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## Research Release

### **Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2023** **Corruption Affects 70.9% of Households; BDT 1,46,252 Crore Estimated Bribe in 15** **Years: TIB**



The passport, BRTA, law enforcement, judiciary, and land sectors were found to be the most corrupt in the service sector, with 70.9% of Bangladeshi households reported corruption between May 2023 and April 2024. Furthermore, 50.8% of households experienced bribery at this time, with law enforcement, BRTA, and passport services having the highest percentages. TIB revealed these findings at a press conference unveiling the “Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2023” results.

The survey of 2023 revealed that 70.9% of households in Bangladesh has experienced corruption in some form while availing services from various public and private sectors or institutions. Passport services (86%) were identified as the most corrupt sector, followed by BRTA (85.2%), law enforcement agencies (74.5%), judicial services (62.3%), land services (51%), public healthcare (49.1%), and local government institutions (44.2%). Overall, 50.8% of households reported paying bribes or being forced to pay unauthorized money to access services. The highest incidences of bribery were reported in passport services (74.8%), BRTA (71.9%), law enforcement agencies (58.3%), judicial services (34.1%), land services (32.3%), and local government institutions (29.7%). Among the households that paid bribes, 77.2% cited the reason as “services cannot be obtained without paying a bribe,” highlighting a concerning institutionalization of bribery practices.

Households that paid bribes or unauthorized money for services from May 2023 to April 2024 spent an average of BDT 5,680 each. The total estimated bribes or unauthorized payments across all sectors during this period amounted to BDT 10,902 crore, which is 1.44% of the national budget for 2023-24 and 0.22% of GDP. Analysis of the results from TIB’s household surveys since 2010 shows that from 2009 to April 2024, the included service sectors/institutions have collected an estimated total of BDT 146,252 crore in bribes or unauthorized payments.

The survey collected data on corruption and harassment encountered by selected households while obtaining services from service sectors between May 2023 and April 2024. Data for this survey were collected between May 13 and August 3, 2024.

The survey reveals that corruption and bribery disproportionately impact low-income and marginalized groups. Households earning below BDT 24,000 monthly spend 0.93% of their annual income on bribes, while those earning above BDT 85,000 spend only 0.21%. Women, religious minorities, indigenous peoples, and individuals with disabilities face additional burdens, worsening their socio-economic challenges. Women are notably impacted by corruption in local governance and educational sectors, which hinders them from participating and, in certain instances, obstructs their progress.

TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “We have seen that the much-publicized declaration of “zero tolerance against corruption” remains confined to rhetoric. While the government speaks of combating corruption on paper, reports exposing its prevalence are often dismissed. Institutions tasked with preventing corruption are not only ineffective but have also had their operational scope significantly curtailed. Consequently, due to the failure to control corruption, the general public is held hostage to it and forced to accept it. It is concerning that individuals who have been accused of corruption are being promoted to prominent roles, including the role of presidents of organizations and principal guests at events, including religious institutions. The persistence of this trend serves as evidence that corruption is being institutionalized through impunity, a situation that is concerning to us. Those involved in corruption must be held responsible, reflecting the public's strongest demand as highlighted in the survey findings. The current context offers a crucial opportunity. If the interim government can set a solid precedent by taking immediate action against corruption, it may provide a benchmark for future governments, compelling them to continue such efforts.”

The survey shows that the rate of victim to corruption is higher when receiving services in person compared to online or mixed methods (partially online and partially in person). Although digital services have been introduced in various sectors, the rates of corruption and bribery in these sectors indicate that, on one hand, digital services are flawed, and on the other hand, digitization has been implemented in a way that compels service recipients to use mixed methods to get services and pay bribes, thereby leaving room for corruption and bribery.

Dr. Zaman further said, “The partial digitization of government service delivery has failed to achieve the desired benefits of integrating information technology into the service sector. Service recipients are often compelled to navigate a mixed system, which leaves room for bribery. Many officials demand several bribes, but services are still not rendered, which permits networks of corruption to continue operating unchallenged. These syndicates are still very difficult to break. Also, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is regarded as ineffective at fighting corruption. The ACC receives only 0.6% of complaints due to a lack of information about the process. Even when complaints are filed, they rarely lead to resolution, often resulting in harassment for the complainant. As a result of this lack of accountability, corruption has been authorized to continue

at worrisome levels, which has undermined public trust and contributed to ineffective governance.”

The survey recommends taking legal action against individuals involved in corruption, with active roles for the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and relevant institutions. Full digitization of services and the implementation of ‘one-stop’ service systems are urged to minimize direct interactions and reduce corruption. Institutions should adopt modern codes of conduct, specifying service delivery protocols, timelines, and behavior standards, alongside systems to collect recipient feedback for performance evaluation. Employee promotions and placements should be merit-based, with corruption-accused individuals barred from benefits. Citizen charters must be regularly updated with service fees and timelines, displayed prominently, and supported by active institutional social media platforms. Additionally, gaps in personnel, infrastructure, and logistics must be addressed, with skill-enhancing training programs introduced for employees.

The press conference was attended by TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Research & Policy Division Director Muhammad Badiuzzaman, and an expert research team from Dhaka University, including former Professors P.K. Motiur Rahman, Sekander H. Khan, and Muhammad Shuaib. The event was conducted by TIB Outreach & Communication Division Director Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, with TIB Research Fellow Mohammad Nure Alam and Research Associate Mohammad Abdul Hannan Shakhider presenting the findings.

For more details : <https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/nhs>.

