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NATIONAL

Bangladesh's Parliament need be the watchdog defence corruption recommends TI-DSP

Two-thirds of parliament and legislatures fail to exercise sufficient control over their Ministry of Defence and the armed forces, according to a new report by Transparency International UK's Defence and Security Programme (TI-DSP). Amongst those, 70 percent of the largest arms importers in 2012 leave the door open to corruption. TI-UK released the report globally on September 17.

The study spin-off from the Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index 2013 (GI), analysed what 82 countries do to reduce corruption risks in the sector- places countries in corruption risk bands according to detailed assessments across seven areas in which parliaments play a vital anti-corruption role. It also shows, through detailed case studies, how parliaments and legislatures can improve oversight of defence.

According to the report, Bangladesh was among 21 countries placed at the bottom of the banding exhibiting very high risk of corruption. China, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bahrain exhibit same level of corruption like Bangladesh. Fourteen countries were placed at the bottom of the banding, exhibiting critical risk of corruption due to lack of legislative defence oversight: Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. Only four nations-Australia, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom-were amongst the top performers, with very low levels of corruption risk, followed by twelve countries which are at low risk due to better performance by their parliaments.

Pointing to the recent huge defence purchase deal, Executive Director, TIB Dr Iftekharuzzaman emphasized on making the defence and security sector accountable to the parliament. Mentionable that the parliament and the people were kept completely in the dark about this deal. He questioned if anyone else could ensure transparency and accountability in defence earnings and outflows if the parliament particularly the concerned standing committee failed to do so.

The study recommended 15 measures for the parliament, executive branch, audit office, civil society and media to ensure transparency and accountability in this sector. TI called on parliamentarians to establish cross-party committees and groups of external experts to empower their scrutiny and inform their debate of defence matters.

Members' Day observed



Quarterly 'Member's Day' was observed on 21st September at the TIB conference room. TIB members and other officials joined the event. Members were briefed about TIB activities held during 2nd quarter and upcoming events. Member's Day is a unique opportunity for the members as well as for the TIB to discuss various governance related issues. Members share their thoughtful insights which help TIB to plan and implement its activities and accelerate its anti-corruption movement. Dr Iftekharuzzaman moderated the programme.

Collective efforts must to tackle governance challenges at primary education

Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr Afsarul Ameen, MP emphasised on collective efforts to tackle governance challenges at primary education. He made this appeal as the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony of a consultation meeting titled 'Challenges of Governance at Primary Education and Way Forward' organised by the TIB on 4 September at BIAM auditorium, Dhaka. Ms Dipu Roy, Programme Manager, Research and Policy, TIB presented the findings of a study at the consultation. Advocate Sultana Kamal, Chairperson, TIB Board of Trustees presided over the event.

Talking about resource limitations of his ministry, the minister said that only 0.91 % of GDP was allocated for primary education. Vacant positions of teachers, discriminatory salary structure of teachers were among other major limitations. He added that despite these limitations, his ministry and the government were working hard to improve the overall quality of primary education by increasing the supply of modern education materials for students and by providing various motivations including financial incentives. In her speech, the Chair stressed to immediately address governance and corruption challenges at primary education. She added that establishing accountability is a pre-condition to achieve expected results in primary education.

Around 130 participants including representatives from 45 CCCs, district and upazila education officers, teachers and representatives of the School Management Committees (SMC) participated the consultation. The consultation ended by recommending a number measures of which increased ratio of teachers and student (1:30); elimination of political and elite group's influence on teachers recruitment and placement; development of a promotion policy; immediate recruitment against vacant positions, ensure quality education materials as per needs; and introduction of primary education cadre service were major.

TIB for level playing field in the next JS poll, urges strict implementation of electoral laws



TIB identified a number of challenges for the Election Commission (EC)– the apex state institution responsible for organizing a fair and impartial Jatio Sangsad (JS) poll. These challenges include; influence of the parliamentarians in case JS exists, controversial reshuffle and promotions, assigning deputy commissioners as returning officers, law and order management during election, influence of black money and muscle power etc. TIB earlier conducted a study titled "Effective Election Commission: progresses, challenges and way forward" which was released to

the media at a press briefing on 29th September at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium.

