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### Open Data Advocacy

#### TIB's Upazila Election Analysis Reveals Exploitation of Power for Personal Gain

**Dhaka, 09 June 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has unveiled significant findings following a comprehensive analysis of affidavits submitted by candidates in the recent 6th Upazila Parishad elections and the preceding 4th and 5th iterations. The findings, disclosed at a press conference on the 'Know Your Candidate (KYC)' analysis reports held at the TIB head office on Sunday, highlight potential discrepancy in wealth reporting, connections to power and profit, and unusual growth in the wealth of incumbent candidates. This event marked the fourth phase of TIB's analysis on the Upazila Parishad elections.

The analysis has brought to light that many candidates have significantly underreported their assets in their election affidavits. Such discrepancies are considered irregularities that could result in the Election Commission canceling a candidate's nomination. One notable instance involved a candidate with a discrepancy exceeding BDT 200 crores between his income tax return and the election affidavit.

| Candidate                  | Position | Upazila      | District        | Assets Presented in Income Tax Returns (In Crores) | Assets Mentioned in the Affidavits (In Crores) (Movable + Immovable) | Difference (In Crores) |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|-----------------|--|--|------------------------|
| Sadat Mannan               | Chairman | Sunamganj    | Shantiganj      | 212.85   | 8.94   | 203.91                 |
| Mohammad Jahedul Haque     | Chairman | Chattogram   | Bowalkhali      | 116.06   | 37.70  | 78.35                  |
| Abu Asif Ahmed             | Chairman | Brahmanbaria | Ashuganj        | 85.06  | 0.46   | 84.60                  |
| Md. Abdul Gaffar           | Chairman | Naogaon      | Patnitala       | 60.60  | 12.86  | 47.74                  |
| Md. Mizanur Rahman (Masum) | Chairman | Jhenaidah    | Jhenaidah Sadar | 58.74  | 13.06  | 45.68                  |
| Md. Abul Kalam Azad        | Chairman | Barishal     | Uzirpur         | 27.45  | 0.12   | 27.33                  |
| Md. Abu Bakar Siddiqui     | Chairman | Munsiganj    | Sirajdikhan     | 25.88  | 10.91  | 14.98                  |
| Jahangir Kabir             | Chairman | Noakhali     | Chatkhil        | 24.02  | 15.32  | 8.69                   |
| Md. Mosharraf Mushu        | Chairman | Lakshmipur   | Ramganj         | 22.18  | 5.73   | 16.45                  |
| Md. Shahed Shahriar        | Chairman | Noakhali     | Begumganj       | 20.58  | 16.27  | 4.31                   |

TIB's analysis has also revealed a clear correlation between wealth accumulation and power retention. The data indicates that incumbent candidates are significantly more likely to amass wealth compared to new candidates who have not been previously elected. TIB has characterized this trend as evidence that politics has strayed from serving the public interest, shifting its focus instead towards personal gain and profit.

# Newsletter-2024

## June Edition

|                      | Increase in Income Since 2019 | Increase in Movable Assets Since 2019 | Increase in Income of Spouse/Dependents Since 2019 | Increase in Movable Assets of Spouse/Dependents Since 2019 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Incumbent Candidates | 114.02%                       | 193.12%                               | 192.55%  | 232.12%  |
| New Candidates       | 100.79%                       | 139.41%                               | 38.51%   | 180.78%  |
| Incumbent At Present | Increase in Income Since 2019 |                                       | Increase in Movable Assets Since 2019              |  |
| Chairman             | 112.68%                       |                                       | 186.38%  |  |
| Vice Chairman        | 127.06%                       |                                       | 363.85%  |  |
| Female Vice Chairman | 105.04%                       |                                       | 139.05%  |  |

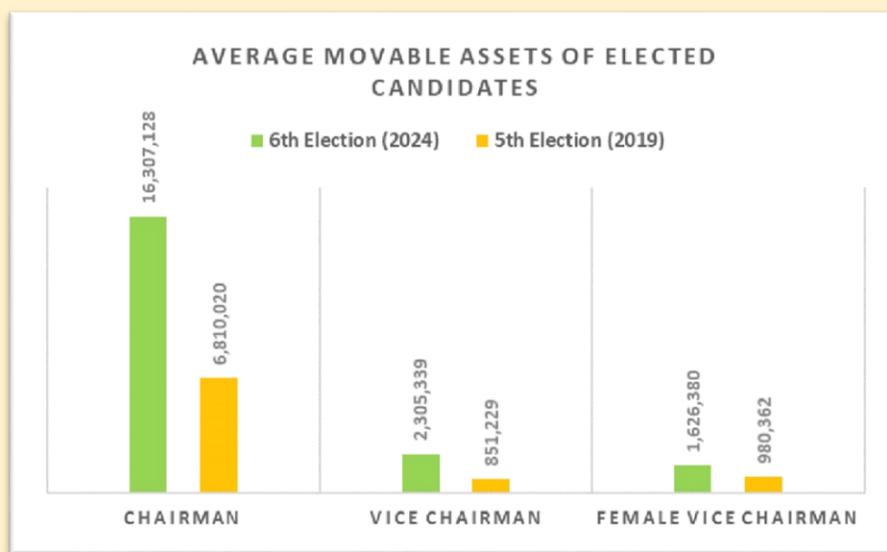
*Figure: Comparison of Increase in Income Between Incumbent and New Candidates*