## Events

### **TIB Held the First-Ever Journalists Conclave and Announced the Investigative Journalism Awards 2024**



Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) unveiled the Investigative Journalism Award (IJA) and held the first-ever conclave for investigative journalists on December 5, 2024, with the aim of promoting journalism for the public interest in the "New Bangladesh" and ensuring press freedom.

This momentous event reaffirmed TIB's steadfast dedication to transparency while allowing journalists to reveal corruption and flaws, marking a major turning point in the nation's investigative journalism history.

The conclave celebrated the 25-year legacy of TIB's Investigative Journalism Awards, which were first introduced in 1999. What began with a modest number of submissions has grown into a prominent initiative, with a cumulative total of 1,440 reports submitted to date, awarded 90 reports in total. The awards include 88 distinguished journalists, 13 documentaries, 7 female journalists, and 17 cameramen acknowledged for their contributions for investigative reporting. These awards honor the contributions of committed media professionals who uncover stories that promote transparency and combat corruption. It also emphasizes resilience and significance of investigative journalism in Bangladesh, despite the numerous obstacles it encountered.



Journalists from print and online media, academics, and other stakeholders came together to discuss critical issues such as press freedom, journalists' rights, and the challenges of navigating a rapidly evolving media landscape. These discussions shed light on various pressing topics, including the pressure on media outlets, declining news quality, the rise of self-censorship, combating disinformation, ensuring the free flow of information, overcoming challenges in investigative journalism, protecting journalists, and creating an environment conducive to ethical and impactful reporting.

## **IJ Award Categories and Topics**

This year's awards recognized excellence in four categories: National Newspaper, Local Newspaper, TV Reporting, and TV Documentary. In 2024, a total of 59 reports were submitted for the TIB Investigative Journalism Awards. Among them four were selected in Local Print/Online Media, National Print/Online Media, Electronic Media and TV Documentary categories respectively. The award-winning reports tackled critical issues such as illicit financial relationships between doctors and pharmaceutical companies, money laundering by a major business conglomerate, and irregularities in government projects for underprivileged women at the grassroots level.

The winner in the Local Print/Online Media category is Shariful Islam (Shariful Rukun), Chief Reporter of Ekushey Patrika from Chattogram. He earned the award for his three-part investigative

series titled 'Co-opting doctors with all - cheques, houses, and cars', 'Burden of bribes on patients' and 'Cost of diagnosis doubled for commission business', the investigative series exposes the unethical greed of certain healthcare professionals and the exploitative profit-making by pharmaceutical companies.



Zyma Islam, Senior Reporter at The Daily Star, was declared the winner in the National Print/Online Media category of this year's TIB Investigative Journalism Awards. Her groundbreaking report, 'S Alam's Aladdin's Lamp' that uncovered a labyrinth of financial irregularities tied to the S Alam Group. The investigative report sheds light on the group's clandestine operations, revealing assets worth over Tk100 crores in Singapore. Zyma's meticulous reporting brought to public attention the shadowy financial dealings of one of the country's most powerful companies, setting a new benchmark for investigative journalism in Bangladesh.

In the Electronic Media category, Al-Amin Haque Ahon, clinched this year's TIB Investigative Journalism Awards for his powerful report titled 'Project for underprivileged women, benefit project personnel rather than the women'. The investigative exposed shocking levels of corruption and mismanagement within a government initiative aimed at empowering disadvantaged women through economic opportunities. Ahon's in-depth investigation not only shed light on widespread mismanagement and corruption but also emphasized the urgent need for transparency and accountability in government programs. His work underscores how investigative journalism serves as a vital tool in bringing systemic problems into the public eye and advocating for the marginalized.

In TV Documentary category, 'Talaash' from Independent Television has been awarded for their insightful program titled 'Dealers and authorities steal the rice and wheat meant for the poor'. The documentary exposed critical insights into the challenges of food distribution and corruption within government relief programs. The award was accepted on behalf of the 'Talaash team' by Md. Shabuj Mahmud, Golam Kibria, Md. Abdulla Al Rafi, Md. Yasin Nur, and Md. Hasan Mahmud.

With this landmark award ceremony, TIB reaffirmed its desire to improve the basis for investigative journalism and public interest in the years to come by empowering journalists in Bangladesh to serve as crucial agents of transparency and accountability.

## Youth Will Break the Chains of Corruption in Bangladesh



Standing before the National Parliament, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, to mark the International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) 2024, TIB's Executive Director delivered a speech that goes far beyond traditional anti-corruption rhetoric. He challenged the systematic corruption that has long beset Bangladesh's institutions, calling for comprehensive reforms that would dismantle the culture of impunity rooted in political and bureaucratic systems. “The youth, he claimed, are not just participants but the primary catalysts for this profound societal transformation and it is a collective responsibility that demands the full engagement of every citizen, especially the young.” His words painted a compelling vision of a "New Bangladesh" where transparency and accountability are not mere aspirations, but fundamental principles of good governance.

TIB celebrated International Anti-Corruption Day by holding a human chain in Dhaka, under the theme "New Bangladesh – The Invincible Youth Will Stop Corruption". The human chain was more than a symbolic gesture—it was a declaration of intent. The organization's approach is strategic and multifaceted. In alignment with IACD theme, a concept paper outlining 14 key recommendations unveiled during the human chain that serves as a roadmap for institutional reform. The paper proposed strengthening the transparency and accountability of the Anti-



Corruption Commission (ACC) and implementing reforms suggested by the ACC Reform Commission. The recommendations also included forming a separate judiciary secretariat to prevent political interference in judicial processes and taking decisive action to end impunity for corruption, particularly at higher levels. Ensuring transparency in government procurement through mandatory use of the e-GP system was emphasized, alongside drafting a “Conflict of Interest Law” to tackle nepotism and irregularities in government functions. Moreover, the paper

also underscored the importance of safeguarding media freedom and preventing surveillance-driven fear and insecurity as critical steps toward systemic reform.

