

OVERVIEW



Training

- TIB Provides Research Skills Training To ACC Officials

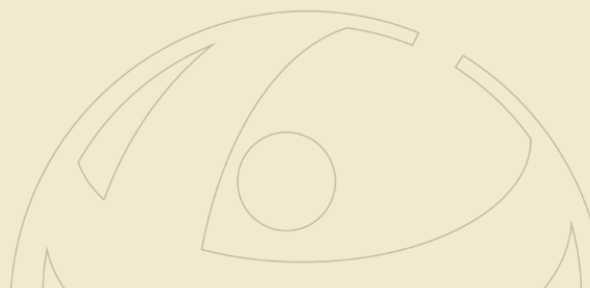


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Training



Dhaka, 30 July 2024: TIB, in collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), has conducted a day-long training session at its Dhanmondi office to provide Anti-Corruption officials with research skills. The training is a follow-up session for the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) officials, which focused on the "basics of research methodology." Ten ACC officials participated in the training.

The training concentrated on a variety of topics, including the definition of research, the comprehension of sampling, the methods of data collection, data coding and transcription, data analysis, triangulation and validation, and report preparation.

The ACC, an officially autonomous entity of Bangladesh, plays a significant role in the country by investigating the corruption issue. The TIB anticipates that the ACC will be better prepared to identify corruption and implement stringent measures in order to eradicate it as it works to fulfill its mandate.



Research: A preventive measure to combat corruption

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, the Executive Director of TIB, emphasized the significance and relevance of research in the ACC's operations, stating, "We aspire to have a more robust and well-equipped research wing." In general, we anticipate that the ACC will be more effective in implementing anti-corruption measures. It is logical and generally anticipated that the primary responsibility of the ACC is to identify corruption and ensure that those responsible are held accountable. Conducting research is one of the preventive measures that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) implements to combat corruption, as stipulated in the Anti-Corruption Commission Act. TIB is consistently available to provide research support to the ACC, as it is the primary stakeholder for the ACC and was involved in the Act's development. Two critical components are required for the viability of an institution such as ACC, as demonstrated by international experience. These two crucial components are the proof that research is significant: robust preventive measures and vigorous executive measures.

TIB's Adviser to Executive Management, Prof. Dr. Sumaiya Khair, emphasized the importance of theoretical knowledge in the conduct of effective research and in the execution of professional responsibilities. She also encouraged further study and research in the field of corruption. She recommended that they locate and read literature on corruption in order to expand their comprehension of the subject and its associated issues. This would enable them to delve deeper into the subject and make a more significant impact with their work.

TIB Outreach & Communication Director Mohammad Tauhidul Islam emphasized the importance of fostering a proactive mindset by encouraging individuals to implement the knowledge they have acquired in their professional environments. Despite the potential for challenges and rejection, they must establish a framework within which to address a specific issue, and the primary investigation should commence. In addition, he underscored the significance of open data sources and encouraged them to continue their exploration by utilizing these sources to document corruption-related Information.

TIB Research & Policy Director Muhammad Badiuzzaman reiterated his call for ACC officials to implement their knowledge in their workplaces with a resolute attitude. He stated that the utmost benefit of the training must be obtained by properly implementing the knowledge that has been acquired. He also noted that this approach would be advantageous to both ACC and the general public.

The training session was conducted by TIB Senior Research Fellow Shahzada Akram and Mahfuzul Haque, while the event was inaugurated by TIB's Adviser to Executive Management, Dr. Sumaiya Khair.



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(Policy Stance)
Stop Fake Narratives and Falsehood: TIB



Dhaka, 29 July 2024: Illegally taking the coordinators of the students' quota reform movement into the custody as a weapon to forcefully suppress the movement and to make them read out statement to declare the withdrawal of their program through a video message is nothing but outright false, flagrant deception, and unconstitutional, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and strongly condemned the hypocrisy. TIB has stated that in order to justify human rights violations such as large-scale killings, detentions, and unjust actions carried out by law enforcement agencies, as well as to suppress the movement, the government, ruling party, state-run institutions, and the Detective Branch (DB) have employed false narratives that are self-destructive, anti-people, and cruel theatrics which people have no reason to trust.