Elected public representatives have also seen their income multiply many times over during their time in office.

| Candidate                       | District     | Upazila        | Position | Increase in Income Compared to 2019 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Md. Alamgir Hossain             | Dhaka        | Dohar          | Chairman | 6477.65%                            |
| Biswa Pradir Kumar Karbari      | Khagrachhari | Ramgar         | Chairman | 3319.15%                            |
| Md. Saifullah Miya Ratan Sikder | Cumilla      | Meghna         | Chairman | 3088.62%                            |
| Mohammad Abul Hossain           | Jamalpur     | Jamalpur Sadar | Chairman | 1264.55%                            |
| S M Rashedul Alam               | Chattogram   | Hathazari      | Chairman | 762.21%                             |
| Md. Fakhru Islam                | Rajshahi     | Charghat       | Chairman | 678.18%                             |
| Shahinul Alam Chana             | Bagerhat     | Mollahat       | Chairman | 651.61%                             |
| A K M Islaim Haque              | Shariatpur   | Noriya         | Chairman | 592.55%                             |
| Md. Akbar Hossain Hero          | Kurigram     | Rajibpur       | Chairman | 555.56%                             |
| Mohammad Shafiullah             | Bandarban    | Naikkhonchhori | Chairman | 547.94%                             |

*Table: Top 10 Candidates in Terms of Increase in Income (Candidates with at least BDT 3.5 Lakh income in 2019)*

The findings by TIB have also spotlighted the issue of increasing movable assets among elected officials. Comparisons between previous and recent elections reveal that movable assets have increased threefold on average.



In addition to the unusual increase in assets of the candidates themselves, TIB has revealed that the spouses or dependents of these candidates have also seen their assets multiply manifold.

| Candidate               | District    | Upazila                | Position             | Increase in Movable Assets of Spouse and Dependents Since 2019 |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Md. Farid Hasan (Wadud) | Rajbari     | Pangsha                | Chairman             | 12400.00%  |
| Abdul Haque             | Pirojpur    | Nesarabad (Sarupkathi) | Chairman             | 8968.75%   |
| Md. Jahangir Alam       | Rajshahi    | Godagari               | Chairman             | 6454.25%   |
| Md. Abdul Berek Sarker  | Rangamati   | Langdu                 | Chairman             | 5400.00%   |
| Md. Nurunnobi Chowdhury | Kurigram    | Bhurungamari           | Chairman             | 3930.30%   |
| Fazlul Karim            | Cox's Bazar | Chakariya              | Chairman             | 1910.00%   |
| Mst. Rabiya Begum       | Rangpur     | Gangachhara            | Female Vice Chairman | 1733.33%   |
| Milki Rani Das          | Bandarban   | Lama                   | Female Vice Chairman | 1566.67%   |
| Krishna Pod Ghosh       | Narail      | Kaliya                 | Chairman             | 1500.00%   |
| Swapn Kumar Dash        | Bagerhat    | Fakirhat               | Chairman             | 1441.39%   |

*Table: Top 10 Candidates in Terms of Increase in Movable Assets of Spouse/Dependents*

Considering such an unusual rise in income and assets, coupled with instances of party directives being flouted in grassroots elections, TIB has commented that the motivation to participate in these elections is driven by the opportunity to accumulate illegal wealth without accountability by abusing power. TIB has expressed concern that this trend undermines democratic processes, even within party lines. TIB asserts that the Know Your Candidate (KYC) dashboard is a 'gold mine' for information on irregularities. The anti-corruption organization calls on law enforcement agencies, the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the National Board of Revenue to study the discrepancies highlighted in the findings and take appropriate action.

### Law & Policy Review

#### Proposed Cyber Security Rules, 2024' – A Weapon to Violate Human Rights, Freedom of Speech and Press; Calls for Amending Original Act



**Dhaka, 13 June 2024:** Despite strong objections from relevant stakeholders, implementing the Cyber Security Rules, 2024 while retaining the human rights and freedom-curbing clauses of the Cyber Security Act, 2023 will not yield fruitful results. Therefore, before the Cyber Security Rules, 2024 are implemented, the Cyber Security Act, 2023 must be overhauled and redrafted. This process should involve meaningful and effective participation from relevant experts and consider the concerns, advice, and recommendations of the concerned stakeholders. These comments were made by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Article-19 in a joint press conference on “Proposed Cyber Security Rules, 2024: Observations and Recommendations”.