What makes TIB's initiative for IACD 2024, truly remarkable is its nationwide activities. While the human chain in Dhaka captured national attention, similar activities unfolded across 45 regions, demonstrating a grassroots movement that cannot be ignored. Community activities, information fairs, awareness campaigns, and cartoon exhibitions turned anti-corruption interaction from an abstract concept into a practical pressing objective.

TIB has made International Anti-Corruption Day a nationwide celebration, empowering young people to lead the way towards a corruption-free country.

### **Youth-Led Cartoon Exhibition Champions Anti-Corruption Movement**



In a state often tarnished by the shadows of corruption, a beacon of hope emerged through a unique initiative—an anti-corruption cartoon competition arranged by Transparency International (TIB). This pioneering competition transformed artistic expression into a powerful weapon against systemic injustice. Marking International Anti-Corruption Day 2024, this event proved not only to be a celebration of creativity but also a call for a corruption-free country envisioned by the youth of Bangladesh.

The theme, “Corruption & Immorality,” drawn through the vibrant strokes of young artists from every corner of Bangladesh. Each drawing told a story—some whimsical, some satirical, and others profoundly poignant. These visual masterpieces reflected a collective yearning for a nation free from corruption and based on accountability, transparency and good governance. The participating young artists demonstrated a refreshing and innovative thinking that brimmed up with optimism and promise.

The 19th Cartoon Exhibition served as a platform for these talented youths to express their aspirations without restraint. As guests and visitors walked among the vivid displays, it was

impossible not to be moved by the unfiltered honesty and ingenuity that radiated from each cartoon. The highlight of the event was the award ceremony, where national and international dignitaries gathered to honor the winners. The panel of judges, comprising prominent figures from the art and cartoon sectors, admitted the immense difficulty in selecting winners, given the extraordinary talent evident in every submission.

One of the distinguished guests remarked, “Art is the pulse of a society, and these young artists have their fingers firmly on it. Through satire and symbolism, they have communicated a powerful message that corruption is not an inevitability—it is a choice that we can collectively reject.”



Special dignitaries from the donor agencies at the event highlighted the transformative potential of youth-driven creativity. “Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the change-makers of today,” one guest stated. They emphasized that young minds bring an untainted perspective, which is vital for envisioning and building a corruption-free country.

Moreover, the cartoons themselves were a study in diversity. Some pieces used humor to expose the absurdity of corrupt practices, while others painted a grim picture of societal decay when integrity is abandoned. A recurring motif was the image of a “clean slate,” symbolizing the youth’s yearning to build a ‘New Bangladesh’, free from the scars of corruption. One particularly striking entry depicted a phoenix rising from a pile of shattered chains, symbolizing renewal and hope. Another juxtaposed a tree with deep roots of integrity against a withered shrub choked by the weeds of bribery. Each piece echoed with its visirors, prompting reflection and discussion long after the event concluded.

The dignitaries, the young cartoonists, and the visitors were united in their belief that the battle against corruption is far from insurmountable. This anti-corruption cartoon contest was more than an exhibition; it was a movement—a vivid reminder that change begins in the imagination and grows through action.

This year, TIB received 247 cartoons from 160 young artists for this competition. Comic Strips and Digital Art that were included into this year's cartoon competition gave young artists the opportunity to showcase integrity through their artwork. The winning drawings were on display at TIB Head Office in Dhanmondi till December 21, with a virtual gallery online.

## **TIB Empowers Journalists with Data Skill to Decode Corruption**



In an era where accuracy and precision are paramount in journalism, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has taken a bold step forward to empower journalists with the art of data-driven storytelling. Recognizing the transformative power of data journalism, TIB hosted its first-ever, hands-on, intensive three-day residential training program from December 26 to 28, offering detailed technical training on data journalism for the first time. The program brought together 25 professional journalists from various media backgrounds, including print, online, and television, to explore the intricate aspects of data journalism.

### **Bridging Gaps in Data Journalism in Bangladesh**

While data journalism has gained momentum globally with groundbreaking investigations like the Panama Papers scandal, its practice remains limited in Bangladesh. With this training, TIB aims to bridge the gap, equipping journalists with the tools and techniques to extract accurate and insightful information from complex datasets.

### **A Comprehensive Learning Experience**

The training, held at BCDM in Rajendrapur, covered a comprehensive range of topics essential for modern journalism. Participants engaged in discussions on the fundamentals and stages of data journalism, methods of data collection and mining, techniques for cleaning and analyzing data, and ways to transform intricate information into compelling narratives. The sessions also focused on utilizing open-source data and leveraging the Right to Information Act to uncover hidden truths. Throughout the program, journalists actively participated, raising questions and collaborating on group work to practice their new skills. The training was designed to give hands-on experience, ensuring that participants could apply these techniques effectively in their reporting.

## Experience Sharing by Journalists: Enriching Story with Data

This training was a unique and insightful experience for the participating journalists. Many of them spoke highly of the initiative and encouraged TIB to expand its efforts within the media landscape. Several participants noted that both media owners and journalists often lack awareness about data journalism and its potential in storytelling, suggesting that TIB could play a pivotal role in bridging this gap. Echoing this sentiment, Raihan Ferdous, a reporter from Jamuna Television, commended TIB's initiative. He emphasized that such training empowers journalists to produce more accurate stories while making a meaningful impact on society. He acknowledged that using data will now add greater depth and value to their reporting.



