



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH

Press Release

Dhaka, 12 July 2006

About the Corruption Data Base: Methodology and Objectives

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has been producing the Corruption Data-Base Reports since 2000. The Data Base Report has since been included in Transparency International's Anti-Corruption Tool-kit. Some other countries have also recently started to replicate this tool in their work.

The Corruption Data Base is one among many other on-going research and communication activities conducted by TIB. While all other research like household surveys and diagnostic studies undertaken by TIB are based on combination of primary and secondary data, the Corruption Data Base rests on secondary data – a collection and analysis of reports on corruption published print-media in a given period. Although the source of information is secondary, in order to ensure the methodological validity of the Data Base Report a rigorous process of corroboration is undertaken before the data are included in the analysis.

Reports scanned for the database are taken from newspapers irrespective of their political or other leanings. Detailed information are contained in the report. The total number of newspapers scanned in this report was 26, of which 19 were national dailies and 7 regional daily newspapers. This time we have ensured corroboration of as high as 20 percent randomly selected reports by cross-checking with documentary evidence of reporters and those individuals or institutions reportedly involved in incidents of corruption.

The main objective of the Corruption Data Base is to inform the public in a consolidated and analytical form about the nature, type, actors and implications of corruption as reported in the media, and sensitize and motivate the stakeholders, especially the concerned authority to undertake preventive and corrective measures. The eighth report in the series released on July 5, 2006 presented a collection and analysis of the reports on corruption published in daily newspapers during January to December 2005.

Electoral Commitment of Political Parties

TIB has been working tirelessly and with increasing public support for last ten years with the vision of a Bangladesh where government, politics, business, civil society and lives of the common citizens would be free from corruption. All reports published by TIB have been widely covered by the media. Many newspapers also publish editorial comments every time a TIB report is released.

It may be recalled that fighting corruption was among the main electoral commitments of all the political parties of country. Therefore, by its research work on corruption, by

bringing research findings for public knowledge and by informing the citizens about their rights on the one hand and lapses in accountable governance on the other TIB has been playing a supportive role for the Government.

Is TIB's work against the government?

TIB's work is against corruption and governance failure. It is not against the Government nor any Ministry or Department thereof. In reality TIB has been trying to strengthen the hands of the Government as long as the Government remains committed to prevent and control corruption. It is unfortunate that the ruling parties have failed to appreciate the implications of our work in that light, and considered TIB as an opponent, and indulged in character assassination of the Trustees and the organization.

This time we have noticed that although two ministries of the Government have tried once again to defame us they have given considerable importance to the report. It has also been discussed in the Parliament. The discussion was however far from objective, and some leading members of the ruling party indulged in falsehood about the current chairperson of the Board of TIB.

We nevertheless hope that in the interest of the people of this country the relevant standing committees would consider our reports with greater degree of seriousness of purpose and objectivity. We are fully committed to extend any support to the concerned Government ministries or departments and the standing committees. We strongly feel that in the interest of the country and for ensuring good governance for the benefit of the people there is no alternative to political commitment.

Country's Image

One of the key objectives of TIB is to empower the people by creating information-based awareness and catalyzing demand for taking effective measures against the dismal state of governance failure. By drawing the attention of the Members of the Parliament as people's representatives TIB tries to motivate them to undertake corrective measures in the relevant ministries. Above all our efforts are aimed at ensuring that the Government remains vigilant in fulfilling their election commitment and deter any lapses in this regard to failure in accountable and transparent governance.

The image of the country will improve only if the Government takes timely and effective measures on the basis of research and report on corruption, which are meant to help this process. Research, analysis, information and communication about corruption do not damage the image of the country. We also believe that research-based reporting on corruption will policy reform and institutional change necessary for fighting corruption.

Views of the Minister for Forests and Environment

The Minister for Forests and Environment has called the TIB report imaginary and baseless. Our report contains all the information, their sources, corroboration process and basis of analysis and presentation. Like any other research, the analytical process is open to continuous improvement and excellence, but there is no scope of considering the methodology, described above and further detailed in the report, as faulty. During the reported period, 87 reports were published in the newspapers. These were published in newspapers irrespective of their political and other affiliation, and detailed information are contained in the reports themselves.

It is encouraging to hear that the Minister has taken actions to control corruption. Nevertheless, no one can underestimate the unabated corruption-related loss of forestry resources as brought out by publications home and abroad. It is not understandable why the Minister wanted to relate the estimate for monetary of corruption with budgetary allocation, when thousands of crores of Taka worth of forestry resources are at the Ministry's disposal which are subjects of corruption throughout the reported period. Still the Hon'ble Minister has given importance to our report and mentioned steps taken under his authority, which we commend.