The scope of the proposed Cyber Security Rules is very limited, as 19 rules are a verbatim reproduction of the Digital Security Rules, 2020. The rules do not adhere to contemporary standards; they fail to adequately define Critical Information Infrastructures and Cyber Security Related Incidents, establish a top-heavy Cyber Security Agency, present a clear organizational structure, or provide an accountable and transparent working procedure. Additionally, they do not specify the qualifications for relevant human resources, lack provisions for international assistance in information exchange and the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), and do not meet global quality standards for the Digital Forensic Lab. Furthermore, certain sections on digital evidence are overlooked, and some sections contradict the main law related to digital evidence, creating legal gaps in evidence collection and reporting. Consequently, these rules would not be very effective, stated the two organizations.

At the press conference, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Adviser Executive Management, TIB, Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, and Regional Director (Bangladesh and South Asia) of Article-19, Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, were present. On behalf of the two organizations, the observations and recommendations were prepared and presented by Quazi Mahfujul Hoque Supan, Associate Professor of the Department of Law at the University of Dhaka. The press conference was conducted by Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, Director of Outreach and Communication at TIB.

The extent of the proposed rules has been kept limited. Without specifying important definitions and explanations, and the capacity and capability of the manpower, the rules related to the Cyber Security Agency, Emergency Response Team, Critical Information Infrastructure, and Digital Forensic Lab have been set. Furthermore, the definition of cyber security, the organizational structure, manpower, scope of work, responsibilities of the director general and directors of the Cyber Security Agency, and the responsibilities of the National Computer Incident Response Team have been copied verbatim from the arbitrary Digital Security Act and its associated Digital Security Rules, 2020. This reflects how the lessons learned from the Digital Security Agency have been incorporated into the new rules. Additionally, there are no provisions or sections in the main Act and the proposed rules to ensure the transparency and accountability of the national Cyber Security Agency. Consequently, in the absence of an independent supervisory body, there are risks of violating citizens' privacy rights and enabling arbitrary access by government-controlled agencies.

In the proposed rules, Critical Information Infrastructures have been defined arbitrarily, not by identifying specific sectors, but by mentioning broad categories like “Public Safety or Economic Safety or Public Health” and “National Security or Sovereignty.” Furthermore, the definition of a cyber security incident is incomplete, as it relies solely on the concept of unrestricted access, failing to consider that cyber security risks can exist even without such access. Additionally, the cyber security agency is structured with six directors, including a director general, without creating sufficient technical positions to carry out the work, resulting in a top-heavy organization. This imbalance between the number of employees at the top and bottom will create multiple organizational levels, impeding morale and effectiveness due to delays in decision-making, slow information flow, excessive expenditure, and limited empowerment. The proposed rules do not specify the inter-agency structure and operating procedure beyond the positions of director general and directors. Moreover, there is no mention of how the agency would build stakeholder-based relationships with law enforcement agencies, civil and military intelligence, and public administration and government strategists.

The review of the rules also revealed that the qualifications of cyber security personnel are not clearly or specifically defined, with only the term "specialist in cyber security" mentioned, which lacks specificity. Past experiences have shown that most personnel employed at the agency lacked cyber security capabilities. To meet contemporary standards, these qualifications should be more clear and specific. Additionally, a clause on "source money and risk allowance" has been added to the rules, which was not mentioned in the original Act. As this is an important policy-related subject, it should be passed by the parliament through a democratic process. Furthermore, all major attacks on Critical Information Infrastructure in Bangladesh have originated from abroad. International cooperation and information exchange are crucial in such instances. However, the rules do not specify the types of legal, diplomatic, or procedural steps that would be taken to ensure such cooperation between local and international bodies.

Schedule-2 of the proposed rules indicates that the digital forensic process has emphasized device and file system forensics, while overlooking other customized apps and software. The idea of "one solution for all problems" would undermine the objectives and effectiveness of the digital forensic lab. Additionally, the "Evidence Act, 1872" was amended in 2022 to allow all courts in Bangladesh

to accept digital evidence. However, the proposed rules do not mention sections 65 Ka and 65 Kha of the amended Act, which define the quality standards for registered evidence.

Highlighting that relevant stakeholders' opinions have not been reflected in the rules, TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman stated, “The Cyber Security Act (CSA) is merely the Digital Security Act (DSA) in different packaging, and it is equally arbitrary. The CSA has been implemented following the DSA to use as weapons against the free access to information and free speech facilitated by information technology. The arbitrary elements unearthed in the review of the Cyber Security Act have been further complicated by the proposed rules. Therefore, the precondition for moving forward is to overhaul the main Act. We believe it is imperative to amend the Act by considering the advice and recommendations of relevant experts, civil society, and journalists. Additionally, the proposed Cyber Security organization has been given excessive powers, with significant risks of abuse due to the lack of clarity in human resource allocation and organizational management structure. Moreover, the most pressing issue is that the local and international organizations that need to be directly or indirectly involved for proper implementation of the law have not been mentioned in the rules. We do not see any possibility of the goals and objectives of the law and rules being met, and we are concerned that this would only be used as a weapon for controlling the rights of citizens.”