According to media reports, in Dhaka alone over 200 cases have been filed indiscriminately against more than 2 Lakh and 13 thousand people under different police stations if the capital in connection with violence in the movement. Mass arrests are going on by law enforcement agencies. Human rights violations are occurring while individuals are subjected to mass arrests and harassments, said TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman. He said, "Although the arrest drive in different areas was to ensure accountability of only those responsible for the violences, media reports inform that students, professionals, and common people are being arrested arbitrarily. Even incidents like arrests of juveniles of 13 to 17 years of age, along with the general people who were not involved in the violence, have taken place. These are clear violations of the citizens' rights enshrined in the Constitution. At the same time, there are allegations of inhumane torture after abductions or arrest, ignoring the clear direction of the High Court, which is a blatant violation of human rights. Reminding the law enforcement agencies of their constitutional and professional duties, we want to call upon them to come out of the path of such violations and harassment of people if there is even a minimum respect for their identity as the protectors of the law, not violators."

The TIB ED mentioned that it is unethical and an abhorrent crime to force the coordinators of the movement to read out a statement in a video message to give up protests while under detention following abductions in the DB headquarters in the ridiculous pretext of 'providing safety'. He added, "From what we have seen on the media, there are sufficient grounds to be concerned that the coordinators were under duress after abduction and torture under detention. All these represent a professional bankruptcy of lying to the public and attempting to mislead them. Moreover, there is no legal basis for 'abduction or detention for safety'. Abducting and detaining students for their role in a fully non-political and peaceful movement for genuine rights is a clear violation of the Article 33 of the constitution. Similarly, coercing the coordinators to call off protests by reading out a statement is a violation of the Article 35(4) of the constitution. It is not baseless to surmise that such unconstitutional measures are being taken to forcibly deprive the students of their right to dissent and cover up the unprecedented use of force to control protests."

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman further stated that the government, while trying to suppress the protests, has been resorting to lies since the very beginning in order to legalize the unaccountable activities including internet shutdowns. He mentioned, "It is clear that the government failed to comprehend a completely apolitical, peaceful protest and pushed it towards violence by applying force and giving a chance to the state agencies to abuse power. Actions that violate the constitutional rights of citizens, including mass arrests, arbitrary cases, block raids, abductions, tortures, harassment of citizens, and use of fake narratives to justify the same must stop."

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Acute Governance Deficits Manifest in Unprecedented Deaths and Havoc; Peaceful Dissent and Movement for Legitimate Demands are Constitutional Rights, not Crimes: TIB



Dhaka, 25 July 2024: Using force to repress the recent quota reformation movement of the students for the government jobs and the unprecedented death and havoc exacerbated by the wrongdoings of the interested groups during the movement depicts the acute governance deficits,

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said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). The organization also emphasized that peaceful dissent and demonstrations to address demands are constitutional rights, not crimes.

Calling upon the government to take corrective lessons from the prevailing crisis, the anti-corruption watchdog has also called upon the government to immediately stop repressive measures against the students and immediately announce acceptance of the students' all legitimate demands while also coming out of the path of abduction and repression. In addition, TIB called for holding a dialogue with the full group of coordinators to develop a mutually agreed road map for enforcement of the government's commitments.

During and after the quota reformation movement for the government job, the death of 200 people have been recorded. Mentioning that the peaceful movement with the logical demands suddenly turned into a violent and bloody one due the provocation of the high-level leadership of the government, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The constitution gives people the right to express dissent, carry out rallies, stage protest, and peaceful demonstration as a part of movement to fulfil demands – but what can be more disappointing than reminding this to a democratic government! In fact, we have become the witness of a massive loss of lives and mayhem on the state's properties revolving around the movement that has been described peaceful by the government itself and this situation manifested the acute lack of good governance and accountability. Even more alarming is that more death news is coming on people including children and teenagers who were not in the protest. It is one of the important questions of the time that whether the responsible individuals be held accountable for the death of those died at point blank shooting or at own home or rooftop, along with the death of others. On the other hand, the judicial commission will only investigate into the six death incidents that happened on 16 July. So, are the rest of the lives worthless? Should we accept dying by bullets at home and accept it as regular normal events?"