Mr Shahazada Md. Akram, Senior Programme Manager (Research and Policy) of TIB presented the findings of the study. Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director; Dr Sumaiya Khair, Deputy Executive Director; Mr Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan, Director (Research & Policy) were also present. The study noted that bringing of EC secretariat under commission control and economic freedom of the commission were two major indicators of institutional successes. Other successes include unified human resource management, organisation of maximum number of elections in free and fair manner, use of technology, disclosure of information and engagement of stakeholders. Analysing the limitations and challenges, TIB tabled 13 recommendations to make the EC effective. Key recommendations include deployment of EC's own officials as returning officers; mandatory provision of taking EC's consent for any kind of deployment or reshuffling in key ministries; amendment of electoral laws in the light of the constitution; and disclosure of information related to voter list, annual financial report of political parties, financial documents including budget and electoral cases.

CCC News

Right to Know Day celebration focuses on demand and supply side of information



International Right to Know (RTK) day was celebrated across the country on 28 September - Committee of Concerned Citizen (CCC), Youth Engagement and Support (YES), Swajan and YES Friends in 34 regions joined hands with the district administration to observe this day. This year's celebration emphasised on strategising ways to increase both demand and supply of information that is raise awareness of people and service providers on RTI, encourage pro-active disclosure of information by both public and private sector. Information fairs, cartoon exhibitions, orientation on RTI application, face the public, rallies, seminars, essay/art/quiz competitions, satellite AI desks and cultural programmes were organised to this end. Apart from these events a number of innovative campaigns like info truck, anti-corruption signature collection were organised to popularise the RTK day.

The day was celebrated nationally from 28-30 September. RTI forum, a network of several civil society organisations organised a roundtable titled Implementation Challenges of RTI Act 2009: Challenges and Way Forward on 30 September at the Brac Center Inn Auditorium. Information Minister Mr Hasanul Haq Inu, MP was the Chief Guest; Chief Information Commissioner Ambassador Mohammed Faruk and Cabinet Secretary M Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan were Special Guests. Information commissioner Professor Sadeka Halim and Country Director of Article XIX Ms Tahmina Rahman were designated discussants and Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Dr Iftekharuzzaman presided over the roundtable. Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) Shaheen Anam presented the keynote paper titled "Strengthening Demand Side Capacity: Challenges and Options."

TIB also joined another celebration with Information Commission that marked the day by organising discussion meeting, rally and information fair on 28 September at the National Academy for Planning and Development. Information Minister was also the Chief Guest there and Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Professor A A M S Arefin Siddique, Chief Information Commission Mohammad Farooq were among others who spoke on the occasion. Some 34 CCCs organised 2/3 days long Information Fair with active participation of government agencies/departments and NGOs. There were 867 stalls (520 stalls from Govt. Sectors and 347 from non-Govt. organisations) in



these information fairs. Posters with information on various services, leaflets, booklet and other publications were displayed and distributed among the visitors. Stall operators provided different service related information. This year marked the highest participation of government stalls compared to private/NGO stalls. Ministers, policy makers and members of the parliament including Minister for Finance Mr Abul Mal Abdul Muhit, MP; Chief Whip of Bangladesh Parliament Alhaz Md. Abdus Shahid, MP; Minister for Shipping Mr Shahjahan Khan, MP; Md Abdul Wadud, MP of Chapainababganj; Mr. Asaduzzaman Noor, MP of Nilphamary-2; Dharendra Chandra Debnath, MP of Barguna-2; Alhaz Kazi Keramot Ali, MP of Rajbari-1; Advocate Talukdar Md. Yusnus, MP of Barisal-1. Chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council Mr Kujendra Lal Tripura and Information Commissioner Professor Dr Sadeka Halim joined the celebration and spoke on RTI.

Participants, guests and speakers at these celebrations emphasised on the role of RTI Act to promote accountability, transparency and participation that is promote good governance at all spheres of service delivery. They also urged for collective efforts among government and non government organisations to create demand of this pro-people act.

Patharghata to be a model ward in Chittagong City Corporation

A 'Face the Public (FtP)' programme was jointly organised by CCC Chittagong and Chittagong City Corporation on September 21 at Rabindra-Nazrul Academy premise. Patharghata Ward 34 Commissioner Alhaj Md Ismail presented the ward development plan, ongoing development works and budgetary allocation of his ward. CCCs in different regions are organising such programmes on continuous basis with a view to promote transparency and accountability in local level service delivery. The interesting part of this event was question and answer session. Participants were curious to know about ongoing developmental works and how the commissioner had planned to tackle water logging, ensure unhygienic sanitation, reduce traffic jam, canal dredging, drug trafficking and eliminate violence against women. In reply, the commissioner updated the citizens about different initiatives to overcome these limitations and urged them to support his efforts to address these issues. He hoped that with support from the citizens, he would be able to turn the ward into an ideal one by promoting transparency and accountability in ward activities. More than four hundred participants including students, professionals, local leaders and common people attended the FtP.