## Expert Guidance from Industry Veterans

Leading the sessions were seasoned experts from various fields, including Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director of Digitally Right; Mohammad Tauhidul Islam, Director of Outreach and Communication at TIB; KM Rafiqul Alam and Rifat Rahman, Assistant Coordinators and Data Visualizers at TIB; Md Anowar Hossain Fakir, a Microsoft Certified Trainer and Lead Consultant at Training Bangla; and Nazmul Ahsan, a data journalist from Bloomberg. Their combined expertise provided participants with both technical knowledge and practical insights into using data as a powerful tool for storytelling.

## Report Must be Based on Facts

During the closing ceremony, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman emphasized the importance of professional integrity and unity in journalism. He stated, "Differences of opinion are natural, but journalists must uphold unity and professional integrity. All reporting must be grounded in facts, with no space for compromise. Once integrity is compromised, it sets a precedent that can persist indefinitely. The best defense against challenges is a proactive approach, and unity remains essential in this profession."

He also added that while TIB's initiatives are often challenging and difficult, the organization remains committed to supporting the media. He emphasized that such training programs will continue to promote best practices in journalism, ultimately serving the public by exposing anomalies and corruption.

## Driving Accountability Through Data



This training underscores TIB's commitment to fostering accountability and transparency in Bangladesh through the power of data journalism. By empowering media professionals to tell impactful stories grounded in facts, TIB hopes to inspire a new wave of journalism that holds power to account and drives social change.

## Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024: TIB Warns of Risks to Media Freedom, Organisational Rights, and Freedom of Expression



TIB has expressed grave concerns regarding several provisions of the Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2024, which may threaten citizens' freedom of expression, dissent as well as media freedom and their right to organize. During a press conference organized to present TIB's observations and recommendations on the ordinance, the organization stated that it largely preserves the regulatory and surveillance mechanisms of previous oppressive laws. TIB further criticized the ordinance for being rushed through approval without providing relevant stakeholders adequate opportunity for review, deeming the process deeply regrettable and unexpected.

In a press statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, “The review of the ordinance reveals that it largely mirrors the agenda and rhetoric of the previous authoritarian government, with several sections echoing provisions from the former Digital Security Act (DSA) and Cyber Security Act (CSA). Freedom of speech, expression, free media, and organizing rights are at risk as a result of this ordinance. Although it claims to promote digital rights, it effectively retains the control and surveillance mechanisms of earlier repressive laws. The ordinance employs complex and ambiguous language, making it difficult to interpret and enforce effectively. Furthermore, by incorporating multiple areas related to cybersecurity in a disorganized manner, it creates confusion rather than clarity. The drafting process failed to incorporate the input of relevant stakeholders, and the ordinance was rushed through approval without adequate time for thorough review. It is particularly uncomfortable that such a regulatory and surveillance-focused ordinance was approved under an interim government, which was established with a commitment to uphold anti-discrimination and democratic principles.”

Dr. Zaman further stated that, “Despite categorizing hurting religious sentiments as a crime, the ordinance fails to define what religious sentiments are. While offending religious values is undeniably unacceptable, the same standard should apply to values of equality, non-communalism, and anti-discrimination. It is imperative that the inclusion of such a clause not be limited just to the upholding of religious principles. Instead, it should encompass a broader clause to address actions or comments that undermine the principles of equality, non-communalism, and non-discrimination. Currently, the ordinance does not reflect the people's aspirations. We urge that it undergoes a thorough revision in consultation with relevant stakeholders before its finalization. This process should ensure that Bangladesh's constitutional commitments and obligations under international human rights conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are fully upheld.”

TIB has reviewed the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024 and found its structure and content misaligned with international best practices. While the ordinance seeks to address various aspects of cyber security, cybercrime, and freedom of expression, its vague terminology and complex language have created confusion among both the ordinary public and experts. Additionally, the absence of clear definitions for technical terms such as "artificial intelligence," "block-chain," and "quantum computing" may further complicate the application of the law.

The definitions of “computer,” “data storage,” and “computer system” in Section 2 of the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2024 are overly broad and fail to reflect technical realities, potentially complicating the law's application. TIB's review also highlights that the title and structure of the ordinance deviate from international standards. While the title attempts to encompass cyber security, cybercrime, and freedom of expression, it introduces ambiguity. The proposed increase

in law enforcement authority under Sub-section (2) of Section 8 raises concerns about potential political misuse or violations of citizens' internet rights. Additionally, Sections 16 and 17 lack clear provisions for oversight by certified experts in monitoring processes to ensure robust cyber security and manage breaches effectively. Section 25 addresses cyberbullying, insult, harassment, and blackmail in overly broad terms, risking the classification of legitimate criticism as "insult" or "harassment." This poses a threat to citizens' freedom of expression. Therefore, this section must be revised in alignment with the Constitution and international human rights standards.

Associate Professor Dr. Mohammad Ershadul Karim, an expert in Law and Emerging Technologies from the University of Malaya, presented TIB's observations. The event was attended by TIB's Adviser- Executive Management, Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair, and moderated by TIB's Director of Outreach and Communication, Mohammad Tauhidul Islam.

## Concept Note

### New Bangladesh: Invincible Youth Shall Surely Resist Corruption



**Dhaka, 10 December 2024:** The authoritarian regime fell in the wake of the anti-discrimination movement led by students demanding quota reform in public service recruitment, a movement marked by unprecedented sacrifice and bloodshed. Following this historic shift, an interim government was formed on 8 August 2024 with a clear expectation from the student-led movement and the general public—to establish a transparent, accountable, corruption-free, and equitable "New Bangladesh."