According to the media, the students participated in the peaceful quota reformation movement are constantly under the fear of arrest, abduction, and physical-mental torture. The students have been tortured after abduction by the groups identifying as law enforcers; these are clear by the remarks of the students returned.

In this regard, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The responsible ones of the government, including the ministers, have admitted that no students have been involved in any atrocities. Despite this, illegal abduction of the students by the law enforcement agencies is nothing but a total disregard for the constitutional right to civilian protest and movement. This would not be an exaggeration to say that showcasing the right to expression, protest and movement to fulfil fair demands as a crime, a fearful situation is being created for the the freedom of speech of the general public and the students.

Demanding that the government must takes steps, Dr Zaman said that the government must immediately accept the legitimate demand of the students while avoiding the path of retaliation and creating an environment for a dialogue. Also, the government must take the initiative to hold a dialogue with the full group of coordinators of the students involved in the movement. Similarly, to immediately materialize the commitment of the government a unanimously agreed road-map has to be developed to eliminate the prevailing tension and fear. He also questioned regarding the

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recent arrest and charges against the protesters and called upon the government not to turn it into a 'festivity' of arrest and harassing people.

Citing the shutting down of internet to repress the movement is a suicidal decision, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, said, "The way all the citizens of the country have been cut off of the internet service violating the digital rights and detaching from the rest of the world on the subterfuge of the arson attack on the data center, it can be easily assuming that the main purpose of it is to obstruct the free flow of information and expression. The access to internet is not a special opportunity but, in reality, rights- the government entity has started to forget this. Financial transactions and the banking system, export business have faced massive damage within and outside the country, and people have faced difficulties in accessing essential services like gas and electricity due to the internet service cut off- who will take responsibility for this? Shutting down the internet, for temporary gain, while also chanting the slogan of from 'Digital Bangladesh' to 'Smart Bangladesh' is nothing but self-contradictory and imprudent of the government. To revive trade and commerce, and ensure the free flow of information, TIB urges the government to immediately resume the internet service of mobile and broadband in full swing."

After violence infiltrated the protest, arson attacks took place at important government establishments. This raises questions of the respective government's institutions regarding their capabilities, preparedness, and integrity in safeguarding those establishments. This situation has also created an opportunity for the government to engage in self-criticism. TIB expects the government to seize this opportunity and refrain from employing repressive measures against dissenters, and adopt the democratic and good-governance oriented path.

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**TIB Condemns Cowardly Use of Force on Peaceful Quota Reform Movement of Students;
Calls for Logical, Peaceful, and Constitutional Resolution of the Crisis**



Dhaka, 16 July 2024: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has strongly condemned and expressed outrage over the attacks on students protesting for quota reform in government jobs, perpetrated by members of the ruling party's student wing and external attackers. In a press statement issued on Tuesday, TIB demanded that the attackers be identified and held to exemplary account. Additionally, TIB called for a peaceful and constitutional resolution to the ongoing crisis.

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TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in the statement, “For the last couple of weeks, a significant portion of students from different educational institutions were peacefully carrying out movements for quota reform in government jobs. We were initially hopeful upon seeing tolerance from the government and its supported student organizations towards the movement, based on the constitutional rights of students for freedom of expression and assembly. However, disgusting and barbarous attacks took place on students from the University of Dhaka and other educational institutions across the country yesterday. Reliable media sources have also reported that even female students faced cowardly, indiscriminate, and dangerous attacks and harassment in public. Media reports have also said that a student tragically died during the protests today in Rangpur. We are appalled, outraged, and disappointed by the attacks and death. We demand that the attackers be identified and brought to book, regardless of their political positions and identities.”