In the press conference, Regional Director of Article-19, Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam said, “We are hasty when it comes to implementing laws. We draft one after another, and none are finalized. Facing backlash locally and globally, the government implemented the Cyber Security Act by merely changing the term from 'digital' to 'cyber' without making any substantive changes. Implementing rules based on a flawed law will not yield any positive results. We still haven't implemented a data protection law, yet we are working on an AI policy, despite AI being heavily reliant on data. We first need to be clear about our objectives! Instead of ensuring the safety of cyber spaces, we are showing interest in implementing such laws to control freedom of expression, gain access to information and data, and harass people. We must step away from this approach.”

TIB and Article-19 have issued a number of recommendations to make the Cyber Security Act and associated rules more aligned with rights, freedom of expression, and democracy. These include overhauling and redrafting the Cyber Security Act, 2023, based on the effective participation of relevant stakeholders before implementing the Cyber Security Rules, 2024; maximizing the use of our limited economic, technological, and human resources; defining the minimum personal, educational, and technological qualifications for cyber security officials; establishing legal provisions for enlisting digital evidence from both domestic and international sources; creating an effective and meaningful organizational structure for the national Cyber Security Agency; upgrading the existing forensic lab with modern equipment, software, and human resources, rather than building a new digital forensic lab, with the possibility of establishing a new lab later based on this experience; and including sections in the rules to ensure the protection of human rights so that the national cyber security agency, national Cyber Incident Response Team, and Digital Forensic Lab cannot violate rights through their activities.

### Policy Stance

#### **BPSA's Statement on Police Graft News & Home Ministry Request Unconstitutional Threat to Media Freedom, A Sinister Bid to Protect Corruption: TIB**



**Dhaka, 23 June 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) strongly condemns the Bangladesh Police Service Association's (BPSA) recent statement on journalism and media. TIB views the BPSA's statement as a threat to press freedom. It appears to be a deliberate attempt to hinder the media exposure of corruption, particularly on amassing of huge income and wealth by former senior police officials, which TIB considers as a sinister effort to protect and promote such alleged corruption.

Criticizing the BPSA statement as an instance of Ostrich Syndrome, TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “The statement by the police association dismissing the recent reports of corruption involving former officials as motivated is in fact itself motivated. It is not unreasonable to consider this statement by the police officers’ association to be intended to shield those alleged of corruption within the force. On one hand, this statement by the country's law enforcement officers' association is a direct threat to constitutionally mandated free media and an attempt to suppress the media voice, on the other hand, it is a clear violation of the citizens' right to access information. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the BPSA is attempting to ‘bury its head in the sand like an ostrich’ and in essence denying the reality.”

Dr. Zaman disagreed with the BPSA's statement that reporting corruption in the forces has a negative impact on the police's reputation. According to him, “The information and evidences of allegedly hefty, unusual and brazen corruption of former top police officials, which have been widely reported in the media, are being questioned with the lame argument of tarnishing the police image. It raises concerns over the credibility and capacity of a responsible organization like the Police to protect its reputation. A more constructive approach would have been a proactive

announcement of internal investigation and support for independent and credible probe into these serious allegations. Such a move would demonstrate the police force's commitment against corruption.”

Highlighting BPSA statement regarding the contribution of the police force for the country, TIB ED said “We always recognize and appreciate the police's contributions in various struggles, disasters, and crises, starting from our war of independence. However, the apparent effort to use this contribution as a license to protect crime or as a tool to allow impunity to corruption raises concerns about the ethical standard of the police.”

According to news reports, following the statement from the Police Service Association, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a letter to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ensure that the media exercise caution when publishing news about the police force. TIB has termed this as an ominous signal, not only for media freedom in the country but also for the prospect of accountable governance in general. In this regard, Dr. Zaman pointed out that “The Ministry of Home Affairs, which as the oversight body of the police force is responsible to facilitate disclosure of information on corruption, is paradoxically observed to trying to shield corruption by preventing flow of information. It is highly regrettable for a government that proclaims itself as democratic, committed to public interest and has a policy of zero tolerance for corruption. TIB expects Bangladesh Police Service Association and Home Ministry will perform their constitutional duty of combating all forms of criminal activity, including corruption and abuse of power and will facilitate unbiased investigations into the allegations of corruption free from any conflicts of interest.