In this "New Bangladesh," the core objective of state reforms and political restructuring must be the eradication of corruption, abuse of power, and impunity. Achieving this goal requires a complete overhaul of institutions responsible for preventing and controlling corruption while fostering an enabling environment for all stakeholders, including the media, civil society, and particularly the youth, to demand accountability and actively participate in governance.

The youth-led struggle against corruption, discrimination, and authoritarianism has ushered in a new era. The sacrifice of over 1,500 lives will remain an inspiration for building a just, inclusive,

and democratic future. Initially focused on quota reform, the movement quickly evolved into a broader demand for equity, transparency, good governance, and the democratic rights of citizens. The unyielding resolve of the youth, backed by public support, compelled the authoritarian regime to step down—a victory not just in politics but a testament to the power of youth, collective action, and integrity in shaping a just society.

The dream of a "New Bangladesh", born out of unprecedented sacrifice and resilience, is rooted in the commitment to continue the fight against corruption, inequality, and oppression—towards a just, transparent, and humane nation. This movement reinforces a crucial lesson from Bangladesh's history: youth remain the driving force in the fight against corruption, and national unity is the foundation of progress.

Click here to access the full [concept note](#).

## Policy Stances

### The Invincible Youth Will Stop Corruption – TIB Calls for Continued Social Movement



**Dhaka, 08 December 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has urged all stakeholders to advance the anti-corruption social movement by engaging the youth. The call was made during a human chain marking International Anti-Corruption Day 2024 at Manik Mia Avenue (in front of the National Parliament) at 11:00 am today. The human chain highlighted that the youth will lead the way in building the "New Bangladesh" — a country achieved through unprecedented sacrifice — towards a corruption-free, well-governed, and accountable future.

Speaking at the human chain, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, said, “The young generation is the driving force behind the goal of a ‘New Bangladesh.’ As part of the state reform and new political agreement, born from unprecedented sacrifice, the social movement to prevent corruption must be strengthened. The key expectation of students and citizens from the government, political parties, and other stakeholders is the creation of a state structure and

environment conducive to a transparent, accountable, corruption-free, and discrimination-free 'New Bangladesh.' To achieve this, eradicating corruption is essential. We hope that, alongside the ACC, reforms in other key institutions will establish an infrastructure that prevents future elected governments from creating an environment conducive to corruption through political or bureaucratic influence. The responsibility of advancing the movement against corruption depends primarily on political leadership and the bureaucracy."

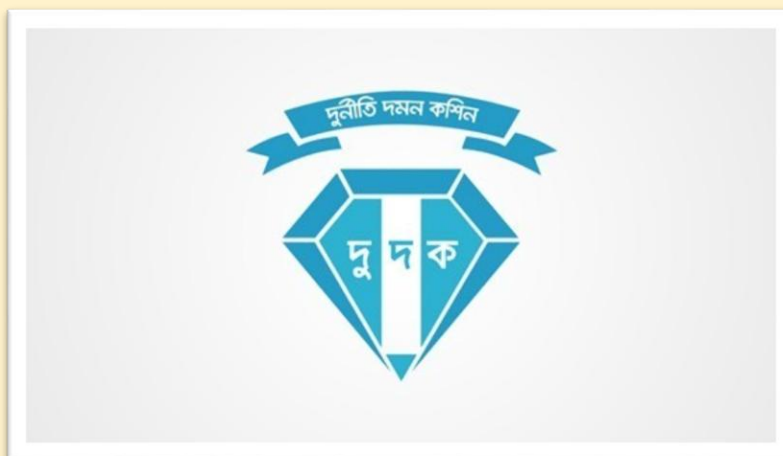
Stating that the fallen authoritarian govt. created a culture of impunity by institutionalizing corruption, Dr. Zaman said, "Over the last 15 years, the power of the ACC has been severely curtailed and taken over by the ruling party through political and bureaucratic influence. It is important to remember that even if the ACC is fully reformed, the anti-corruption initiative will remain ineffective unless the prevailing culture of political and bureaucratic corruption is changed."

This year, TIB marked International Anti-Corruption Day under the theme "New Bangladesh – The Invincible Youth will Stop Corruption." TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, along with TIB members, staff, YES Group members, and students from various Dhaka educational institutions, participated in the human chain in Dhaka. Additionally, members of the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) and local YES Groups, along with people from various walks of life, will observe IACD tomorrow across 45 regions of the country through various activities.

In alignment with IACD theme, a concept paper outlining 14 key recommendations was presented at the human chain. The paper proposed strengthening the accountability of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and implementing reforms suggested by the ACC Reform Commission. It emphasized enabling the public, media, and NGOs to combat corruption by simplifying registration processes and eliminating administrative harassment. The recommendations included forming a separate judiciary secretariat to prevent political interference in judicial processes and taking decisive action to end impunity for corruption, particularly at higher levels. Ensuring transparency in government procurement through mandatory use of the e-GP system was stressed, alongside drafting a "Conflict of Interest Law" to tackle nepotism and irregularities in government functions. The paper also underscored the importance of safeguarding freedom of expression and preventing surveillance-driven fear and insecurity as critical steps toward systemic reform.