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman expressed hopes that the protesting students would continue their peaceful movements, keeping in mind Bangladesh's legacy, a country where students have played a significant role in all rights-based achievements, including the glorious Language Movement and Independence. He added, “The government should not ignore the logical demands of the students by passing the burden onto the courts; rather, it should take steps for a logical, modern, peaceful, and constitutional solution. TIB expects that the government will not attempt to curb the students' logical movement by instigating violence but will fulfill its constitutional responsibility of ensuring a peaceful environment for student protests.” TIB believes that the top brass of the ruling party and the state should avoid negative sentiments about protesters and that the protesters should carry on their movement with the spirit of the Liberation War and patriotism. It must be ensured that the Liberation War and the valiant Freedom Fighters are not belittled in any way.

The TIB ED mentioned that the armed attacks on the protesting students the day before, which continued until midnight at various universities, were cowardly acts reminiscent of the Pakistani occupation forces and represented an institutional failure of the relevant educational institutions as they were unable to resist the violence. He added, “The government and law enforcement agencies cannot evade responsibility for failing to prevent the attacks on universities in Dhaka, Chattogram, Jahangirnagar, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Cumilla by government-backed student organizations and external attackers. We watched with concern the sinister attempts to blame the violence on protesters, despite the perpetrators being the initial aggressors. The entire state mechanism failed to stop the attacks. Especially, several government ministers have directly or indirectly incited violence, which is beyond condemnation. We are appalled and stunned by such attacks by external vandals on university campuses in the dead of night, 53 years after independence. We do not want a repetition of such violence. These must be stopped immediately, and the attackers must be identified and brought to exemplary punishment, regardless of their identities and conflicts of interest.”

TIB has called on all parties, including the government and law enforcement agencies, to act with moderation and logic to find a reasonable, peaceful, and constitutional resolution to the quota reform movements. The organization has also urged the government and associated agencies to arrange proper treatment for everyone injured in the attacks, ensure the safety of the students, and maintain an environment for peaceful protests at any cost.

(Policy Stance)

Far or Near, Don't Care; Zero Tolerance against Corruption to Continue' TIB Calls for Specific Time-Bound Roadmap to Enforce PM's Declaration



Dhaka, 15 July 2024: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) would like to consider Prime Minister's disclosure of action taken against a former employee at her residence who accumulated huge amount of income and wealth, her declaration that 'far or near, no matter', and that 'zero tolerance against corruption will continue as a testimony to her firm commitment against corruption. At the same time TIB has urged the government to adopt and enforce a time-bound road map consistent with this "Zero Tolerance" declaration and the ruling party's election manifesto.

Recently, many instances of high level corruption have come to light where individuals have allegedly amassed huge income and wealth through corruption abusing their entrusted power or leveraging their relationships with those in powerful positions. In this regard, during a press conference on July 14, in response to media about government's initiative, the Prime Minister disclosed that she took action against a former employee of her household who had amassed BDT 400 crore. Mentioning the PM's disclosure as an indicator of political will, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The Prime Minister has in reality expressed her dismay and discomfort towards the culture of normalization of amassing illegal wealth through abuse of power in the name of being associated with her or by individuals in other high positions in the government".

Dr. Zaman termed her announcement as timely and promising, especially that action has been taken against the individual; that such bad elements must be removed whether far or near; that taking action against corruption doesn't tarnish the government's image; and that zero tolerance against Corruption will continue".

Stating that the Prime Minister's declaration to bring the corrupt under accountability is significant for the government and the relevant institutions, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "Failure to bring to justice the individual for amassing Tk 400 crore who according to the Prime Minister is known to travel only by helicopter will be demeaning for the statement made by the head of the government if subject to due investigation by ACC these are found to be inconsistent with legitimate income.

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The Prime Minister has clearly emphasized the legal and political obligations to ensure exemplary accountability of anyone alleged of corruption. Similarly, in light of recent developments, it is imperative to effectively hold to account key figures in recent public concerns over reported instances of high level corruption including that of the former army chief, former police and RAB chief, and high-ranking officials from the National Board of Revenue, through efficient and conflict of interest-free investigations.”