### (Policy Stance)

**Budget provision for whitening black money unconstitutional, discriminatory, unethical, corruption-friendly: TIB**



**Dhaka, 06 June 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed shock and disappointment over the unethical provision in the newly announced budget that allows laundering black money disguised as undisclosed income. TIB fears that the facility to legalize black money with just a 15 percent tax will discourage honest and legitimate taxpayers, as no authority will question the money and assets declared under this provision. This will foster a liberal environment

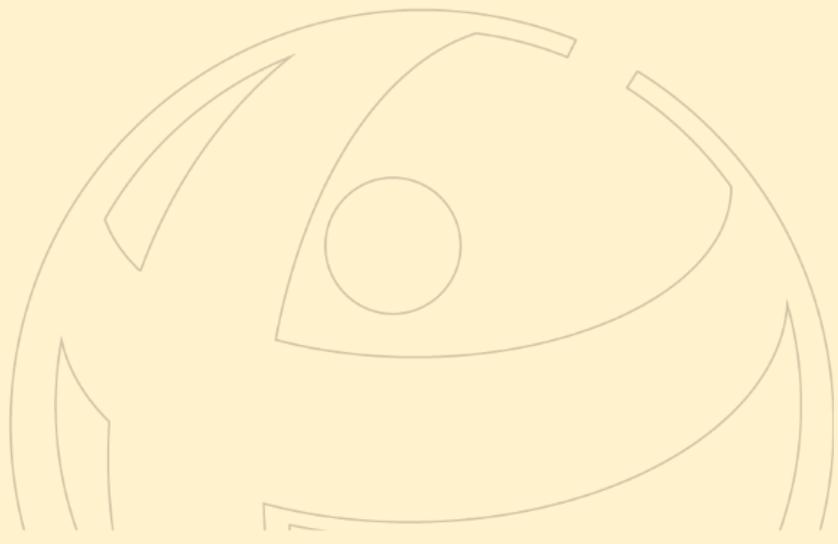
conducive to corruption in the country. Furthermore, this opportunity undermines the ruling party's election manifesto and its frequently reiterated pledge of zero tolerance against corruption. In light of these concerns, TIB is strongly demanding that the government withdraw this provision allowing the laundering of black money.

TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman expressed frustration over the logic behind keeping the provision to whiten black money. He also expressed profound disappointment at how the Data Verification System (DVS) has resulted in legal complexities regarding the declaration of undisclosed money, leading to the legitimization of property purchases using such funds, primarily due to taxpayers' lack of awareness. Even more troubling is that no authority will have the opportunity to question these transactions. He also said “Justifying such unethical, illegal, discriminatory and unconstitutional provision which renders the ruling party’s talk against corruption meaningless is also deepening and widening the erosion of moral and ethical backbone of the society. Furthermore, it is a clear government invitation to the people to be involved in all forms of corruption and illegitimate enrichment with the guarantee that such black money will be given clean certificates. In other words, government is, in reality, advising people to be corrupt with a guarantee of impunity.”

Dr. Zaman termed the provision of a maximum 30 percent tax on honest taxpayers as discriminatory and unconstitutional. He said, “For a number of reasons this provision is unjustifiable. It is distinctly contradictory to the Constitution, especially article 20(2) which criminalizes illegitimate income. It further violates the constitution as it is discriminatory against honest income earners who are subjected to upto 30 percent tax whereas the black money holders are being practically rewarded for corruption by offering the bait of only 15 percent.”

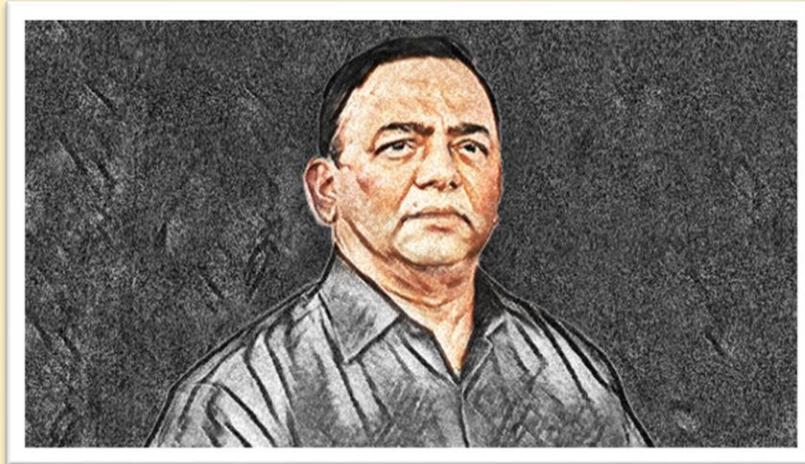
“Compromising morals in an attempt to collect expected revenue will never succeed in the short or long term. A prime example is that two years ago, a 10 percent tax was allowed to legalize undisclosed money, but there was no significant response. Similarly, no one took advantage of the opportunity to repatriate smuggled money. Therefore, it is reasonable to question whose interests are being served by including such provisions in the budget.” he said.