Views of the LGRD & Cooperative Minister

The Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives is headed by a highly respectable top-ranking political minister. Our report has shown that of the 251 reported cases of corruption only in one case (0.4 percent) was the secretariat involved. Various departments, corporations, city corporations and Upazila and Union Parishads are however under the jurisdiction of the ministry, which is the reason for the discourse and movement for devolution of authority of the various local government units. In our report corruption in those units have indeed been shown separately, although the cumulative loss has been estimated under the umbrella sector identified as local government, which cannot necessarily be interpreted as corruption in the ministry as such.

Since the DCs and UNOs are in charge of fund management of projects for local development, corruption cases involving the Zila Parishads and Upazila Parishads have only been included in the category of local government, not the offices of DCs and UNOs per se.

The Hon'ble Minister has set up a special cell in the Ministry to monitor the reported cases of corruption, which we understand was prompted by one of our previous reports in the series, and for which we highly commend him and consider replicable for other ministries. We have all the reports of corruption that relate to the category of local government, a set of which we have already made available to them separately. We would be privileged for an opportunity to discuss with him or his officials for any further clarifications. Corruption leads to many types of reactions. We appreciate the Minister's angry reaction, but it is not expected of a highly placed public representative that instead of objective criticism of research and analysis one would resort to the threat of use of force.

This report was also discussed in the Parliament – no mean an achievement for TIB. However, the way the discussion was conducted was unfortunate. We have already mentioned the estimated loss of corruption cannot be linked with budget. The case study on the brick field in Jhenaidah presented in the report relates to environmental pollution and loss of forestry resources because of use of firewood which is unlawful. We have the relevant report and other relevant information, which we can share with anyone interested. The financial loss incurred for this was not included shown in our report as a corruption case of the ministry. We have no information on the story of theft of barrels allegedly in collaboration with DC. Our report only mentions involvement of the office of the DC.

Speaking in the Parliament the Hon'ble LGRD Minister has described corruption as a social disease and called for creating a social movement. That is exactly what TIB has been striving at. That TIB cannot be held responsible for damaging the image of the

country only because it is creating awareness and demand against corruption is beyond anybody's doubt. Any action taken by the monitoring cell set up in the LGRD Ministry, if reported in the media is reflected in TIB's report. The Minister himself has mentioned that all cases of corruption are not reported in the newspapers. We have also mentioned this as a limitation of our report. In spite of that our research method is fully scientific. As already mentioned, of all the instances of corruption included in our report 20 percent randomly selected cases have been corroborated for ensuring credibility through checking back with the reporters and institutions and/or officials involved. We draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister to this.

Allegations against Chairman of TIB

The Chairman of TIB has been undesirably subjected to discussion. He was a member of the first advisory council of the late President Ziaur Rahman. The allegation of corruption against him is baseless. He pays taxes regularly. The present and former Finance Ministers had his tax file examined by making public announcements. The Hon'ble Ministers can collect information about such matters by consulting his colleagues. The only possible objective of indulging in undue character assassination is to make a public interest organization ineffective. On the recent allegations brought against Prof Muzaffer Ahmad centering around an endowed chair of the University of Dhaka the position taken by the University Syndicate, Senate and Academic Council of the Department of Economics have sufficiently clarified the situation. The allegation of corruption in this connection is totally baseless. For the period he could commence his research he had returned the honorarium paid to him whereas for the period he worked, although his actual expenses of research was much higher than the amount paid, he had also informed the Vice Chancellor of the University about his preparedness to return the amount he received. In this connection he was waiting for the decision of the University authority.

Source of Fund of TIB

Hon'ble Law Minister Mr Moudud Ahmed had raised questions about the funding source of TIB, to which he was provided the detailed response. There is no reason or scope of secrecy about TIB's funding. We receive funds under the authority of the relevant laws and with the approval of the concerned authority of the Government of Bangladesh. The Government is fully aware of any funds received by TIB and the budgetary allocations. The source TIB funds and related information are a matter of public knowledge as these are published in our website and other publications.

Unity of Political Parties to fight against Corruption, not against TIB

In the Parliament Mr Mosharraf Hossain has called upon all politicians to unite against TIB. It would be more befitting for a public representative if he had called for unity of politicians and political parties in fight corruption. We hope that our public representatives would actually unite in the struggle against corruption and help the cause of anti-corruption movement. Corruption is preventing development and social change, we this menace of corruption to be effectively prevented and controlled.