Mothers pledge to ensure quality education



Education – particularly primary level education has always been a priority issue for TIB. The organisation believes that if primary level education is not given proper attention, the country will not be able to educate her future generation. Mothers can play critically important roles in enhancing the quality of primary education. Keeping this in mind TIB regularly organises Mother's gathering at different CCC level primary schools. The objective of such gathering is to encourage engagement of mothers in enhancing the quality of primary education and promote transparency at the same time. This month, such mothers' gathering was organised by the CCC

Brahmanbaria at Mirhati Government Primary school on September 25. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Education & ICTs) Ripon Chakma attended as the Chief Guest and Chairman of Suhilpur Union Parishad Md. Azizur Rahman attended the Special Guest. President of the School Management Committee (SMC) Abdul Gafur presided over the gathering. Attending the event mothers shared their opinion and expectation on education system of the school and promised to work together to ensure quality education for their children. It is expected that such involvement of mothers improve the overall quality of primary education, increase the net enrollment and reduce drop out. Around five hundred mothers attended the programme.

Better health service despite limitation of resources

As part of its continuous effort to improve health services, CCCs regularly organise open dialogue sessions with local level hospital authorities. At these sessions both public health service providers and service recipients get an opportunity to discuss with openness about the state of health service, limitations faced by authority and experience of the service recipients. The overarching objective is to improve the quality of hospital services so that people – the poor and vulnerable in particular receive proper treatment at minimum cost.

This time CCC Chapainawabganj organised a similar session on 4th September at the Chapainawabganj Modern General Hospital. District Civil Surgeon Dr Narayan Chandra Dey attended the programme as the Chief Guest while CCC president Saiful Islam Reza presided over the programme. Stakeholders including CCC members, hospital doctors and service recipients attended the programme and discussed openly about the quality of services, problems in service delivery and limitations of the authority. The Chief Guest acknowledged the contribution of the CCC in terms of bridging the gap between the district health authority and citizens by organising such "Face the Health Authority". He sought cooperation from the CCC and service recipients and promised to deliver better health services despite the limitations of resources.





International Literacy Day vows for illiteracy-free country

CCCs, across the country observed the International Literacy Day on September 8. The day was marked by a variety of programmes including rallies, discussion meetings, hand writing, essay and art competitions etc for the children and students. Government and non-government organisations joined their festive celebration. Citizens from all walks of the society including CCC, YES and Swajan members; education and local government officials; CSO and NGO officials; teachers; parents and common people attended these programmes. The celebration urged for greater cooperation among stakeholders to eliminate illiteracy from the country.

RTI Workshop and Campaign at Stamford and Uttara University

Prior to Right to Know (RTK) day – YES groups of Stamford and Uttara University undertook series of activities on Right to information (RTI). Activities included workshop on RTI filing; dissemination of RTI related information, education and communication materials; RTI social networking etc. TIB officials facilitated these events.

On 17th September a daylong workshop on Right to Information Act-2009 was held at Uttara University. A total of 20 YES members participated and received hands on training on basic concept of RTI and RTI filing process.

On 24th September, YES members of Dhaka YES-1 and Uttara University jointly undertook a RTI campaign and distributed stickers, brochures, RTI application forms. The facilitators explained to the participants about RTI Act, filing process. Other campaigns included anti-corruption game show, RTI social media campaign and screening of RTI related TVCs. Professor Faez M Sirajul Hoque of the University and also the advisor of YES inaugurated the campaign program.

On 26th September the YES Group of Stamford University, Bangladesh organised a similar workshop on 'Right to Information Act 2009: Bangladesh Context'. YES members along with YES friends took part in this workshop.

YES News

Satellite AI-Desk at DMCH

YES Members of Institute of Social Welfare and Research, Ruqayyah Hall of Dhaka University and IBAS University



organised two day long Satellite AI-Desk for the outdoor patients of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on 25-26 September. More than six thousand people received health service related information from the desk and around eight thousand leaflets containing information on available health services, price of service and location of different departments. The objective of AI desk is to create easy access to health related information so that patients can avail services at ease and without hassle.

Drama Jabanbandi voices for labour rights

25th September was a different day for the passersby at Shahbag.

They watched and enjoyed the 4th show of Jabanbandi (statement) in front of National Museum.



Jabanbandi is a production of Dhaka YES theatre that pictured various anomalies like violation of labour rights and building code particularly in the RMG sector. In view of a number of incidents of rights violation and death of workers resulting from building collapse to fire, Jabanbandi was produced with the objective of mobilising people's opinion in favour of social change and ensure labour rights in the RMG sector. The drama is considered as a spokesperson for these vulnerable people.

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