Calling upon the government to end the long-standing and unconstitutional practice of providing opportunities to whiten black money, Dr. Zaman hoped that “The government will ultimately act with good sense, foresight, loyalty to the Constitution, and adherence to the rule of law by withdrawing this provision. Simultaneously, we call for effective accountability measures to trace the sources of wealth of black money owners, thereby reducing rampant corruption.”



(Policy Stance)

### **Massive Corruption Allegations Against Former Police Chief Uncontrolled Power Abuse At High Level Creating Frankensteins; Ensure Effective Accountability and Compensation for the Victims: TIB**



**Dhaka, 03 June 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has raised serious alarms regarding revelations surrounding the former Inspector General of Police (IGP) and RAB chief, who allegedly amassed a substantial amount of illegal wealth and property through the misuse of their state-granted authority. The anti-corruption organization underscored that the unchecked misuse of power by individuals in high-ranking positions is not only alarming but also reminiscent of creating Frankenstein-like figures such as Benazir, ultimately undermining the state's accountability mechanisms. TIB has called for decisive legal action against those aiding and shielding such abuses of power. Additionally, TIB has demanded fair compensation for individuals who were coerced by the former police chief into forcibly selling their land.

Information on wealth and property accumulation by the former police chief are surfacing regularly. Media has reported that most of this wealth and property were grabbed by the former police chief by using fear tactics, or he had taken the real owners hostage to force them to sell their land. In many cases, the owners of these lands were minorities. For carrying this out, the former police chief arbitrarily employed personnel from his own agency and other state-run agencies. Terming such abuse of power by the top ranking officer of a law enforcement agency as outrageous, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "Allegations that the properties were forcibly acquired through intimidation using the former IGP's name and his family members and the collusion of law enforcement and government agency personnel in carrying out these tasks is truly horrific. Any chance of the victims getting justice for his crimes has also been forcefully blocked. Under such circumstances, there is no alternative to ensuring exemplary punishment for the main accused and the colluders, and to compensate those who were forced to sell their properties out of fear of the former police chief."

The allegations of wealth and property accumulation through corruption against the former IGP are currently under investigation, with new information about his wealth surfacing regularly. TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman has raised questions about how Benazir Ahmed and

his family were able to flee the country amid such serious allegations. He stated, “Media reports indicate that the former police chief, accused of corruption, fled the country after withdrawing a substantial amount of money from the banks. Given these circumstances, it is truly surprising that someone as controversial as him could leave without anyone noticing. It raises doubts about whether his departure involved collusion, or if any bank official assisted in withdrawing and laundering the funds abroad, or if the investigations against him are superficial. It's evident that a certain faction within the power structure has protected him before and continues to do so. Justice cannot be served solely by prosecuting the former police chief; those aiding and abetting him must also face legal consequences.”

The TIB Executive Director further emphasized, “It is unacceptable that the former police chief went unnoticed by the government, especially when he set a shocking precedent by openly engaging in corruption and amassing substantial wealth. In such a scenario, it is logical to presume that the government not only shielded and supported him but also, in some instances, actively encouraged his actions, contributing to the emergence of the Frankensteins within the political sphere of bureaucracy. According to the ruling party's general secretary and the Road Transport and Bridges Minister, Obaidul Quader, the government possesses information on all corrupt individuals. Despite such acknowledgments being rare, the government must address how a high-ranking police official could establish such a flagrant culture of corruption. Releasing the names of corrupt individuals and ensuring accountability for all involved is imperative to demonstrate the government's commitment to zero tolerance against corruption. Failure to do so will only reinforce the perception among citizens of such commitments as mere theatrics.”

### Policy Brief

#### **TIB's Recommendations to Enhance the Effectiveness of the Eleventh National Parliament**

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) published a study titled "Parliamentwatch: Eleventh National Parliament" on May 26, 2024, assessing the functioning of the parliament since its first session. Based on the findings of the study, a policy brief was prepared and shared with the government to address the concerns identified.

The report reveals that while the ruling party, with its overwhelming majority, holds significant power in law-making, budget formulation, and committee participation, the opposition parties have struggled to play an effective role in holding the government accountable.

The study points to several issues, including the opposition's marginal position and dual role in aligning with the ruling party, which has limited their ability to challenge the government. Although the opposition occasionally raised constructive views, the ruling party often showed reluctance to accept them.

Key concerns include a lack of spontaneous participation in legislative deliberations, ineffective parliamentary committees, insufficient openness in information sharing, and the absence of effective opposition, reducing parliamentary proceedings to mere formalities. Debates often

focused on praising the government or criticizing opposition parties rather than engaging in meaningful discussions on public issues.