Additionally, as part of International Anti-Corruption Day 2024 celebrations, TIB marked the 25th anniversary of the Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Awards with a gathering of award-winning journalists on December 5. Besides, this year's IJA awardees were announced, and select journalists were honored with the "Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Fellowship." TIB also organized its annual anti-corruption cartoon competition, engaging students nationwide. Also, a two-week exhibition showcasing the top 60 entries took place at TIB's head office.

## TIB calls for proactive disclosure of income and asset statements of newly appointed ACC Chair and Commissioners



**Dhaka, 11 December 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) today urged the newly appointed Chairman and Commissioners of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to proactively disclose income and asset statements for ensuring their own accountability and transparency.

In addition, TIB encouraged them to clarify their positions on corruption allegations and disclose any political allegiance.

TIB further emphasized the significance of executing their obligations with honesty and integrity, in line with the anti-discrimination movement's core values and the massive sacrifices that created the opening for a "New Bangladesh."

Commenting in the context of their appointment to the covered positions of ACC leadership, TIB's Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman stated, "At this pivotal moment of the nation's history when ACC is at the main focus public expectations, we call upon the top leadership of the ACC to proactively disclose the following as examples of pledge of their own transparency and accountability:

- a) Information regarding income and assets of their own and immediate family members held under direct or beneficial ownership;
- b) consistency between income from legitimate sources and accumulated wealth or assets;
- c) Steps to be taken to verify the accuracy, adequacy, and consistency of income and asset statements by an independent auditor.
- d) stance on any published or unpublished allegations of abuse of power, irregularities and corruption during their professional careers.
- e) Details about any direct or indirect partisan political allegiance; and
- f) A formal declaration of preparedness to voluntarily resign and undergo due legal investigation in the event of any inconsistencies in the above matters."

At the same time, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman urged the newly appointed ACC Chairman and Commissioners to remain fully committed and respectful to the core values of the anti-discrimination movement and the vision of the "New Bangladesh." He also called on them to pledge their unwavering commitment to fulfilling their responsibilities with the utmost integrity.

### **Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2024: TIB Recommends Thorough and Inclusive Review Before Issuing Ordinance**



**Dhaka, 17 December 2024:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has urged the interim government to allow at least a month for a comprehensive review and inclusive participation process before promulgating the draft “Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2024.” TIB emphasized that issuing the ordinance without adequate analysis and consultation with relevant stakeholders’ risks undermining its intended purpose.

In this regard, TIB officially made a recommendation to the interim government on Sunday. The organization's Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said in the letter, “The decision to repeal the Cyber Security Act, which was used as a tool to suppress dissent and silence the media, has brought relief to all citizens, which is one of the public welfare-oriented steps of the interim government. The Law and Rules Branch of the Information and Communication Technology Department has prepared a draft of the ‘Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2024’ by repealing the law that violates freedom of speech and expression. TIB hopes that this ordinance will be enacted to ensure cyber security and formulate necessary provisions for preventing and suppressing cybercrimes and conducting cybercrime investigation and judicial proceedings. On the other hand, it is essential to take into consideration the probabilities that this ordinance, which is similar to the Digital Security Act and the Cyber Security Act might restrict the freedom of speech and expression of citizens.”

The Executive Director of TIB further stated, “This draft was made available on the website for only three working days for review, which has since ended and been removed. According to media sources, the draft has already received initial approval from the Advisory Council on December 12, 2024. Issuing such an important ordinance like the ‘Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2024’ without sufficient analysis and inclusive feedback from relevant stakeholders carries the risk of disrupting

its core objectives. In this context, it is kindly requested to allocate a minimum of one month for all relevant stakeholders and experts to engage in a comprehensive review of the draft. This process will ensure that the ordinance is issued only after a careful and inclusive analysis has been undertaken.”

## CCC News Highlights

### Youth at the Forefront: International Anti-Corruption Day 2024 Observed Nationwide with a Call to Action



With a resounding call for youth to take a stand against corruption, TIB-inspired Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) marked International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) on December 9, 2024, through nationwide observances. In collaboration with 45 CCC-YES groups and Dhaka YES, a series of dynamic programs were organized, including human chains, rallies, cycle rallies, discussion meetings, anti-corruption oaths, quizzes, and various competitions. These initiatives engaged a total of 10,399 citizens (6,526 men, 3,873 women, and 1,658 individuals from marginalized communities), fostering a collective voice against corruption. The observances were conducted in partnership with district and upazila administrations, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), and other like-minded organizations.

On this occasion, CCC-TIB put forward a set of recommendations urging stakeholders to take decisive measures to prevent corruption. A significant number of government officials and representatives actively participated in the day's events, demonstrating unity in the fight against corruption. Among them were Divisional Commissioners, Metropolitan Police Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Local Government Deputy Directors, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents and Additional Superintendents of Police, Deputy Directors of the ACC, journalists, and representatives from civil society organizations, NGOs, and educational

institutions. Members of CCC, YES, and Active Citizens Groups (ACG) also took part, amplifying the collective demand for accountability and integrity.



Speakers at various events underscored the pivotal role of young people in curbing corruption and fostering ethical governance. They emphasized that public awareness, moral education, and a well-governed society are crucial to preventing corruption. Describing corruption as the primary obstacle to the country's development, they stressed that it is a global issue affecting every sector of society. The speakers urged the government to strengthen anti-corruption initiatives by increasing public awareness and ensuring active citizen participation.



Reaffirming the need for a united front, speakers called for the collective efforts of the government, political representatives, civil society, media, and the general public to build a sustainable anti-corruption movement. They highlighted that only through collaborative action can corruption be effectively challenged, paving the way for a more transparent and accountable society.

