat Rahman, founder of Cyber Teens. Moderated by Md. Atiqur Rahman, the panel emphasized youth leadership in combating corruption.

Conclusion: The YES Camp concluded with youth pledging to actively participate in the anti-corruption movement, committed to building a just, transparent, and prosperous Bangladesh. Their collective resolve underscored the power of youth in driving social change.

Information Fairs Promote Right to Information Act in Muktagachha and Rangamati

Two information fairs aimed at raising awareness about the Right to Information Act-2009 were held in Muktagachha and Rangamati, organized by the respective Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) in association with local Upazila and District Administrations. These events featured government and non-government offices providing service-related information to the public.



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Muktagachha Fair: Held on 04 March 2024 at the Zilla Parishad Dakbanglow, the Muktagachha fair featured 37 stalls from various offices. Dr. Nazrul Islam, MP, inaugurated the fair. Highlights included:

- 256 applications for information filed, with 229 responses received.
- Public hearing addressing citizen issues and promising service improvements.
- Activities included information dissemination, anti-corruption signature collection, and student competitions.

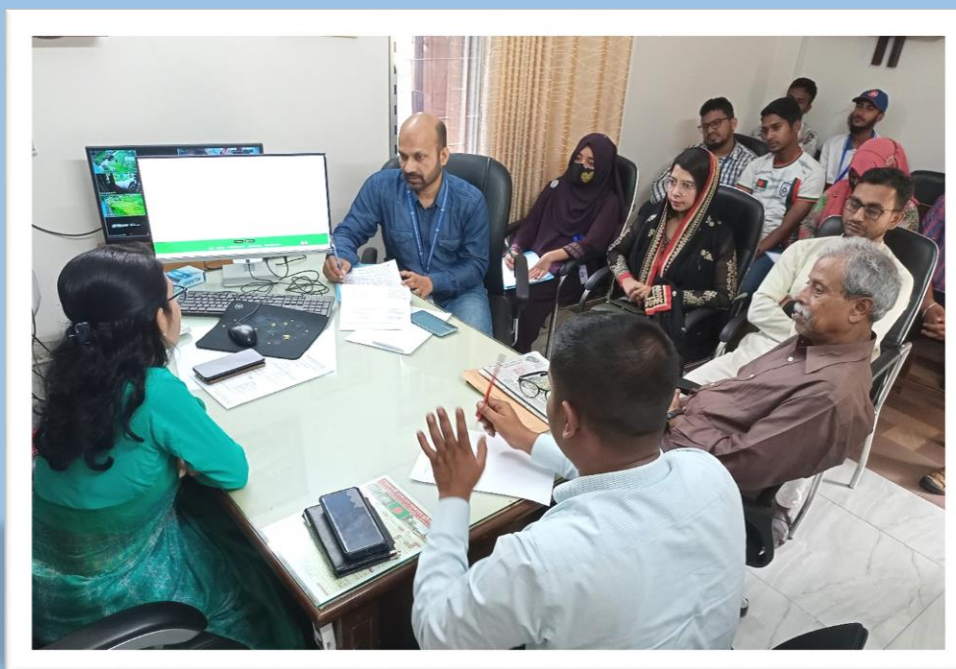
Rangamati Fair: On 10 March 2024, the Rangamati Hill District Administration and CCC organized an information fair at Kumar Samit Roy Gymnasium grounds. Key points included:

- Inauguration by Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain Khan.
- 33 stalls showcasing government and private services.
- Public hearing addressing issues like corruption, service delivery, and administrative inefficiencies.
- Various competitions and a cultural program organized by the YES group.

Both fairs emphasized the importance of the Right to Information Act in combating corruption and improving governance, with active participation from government officials, CCC members, and the public.

Upazila Administration for a Sustainable Upgradation of Land Services

On 28 March 2024, the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) in Jhalakathi held an advocacy meeting with the Jhalakathi Sadar Upazila Land Administration to discuss improving land services. The meeting, led by CCC President Satyaban Sen Gupta and attended by Upazila Nirbahi Officer Anuja Mondal and Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md. Saiful Islam, focused on enhancing transparency and service quality.



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CCC members showcased their community monitoring efforts using the 'PACTApp' and emphasized gathering public opinions to improve services. They proposed measures like better publicity of services, updated Citizen Charters, eliminating brokers, and improving office facilities.

Anuja Mondal stressed the need for public awareness to reduce harassment, acknowledging existing corruption but noting improvements through online services. Md. Saiful Islam highlighted recent progress in resolving land issues.

The meeting included participation from CCC and Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Group members

Community Leaders Advocate for Quality Education at Lalmonirhat Gathering

A parents and citizens gathering was held on 14 March 2024 at 01 No. Khuniyagach Government Primary School in Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila, jointly organized by the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) Lalmonirhat and the school. The focus was on the need for quality, practical education that involves the collective participation of teachers, students, parents, and citizens. Speakers emphasized the importance of parental involvement, especially from fathers, in creating a supportive learning environment at home. They also highlighted the role of community monitoring to ensure institutional transparency and accountability in education. Key speakers included CCC President Captain (retd) Azizul Haque Bir Prateek, local education officials, and community leaders. The event saw participation from parents, citizens, elected representatives, and students.



CCC Advocates for Transparent and Accessible Health Services in Kushtia

CCC in Kushtia conducted advocacy with the Civil Surgeon on 31 March 2024 to enhance transparency and accountability in health services. They presented a baseline survey and community monitoring report of Hatshaharipur Union Health & Family Welfare Center. Civil

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Surgeon Dr. Md. Akul Uddin assured consideration of CCC's recommendations, emphasizing the ongoing efforts to improve healthcare accessibility. CCC proposed measures such as visible service information, women and disabled-friendly facilities, and complaint/suggestion boxes in every Union Health Center.

Empowering Women and Promoting Transparency: Youth Initiatives in Dhaka

ULAB's YES group organized a women's empowerment campaign, highlighting the theme "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress" on March 18, 2024. The event aimed to inspire female students through the stories of pioneering female entrepreneurs, encouraging them to pursue their dreams and contribute to gender equality. It also provided a platform for students to celebrate influential women who inspire them, showcasing the remarkable achievements of female entrepreneurs, some of whom were ULAB students.

Meanwhile, Dhaka YES-2 group conducted an orientation and quiz competition on the Right to Information Act, 2009, at Lalmatia School & College. Around 120 students participated, gaining insights into the act. School authorities and teachers attended the event, delivering speeches and presenting awards to quiz competition winners.



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