The time spent on legislative activities has increased compared to previous parliaments, but the quality of debates has not improved. Additionally, the focus on public representation and accountability has diminished, and parliamentary committees have not ensured effective oversight of the executive. A continuing quorum crisis further drains state resources. Overall, the promises made in the ruling party's election manifesto regarding parliamentary reforms have not been reflected in practice.

### Event

#### **RUET crowned champions of TIB-DUDS Earth and Climate Debate Tournament 2024**



Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET) has won the TIB-DUDS Debating Competition 2024 on the theme “Youth Perspective: Earth & Climate.” East West University was the runner-up. The two-day competition, organized by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS), aimed to engage university students in climate issues, including governance, financing, mitigation, and adaptation. A total of 32 universities participated.

# Newsletter-2024

## June Edition



The final round debated the effectiveness of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), with the opposition team winning by highlighting the GCF's shortcomings and the need for greater accountability from governments and polluting developed countries. Judges of the final debate emphasized the importance of climate discussions extending beyond debating circles to parliaments, policy

dialogues, and everyday conversations. They encouraged young debaters to enhance their skills through research and communication for their future careers.

Professor Dr. S M Shameem Reza, DUDS moderator, discussed climate anxiety affecting everyone, not just those in coastal areas. He emphasized that debating fosters a better understanding of global issues and expressed hope that students' voices would be heard on international platforms. At the closing ceremony, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekhazzaman addressed corruption in climate change, referencing TIB's recent report on GCF's bias against developing countries. He stressed the importance of youth leadership in climate change efforts and committed TIB to ongoing engagement in climate-related debates.

Chief Moderator of DUDS, Professor Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen, highlighted the reality of climate-induced disasters and urged focus on GCF and global climate bodies. She advocated for including climate change topics in children's education. Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka, A. S. M. Maksud Kamal, underscored the shared responsibility of saving the planet. He criticized global climate financing bodies for conflicts of interest and lack of emphasis on loss and damage. He noted the direct correlation between climate change and public health, particularly its impact on youth, and thanked TIB for organizing the event.

This year's competition featured 32 teams from various universities, including Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, University of Chittagong, Rajshahi University, Jashore University of Science and Technology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University, South East University, East West University, Comilla University, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Daffodil International University, International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Kazi Nazrul Govt. College, Bangladesh Textile University, Stamford University, Jahangirnagar University, Military Institute of Science and Technology, Bangladesh Agriculture University, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Sher-E-Bangla Agriculture University, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University, Barishal University, Premier University, National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka College, Jagannath University, Sir Salimullah Medical College, United International University, Govt. Bangla College, Tejgaon College, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, and Rajshahi College.

As climate change continues to pose global challenges, TIB's initiative aimed to raise awareness among the youth about climate governance. The event facilitated meaningful discussions on climate funding and challenges faced by countries like Bangladesh, with TIB planning to continue such engagements to foster youth involvement in anti-corruption and policy dialogues.



### CCC News Highlights

#### Citizens Speak Out Against Corruption and Irregularities at Muktagacha Public Hearing



**Muktagacha, 04 June 2024:** On 04 June 2024, a Citizens Gathering was held at Paduabari, Muktagacha, organized by the Active Citizens Group (ACG) and Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC). The event saw 26 men and women sharing first-hand experiences of irregularities in key service sectors, including education, health, land, and local government. Complaints ranged from harassment in land offices, the need for bribes to secure widow allowances, and extra fees for birth certificates, to misuse of Vulnerable Women Benefit (VWD) cards.

Attendees also raised concerns about the negligence of duty bearers, misconduct by healthcare professionals, and the misappropriation of funds from the KABITA project. Additionally, participants highlighted how old government buildings have become havens for drug users.

Ms. Corinne Thevoz from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation emphasized that the findings should lead to concrete action. Md. Atiqur Rahman of TIB encouraged citizens to protest against irregularities and seek assistance from CCC Muktagacha when needed. The event was chaired by Ms. Mahfuza Akhtar, Coordinator of ACG.

#### Chandpur Information Fair Highlights RTI Act's Role in Empowering Citizens

**Chadpur, 03 June 2024:** On 03 June 2024, a vibrant Information Fair took place at Chandpur Central Shahid Minar, co-organized by the Committee for Concerned Citizens (CCC) and the district administration. The event aimed to raise awareness about the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009 and promote its effective use. A total of 32 public and private organizations participated, providing advice and hands-on assistance to citizens on how to request information under the RTI Act.

Deputy Commissioner Kamrul Hasan, the chief guest, highlighted the RTI Act as the most empowering law in Bangladesh, emphasizing the constitutional principle that people are the source of all power. He urged young students attending the fair to utilize the RTI to combat corruption by ensuring access to information. Special guest Superintendent of Police Mohammad Saiful Islam echoed this sentiment, stressing the importance of correct information to prevent confusion.