Stating that the PM’s statement debunked the often-heard motivated impression that taking action against high level corruption damages government’s reputation, Dr. Zaman also emphasized, “In this context, we urge the government to adopt specific time-bound road map for the meaningful and effective implementation of the Prime Minister's zero tolerance pledge and the ruling party's election manifesto. By so doing the government can open the road to address growing public concerns about the enormous depths and breadths of corruption and impunity.”

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Transfer, Dismissal, and Retirement not Enough to Address Corruption Allegations; TIB Calls for Ensuring Exemplary Punishment



Dhaka 01 July 2024: Presenting transfer, dismissal, and compulsory retirement as the maximum punishment for the corrupt public servants is insufficient and can encourage corruption instead. Therefore, the corrupt public servants must be brought to proper trial to ensure exemplary punishment in accordance with legal proceedings, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) called upon the government.

According to media reports, officials from NBR and the police facing corruption allegations have been transferred or compelled into retirement. Describing these administrative actions as 'promising', TIB Executive Director (ED) Dr. Iftekharuzzaman stated, “It has become normalized to limit disciplinary actions such as transfer, dismissal, or compulsory retirement for government employees accused of corruption. However, such measures fall short in effectively ensuring accountability and deterring corruption. Crimes like corruption can spread to other officials and beyond if punishment is limited to transfers alone. Public servants do not have to face the law if

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they involve in corruption- in fact the widespread acceptance of this idea can further encourage corruption.”

Dr. Zaman pointed out that amendments relaxing provisions in the Government Service (Discipline & Appeal) Rules over time have effectively provided a protective shield. “It is a blatant violation of the Constitution to shield public servants from liability for corruption through mere divisional actions. According to Article 27 of the Constitution, all citizens are equal before the law. Limiting punishment for public servants accused of corruption to measures like transfer, dismissal, or retirement is the indication of discrimination against people of different professions and classes. It also works as the pre-dominant factor for the spread of corruption across various areas within the government sectors through collusion,” he said. Dr. Zaman demanded that officials accused of corruption face investigation and trial through the standard legal processes applied to all citizens.

Citing that there is no way to ignore the political responsibilities regarding the glaring examples of the recent corruption of the public servants, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “While some leaders within the ruling party acknowledge institutionalized corruption, many attempt to shift blame solely onto government employees. However, it can not be denied that high-level corruption often involves political patronage and collusion. The failure to effectively combat corruption is partly due to political leaders’ avoidance of responsibilities for their influence over key institutions. Moving beyond mere rhetoric of a zero-tolerance policy against corruption, political leadership must accept responsibility and enforce genuine measures to root out corruption. This requires a shift from lip service to substantial actions that rebuild public trust and uphold ethical governance standards.”

CCC News Highlights

ACG-CCC Discussion Focuses on Service Improvements at Brahmanbaria General Hospital



Brahmanbaria, 14 July 2024: To improve service quality, the Active Citizens Group (ACG) of the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Brahmanbaria, held a discussion meeting with the

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authorities of Brahmanbaria 250 Bedded General Hospital on 14 July 2024. Dr. Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, convener of the CCC's sub-committee on health, presided over the meeting, which took place at the Doctor Milon Conference Room.

Hospital Superintendent Dr. Ratan Kumar Dhali, the chief guest, acknowledged ongoing efforts to improve services despite limitations in manpower and infrastructure. He highlighted actions taken since the last meeting, including repairing generators, regulating pharmaceutical company visits, and curbing broker activities. He also mentioned that post-hospital health services have begun on a limited scale, with plans for full implementation.

CCC members expressed gratitude to the hospital for their dedication and urged them to address the discussed issues promptly. Prof. Md. Rafiqul Islam, CCC adviser, and member Mohammad Arju, along with hospital staff and CCC-YES-ACG members, participated in the meeting.