## Information Fairs Organized Nationwide to Empower Citizens in the Fight Against Corruption



With the aim of empowering citizens to prevent corruption, Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) organized 18 Information Fairs across the country in collaboration with respective District and Upazila Administrations. The fairs were held in Bogura, Chapainawabganj, Jashore, Gazipur, Natore, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Jhenaidah, Jhalakati, Satkhira, Rajbari, Patuakhali, Brahmanbaria, Munshiganj, Rajshahi, and Rangpur. A total of 530 government and non-government institutions (484 government offices and 46 NGOs) participated by setting up stalls, proactively disclosing service-related information to the public. The fairs attracted nearly 50,000 visitors, who directly accessed critical information regarding public services. Beyond the exchange of information, the fairs also featured anti-corruption quizzes, signature campaigns, cartoon exhibitions, public hearings, debate competitions, and cultural programs—transforming them into vibrant platforms for civic engagement.



YES Group members under CCCs played a crucial role in orienting visitors about the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009, and guiding them through the process of submitting information requests under the Act. Various government offices also distributed informational leaflets and stickers detailing their services. As a result of these fairs, many citizens formally sought

information from authorities, with several receiving their requested details—a significant step toward transparency and accountability.

One of the highlights of the fairs was the active participation of government institutions in public



hearings, where officials directly responded to citizens' questions and addressed service-related concerns. High-ranking officials—including Police Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Civil Surgeons, Superintendents of Police, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, and Assistant Commissioners (Land)—attended the events, reaffirming their commitment to open governance and citizen engagement.

Speakers at various events underscored the importance of accessible information in fostering inclusive institutions and strengthening democracy. They reiterated that the Right to Information is a fundamental public right and urged citizens to use the RTI Act as a powerful tool in the fight against corruption. The discussants also called on government authorities to proactively cooperate with citizens seeking information and to institutionalize a culture of transparency.



Emphasizing the role of information in ensuring human rights and curbing corruption, the speakers highlighted that all institutions must be more proactive in disclosing information to the public. They asserted that voluntary, self-motivated disclosure of information by organizations can significantly deter corruption. However, they noted that many citizens face challenges in accessing information online due to technological barriers. To overcome these challenges, they stressed the urgent need to establish a free flow of information and institutionalize self-disclosure practices.



The speakers concluded by calling on authorities to demonstrate genuine goodwill and sincerity in upholding citizens' right to information, ensuring transparency as a cornerstone of good governance.

### Commitment to Enhancing Healthcare Services: A Collaborative Effort for Quality Healthcare Delivery



On December 12, 2024, a vital Sharing Meeting took place between the Citizens' Concern Committee (CCC) Mymensingh and the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) Authority, aimed at improving healthcare services for the public. The meeting, held at the hospital's Video Conference Hall, was presided over by Dr. Md. Zakiul Islam, the Deputy Director of MMCH, who reaffirmed the hospital's unwavering commitment to providing quality healthcare to all citizens. The session began with a welcome speech delivered by CCC Member Meer Golam Mustofa.

Dr. Mohammad Mainuddin Khan, Assistant Director (Administration) of the hospital, provided an insightful overview of the hospital's services and operations. He paid heartfelt tribute to the martyrs of the July Uprising, recognizing their sacrifices in the pursuit of justice and freedom. Dr. Khan detailed the hospital's efforts to deliver comprehensive medical care despite facing limitations in manpower and resources. On average, MMCH serves 5,000 to 6,000 outpatients and 3,500 to 4,000 patients in its internal departments daily. Additionally, the hospital continues to operate a One Stop Service Center, providing around-the-clock services, including MRI scans, CT scans, and urgent pathology tests. The Cardiology Department has also introduced automation services to further enhance service efficiency.

The chief guest, Dr. Md. Zakiul Islam, Deputy Director of MMCH, expressed deep respect for the martyrs of the Liberation War and the July Uprising. He highlighted that with the completion of ongoing infrastructural developments, MMCH would be well-positioned to offer advanced treatments for cancer, heart, and kidney diseases. He extended his sincere gratitude to the CCC-TIB Mymensingh for their support in the upgrade of healthcare services at the hospital. As part of the meeting's outcomes, it was agreed to establish two service-related information boards at key locations: in front of the emergency department and the outpatient department.

During the open discussion, several challenges were raised by the participants, including the overwhelming pressure of patient numbers, shortages in hospital staff, and the lack of awareness among patients and their families, especially regarding visitor pressures. Additional concerns included the prevalence of brokers, the inefficacy of the hospital management committee, and other systemic issues. Several distinguished individuals, including Senior Clinical Pathologist Dr. Khaled Mosharaf Hossain, CCC President Sharifuzzaman Parag, CCC member Taslim Uddin Ahmed, and ACG member Jaglul Pasha Russo, contributed to the conversation. TIB's Area Coordinator Muhammad Habibur Rahman skillfully moderated the discussions.

In light of the challenges discussed, CCC Mymensingh proposed several recommendations aimed at improving the region's healthcare infrastructure. These included the establishment of a District Sadar Hospital, enhancing the capacity and activities of the Sadar Upazilla Hospital and Union Sub-Health Centers, and strengthening the City Health Center within the City Corporation area. Furthermore, the CCC called for the expedited completion of all healthcare infrastructure projects, including the construction of a Children's Hospital. They also emphasized the need to regulate private ambulances operating within hospital premises, alleviate traffic congestion around hospital areas through flyover construction, renovate SK Hospital, and transfer specialized healthcare services to where they are most needed.