The event also featured speeches from Superintendent of Chandpur General Hospital Dr. A K M Mahabubur Rahman, President of Chandpur Press Club Shahadat Hossain Shanto, and other key figures. They emphasized the need for open access to information to achieve Bangabandhu's vision of Sonar Bangla.

Alongside informative discussions, the fair included an anti-corruption quiz, cartoon competition, and sessions on adolescent health, women's roles in a corruption-free Bangladesh, and citizen expectations from service providers. A signature campaign and cultural performances by YES members capped off the day.

### **Advocacy Meeting in Pirojpur Aims to Improve Family Planning Services**

**Pirojpur, 11 June 2024:** On 11 June 2024, an Advocacy Meeting with the District Family Planning Authority was held in collaboration with CCC, Pirojpur, to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen-friendliness in the district's family planning system. The meeting, chaired by CCC President M. A. Rabbani Firoz, addressed various issues at Kadamtala Union Health and Family Welfare Center, including illegal land encroachment, tree stumps left on the premises, irregular medicine supply, staff shortages, boundary wall construction, and lack of sanitary napkins for adolescent girls.

Deputy Director of Family Planning Md. Sohel Parvez, the chief guest, stated that steps had already been taken to address these concerns, including land mutation, infrastructure development, boundary construction, and staff recruitment. He also mentioned that ACG's work under TIB's PACTA project would increase visibility of healthcare issues, benefiting the public. He encouraged CCC to form ACG at Shariktala Dumritala Union Health Center.

Other participants included Md. Shafiqul Islam, Upazila Family Planning Officer, and TIB Area Coordinator M. Zahirul Qayyum.

### Advocacy Meeting Seeks to Improve Satkhira Land Office Services

**Satkhira, 25 June 2024:** On 25 June 2024, Active Citizens Group (ACG), supported by CCC Satkhira, organized an Advocacy Meeting with Satkhira Sadar Upazila Land Office Authority at the office of Assistant Commissioner-Land. Key topics included improving service quality, reducing broker influence, ensuring harassment-free and ethical service, prioritizing women and persons with disabilities, and enhancing the Complaint and Redress Mechanism. Plans to address these issues were also discussed.

The meeting, presided over by Assistant Commissioner (Land) Mr. Atish Sarkar, began with a welcome speech from ACG Co-Coordinator S M Biplab Hossain. Guests included CCC Land Sub-Committee Co-Conveners Dr. Sushant Kumar Ghosh and Dr. Dilara Begum. Union Land Assistant Officer Mr. Mostafa Moniruzzaman, ACG member Sanjida Ahid, YES member Mushfiqur Rahman, and TIB's Area Coordinator Md. Monirul Islam also participated in the discussions.

### YES Group Marks World Environment Day with Rally and Tree Plantation at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

**Dhaka, 05 June 2024:** On 05 June 2024, the Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Group of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University organized several activities to commemorate World Environment Day. Events included an Anti-Corruption Cycle Rally, Street Drama, Signature Campaign, and Tree Plantation, under the slogan "We want effective measures to prevent land degradation and desertification."



The Anti-Corruption Cycle Rally was inaugurated by Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Alok Kumar Paul, with more than 100 students participating. The rally passed through key points on campus,

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ending at the Independence Pillar near the Faculty of Agriculture. Later, the Proctor and YES Advisor Prof. Dr. Harun-Ur-Rashid inaugurated a Signature Campaign and Street Drama, performed by YES members in front of Sheikh Kamal Bhavan, where students and teachers voiced their commitment to environmental protection.

On 06 June 2024, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Md. Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan inaugurated a tree plantation program, with the Pro-VC, Treasurer, and university officials present. Speakers emphasized the need for effective environmental laws and urged youth to raise awareness and protect the environment.

### CCCs Observe World Environment Day with Nationwide Events

**On 5th June 2024**, the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) marked World Environment Day across the country with events including human chains, rallies, discussion meetings, youth competitions, and tree planting. The theme was "We want effective measures to prevent land degradation and desertification."

Speakers at various events urged all sectors, especially youth, to take action in protecting the environment. They called for transparency and accountability in climate change funds and stressed that lack of public awareness is worsening environmental damage. Speakers also highlighted rising carbon emissions, deforestation, and improper financial support from developed nations, emphasizing the urgent need for stronger laws and policies.

CCC, ACG, YES members, and representatives from various organizations, along with local administrations, participated in these activities.



**Chief Editor:** Mohammad Tauhidul Islam  
**Editors:** Shahreen Haq, Kazi Mahdi Amin, Mathews Chiran

**Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)**  
MIDAS Centre (Level 4 & 5)  
House-5, Road-16 (New) 27 (Old)  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka -1209  
Phone: (+880-2) 41021267-70  
Fax: (+880-2) 41021272  
E-mail: [info@ti-bangladesh.org](mailto:info@ti-bangladesh.org)