YES-CCC Jamalpur Organizes Human Chain with 16-Point Demand for Improved Public Transport



Jamalpur, 16 July 2024: The Youth Engagement & Support (YES) group of the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Jamalpur, organized a human chain on 16 July 2024 at Dayamayi Mor in Jamalpur city, presenting a 16-point demand for passenger-friendly public transport services from Jamalpur to Dhaka and Mymensingh. Mohammad Zakaria, Team Leader of YES, presided over the event.

CCC Jamalpur President Shamima Khan emphasized the need for immediate action from authorities to address the demands, while speakers pointed out the mismanagement of public transport and rail services in Jamalpur. They called for an end to the monopoly of a few beneficiaries and urged for necessary reforms.

The demands, presented by YES member Abriti Amin Eva, included introducing AC buses on the Jamalpur-Dhaka route, removing unfit vehicles, ensuring licensed drivers, and restarting BRTC bus services. Over 200 printed versions of the demands were distributed to participants, which included journalists, lawyers, NGOs, and local community members.

The event was moderated by CCC Vice President A. K. M. Ashrafuzzaman, with notable speakers such as Jahangir Salim, President of Durniti Protirodh Committee, and Adv. Yusuf Ali, President of Jamalpur Press Club.

CCC Rajbari Hosts Experience-Sharing Meeting to Strengthen Anti-Corruption Movement



Rajbari, 01 July 2024: The Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Rajbari, organized a meeting at Rajbari Convention Center on 01 July 2024 to share local experiences in the anti-corruption movement. The event was presided over by CCC President, Professor Md. Nuruzzaman, with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman leading an anti-corruption oath-taking session online.

Participants, including members of CCC, YES, and nine Active Citizens Groups (ACGs), engaged in an open discussion, sharing their anti-corruption efforts. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman encouraged using past experiences to strengthen the movement, acknowledging that opposition from corrupt individuals is a normal consequence of speaking out.

TIB's Civic Engagement Coordinator Md. Atikur Rahman discussed the objectives of the program, and Area Coordinator Masud Ahmed presented on CCC Rajbari's achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. CCC members, including Professor Shankar Chandra Sinha and others, addressed the meeting. Over 100 participants pledged to intensify their involvement in the anti-corruption movement.

CCC Savar Organizes Orientation on SDGs and National Integrity Strategy



Savar, 11 July 2024: On 11 July 2024, the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Savar, organized an orientation focused on skill development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and promoting the National Integrity Strategy (NIS). The event, held in Savar, Dhaka,

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saw participation from CCC, Youth Engagement & Support (YES), and nine Active Citizens Groups (ACGs).

Inaugurated by CCC Savar President Prof. Deepak Kumar Roy, the sessions were led by TIB Civic Engagement Coordinator Md. Atikur Rahman and Area Coordinator Rashiduzzaman Liton. Discussions included an overview of the NIS, SDGs, and the importance of SDG 16 in combating corruption and fostering good governance.

Among the 38 attendees were CCC Vice President Advocate Nazrul Islam, member Srabanti Ghosh, and Freedom Fighter engineer A. Khalek. Speakers expressed their gratitude to TIB and committed to working collaboratively to promote NIS and SDGs.

CCC and ACG Advocate for Improved Land Services in Sunamganj

Sunamganj: An advocacy meeting organized by the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) and Active Citizen Group (ACG), Sunamganj, focused on enhancing transparency, accountability, and governance in land-related services. Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Sunamganj Sadar Upazila, Emdadul Haque Sharif, highlighted initiatives such as banning brokers from the land office and taking action against a caught deed writer.

The CCC presented recommendations, including nameplates for designated officers, complaint boxes, updated Citizen Charters, and improved web portals. The AC (Land) urged citizens to report any demand exceeding the standard Taka 1170/- fee for mutations, assuring administrative action.

A digital land service campaign billboard was installed at Kazi Point, and efforts to promote digital land services will gradually extend to union levels. The AC (Land) also called on CCC, YES, and ACG to raise awareness about these improved services to reduce public misconceptions.



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