The meeting was attended by a range of hospital officials, CCC and ACG members, and TIB staff, all of whom contributed to the robust discussions aimed at improving healthcare services in Mymensingh. The collective commitment demonstrated during the meeting highlights the importance of collaborative efforts to provide accessible, effective, and quality healthcare for all citizens.

## **EWU Students Pledge to Combat Corruption: A Commitment to Integrity and Accountability**



On December 18, 2024, East West University (EWU) hosted a transformative Anti-Corruption Cartoon Exhibition aimed at raising awareness among students about the destructive impact of corruption. The event, organized by the Youth Engagement & Support (YES) Group of EWU with the support of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), took place at the university's Wi-Fi Zone and featured an engaging array of anti-corruption cartoons and interactive games.

The event was officially inaugurated by Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Mohammad Ashik Mosaddik, alongside Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, with the presence of Engineer Kamrul Hassan, the Adviser of the EWU Career Counseling Center (CCC) and YES Club. This collaborative effort sought to empower students with the knowledge and tools to challenge corruption and embrace transparency.

Hundreds of students flocked to the exhibition, captivated by the powerful anti-corruption cartoons on display, which depicted the various ways corruption affects society. In addition to viewing the artworks, students participated in interactive anti-corruption games designed to foster a deeper understanding of the issue.

As the day unfolded, the students demonstrated their commitment to the fight against corruption by pledging to uphold integrity and accountability in their personal and professional lives. YES Club members also took the opportunity to educate students about the Right to Information Act of 2009, distributing informative leaflets and stickers to raise awareness of citizens' rights to access public information.

The campaign sparked considerable interest, with nearly a hundred students expressing their desire to join the YES Club and take a more active role in the movement against corruption. Through this event, EWU students not only learned about the importance of transparency but also made a public commitment to stand against corruption, paving the way for a brighter, more accountable future for all.

## Dhaka YES Groups Lead Awareness Campaign Marking IACD 2024



On December 2, 2024, in observance of International Anti-Corruption Day, the Youth Engagement and Support (YES) Groups from Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall and Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall of the University of Dhaka organized a series of impactful events aimed at fostering awareness and inspiring action against corruption. The day's activities were designed to engage, educate, and empower students to take a stand for integrity and transparency.

The event featured an anti-corruption cartoon exhibition that powerfully illustrated the pervasive effects of corruption on society. Students and faculty also participated in a lively bicycle rally, which drew attention to the cause, as well as an interactive anti-corruption game show that made learning about integrity both fun and engaging. The highlight of the day was the comprehensive campaign promoting the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009, emphasizing the importance of citizens' rights to access public information and hold the government accountable.

Students and faculty from both halls, as well as the Institute of Social Welfare & Research at the University of Dhaka, participated enthusiastically in the events. At the conclusion of the day, the



youth gathered to pledge their commitment to the ongoing fight against corruption, signaling their dedication to fostering a more transparent, just, and accountable society.

The event was formally inaugurated by two distinguished leaders—Dr. Mahbuba Sultana, Provost of Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, and Dr. Aleya Begum, Provost of Bangamata Sheikh

Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall. The presence of Dr. Rifat Ara Begum, Advisor of YES Group at Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, and Ms. Jameni Javed Suchana, Advisor of YES Group at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall, alongside the House Tutors, reinforced the strong institutional commitment to fighting corruption and promoting transparency across the university.

As part of the RTI campaign, students were given valuable insights into the Right to Information Act, 2009, including guidance on how to fill out applications for seeking information. TIB's informative flyers and stickers were distributed to raise awareness about the RTI Act and empower students to exercise their right to know.

The event concluded with a collective promise from all participants to continue their efforts in combating corruption, demonstrating the power of youth-driven initiatives in the fight for a more equitable and transparent future.

### **Advocacy Meeting with Upazilla Education Authority: A Step Towards Quality and Transparent Education System**



On December 5, 2024, a pivotal Advocacy Meeting was held between the Pirojpur Sadar Upazilla Education Authority and the Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC), aimed at promoting a more transparent, accountable, and citizen-friendly education system in the region. The meeting, which was moderated by Md. Shah Alam Sheikh, Co-Convener of CCC's Education Sub-Committee, saw the participation of Md. Shahidul Islam, Upazilla Education Officer, as the chief guest.

The meeting focused on several critical issues impacting the quality of education in the Upazilla, including the need for improved safety measures and infrastructural development. Key discussions centered around sending a formal request to the Pirojpur Road & Highways Office for the installation of zebra crossings and signal signs to ensure the safety of children crossing the road near Mandalpara Government Primary School. Another important point raised was the strengthening of monitoring systems to maintain an ideal learning environment at Matibhanga Government Primary School. Additionally, there were calls for land mutation initiatives to establish a Citizen Charter at Matibhanga Government Primary School, the appointment of key

staff such as a Head Teacher and Office Assistant cum Night Guard, and the installation of Complaint Boxes in all schools to empower students and parents to voice concerns.

In his address, Md. Shahidul Islam assured the attendees that the Upazilla Education Authority would take swift action to address the concerns raised during the meeting. He emphasized that efforts were already underway to enhance monitoring systems, improve infrastructure, and appoint a qualified teacher at Matibhanga Government Primary School. The Education Officer also extended his support for the Active Citizen Group (ACG)'s activities under the PACTA project, pledging to collaborate closely with them to ensure the success of these initiatives.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Upazilla Education Officers, CCC President and members, as well as the Area Coordinator for Civic Engagement of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). Together, they reaffirmed their commitment to working collaboratively for a more accountable, transparent, and citizen-oriented education system in Pirojpur Sadar Upazilla.



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