

## **TIB: Private banks need ownership transparency law for transparency Policy Stance**

**Dhaka: 05 December, 2022:** Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) strongly urged the government to formulate a 'beneficial ownership transparency' law to ensure transparency in the private banking sector.

The anti-graft watchdog also stressed joining the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) for monitoring financial transactions to save the country's ailing banking sector.

In a press release, the Berlin-based multinational civil society organization also expressed its concern over the recent alleged loan scams in three private banks, including Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. The irregularities involving thousands of crore taka coupled with money laundering have pushed the country's banking sector to the brink of collapse, it added.

The Common Reporting Standard (CRS) is an information standard for the Automatic Exchange Of Information (AEOI) regarding financial accounts on a global level, between tax authorities, which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed in 2014. Its purpose is to combat tax evasion. Similarly, transparency about beneficial ownership is aimed at preventing companies' owners from operating in secrecy, according to the World Bank.

Talking about the anomalies in the banking sector, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharruzzaman said, "A regular customer has to provide a lot of documents to get a small loan, then how do fake companies get such big loans? The total amount of defaulted loans has risen six folds in the past 14 years. Even, the loans cannot be recovered for frequent changes in the definition of defaulted loans and rescheduling. Who benefits from the loan scams? Citizens have the right to know,"

"Bangladesh Bank itself says that in the case of money laundering through invoice fraudulence in import-export trade, there have been more than 100 cases of showing additional/increased prices by 20-200 percent when importing goods. Moreover, according to the latest published report of Global Financial Integrity (GFI), the average amount of money smuggled out of Bangladesh under the guise of trade is 827 billion US dollars. Unfortunately, instead of taking any action to prevent money laundering, sending information in this regard to relevant UN agencies is said to be suspended with the intention to hide the data," he said.

In the statement, urging the govt. to join the CRS and formulate a law on beneficial ownership transparency, he stressed the need for probing the latest loan scam cases and demanded immediate and appropriate measures so that these funds cannot be smuggled abroad in any way.

## Medical waste sold, not destroyed; No 'authority' formed in 14 years: TIB study finds

### Research Study

**Dhaka, 5 November 2022:** A section of the hospital staff sells reusable waste (glass bottles, syringes, saline bags, knives, scissors, blood bags, rubber/plastic tubes, etc.) to recyclable waste collectors instead of destroying them. A syndicate then cleans and packages the reusable waste without proper sterilisation and sells it to drug stores, hospitals, and clinics, finds TIB's research.

As per the Medical Waste (Management and Treatment) Rules 2008, there are guidelines to prick or cut rubber/plastic tubes and various bags into pieces to prevent the re-use of medical waste, but it is not followed. The research says that 31 percent of hospitals do not cut off rubber/plastic tubes, and 49 percent do not have needle destroyers.

During a virtual press conference, TIB revealed the "Governance Challenges in Medical Waste Management and Way Out" study. A total of 93 medical waste workers and 231 institutions (181 hospitals, 38 city corporations/municipal authorities and 12 contractor companies) of 45 districts participated in the survey of the qualitative and quantitative research conducted between June 2021 & November 2022.

#### *Illicit financial transactions in recruitment process of medical waste workers:*

Institutions	Amount of bribe (BDT)	Beneficiaries
Govt. Hospital	1-2 lakh	A group of DGHS officials and employees
City Corporation/ Municipality	5-60 thousand	Mayors, councillors, a section of officers and employees, trade union leaders
Contract Agency	2-10 thousand	A section of officers and employees

As per The Medical Waste (Management and Processing) Rules 2008, an 'Authority' was supposed to be constituted within three months of publishing the gazette; however, it has not been formed even in the last 14 years. Besides, the study says that city corporations/municipalities and hospitals are conducting medical waste management activities by appointing certain contractors, who are not licensed, on a contractual basis.

Besides, the rules do not specify any organisation responsible for generating a central database related to medical waste. As a result, hospitals, city corporations, and municipalities do not store information on medical waste, and no central database has been developed in this regard.

There are also anomalies in the recruitment process of waste management workers. Around 1-2 lakh taka is exchanged in the govt. hospitals for recruitment, the study points out. The study also shows a lack of coordination between concerned ministries and entities, including the DGHS, DoE, and Office of the Divisional Commissioner, to form the 'Authority' on medical waste management. Due to a lack of coordination, the National Advisory Committee, including the Appellate Authority and Waste Management

Committees at city corporations/ municipalities, district and upazila levels, are ineffective. At the press conference, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "Although the legal and regulatory framework for medical waste management is on paper, there is no effective implementation or accountability. In terms of all seven indicators of good governance on which the study was conducted have alarming deficiencies. Fourteen years have passed since the waste management rules were enacted in 2008 but the "authority", as per the rules, has not yet been formed. There is also no accountability in this regard. There is total anarchy with neglect of duty, lack of coordination, and corruption-irregularity. Lack of good governance and corruption in this important area of health care has led to greater risks of disease transmission and environmental degradation at every stage."

### **Anti-corruption day celebration throughout December**

#### **Press release**

## **Anti-Corruption Cartoon Awards announced, curated cartoons on exhibition**

TIB announced the results of its flagship Anti-Corruption Cartoon Awards on International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD). The colourful exhibition of 48 curated cartoons was also inaugurated on the same day.

Cartoons this year covered various topics under the theme "Corruption and Good Governance". TIB received 268 cartoons from 180 artists for this year's competition.



In Group A (13-18 years), Tanvir Hasan Shuvo stood third for his cartoon on corruption in job sectors, Md. Jubair Islam Shafi stood second for his cartoon on the failure of the criminal justice system, and Rafsan Jani stood first for his cartoon on the inability of policy mechanisms to stop corruption.

In Group B (19-25 years), the third position went to Oishik Jawad for his cartoon depicting how good governance cannot be established without eradicating corruption, the second position went to Abdullah Al Zunaed for his artwork on election irregularities, and the first position went to Rajan Nandi for his artwork on socioeconomic impacts of corruption.

The six winners from two age groups received certificates, crests, and prize money for their artwork, while the rest of the cartoonists received certificates as special mentions.



While speaking at the awards distribution event, the chairperson of the board of trustees of TIB, Dr. Perween Hasan said, “A single cartoon can say a lot of things. This is not just a picture but a medium for raising questions. We see now that society avoids asking tougher questions. But it makes us happy and encouraged seeing young people raising the questions using cartoons.”

The Anti-Corruption Cartoons Exhibition will continue till 23 December 2022 at TIB’s Meghomala Conference Room situated in MIDAS Centre (Level-5), Road 16 (new) 27 (old), Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The gallery will be open from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm, including weekends.

## **Investigative Journalism Awards declared; speakers recognise data journalism as the new frontier in unearthing corruption**

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has announced the results of the Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Awards 2022 to mark International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD).

The awards were announced following the presentation of the paper ‘Data Journalism against Corruption: Bangladesh Context’. The paper portrayed how open-source data and analytics can further help anti-corruption activists, including journalists, to unearth corruption. The paper, which covered a wide range of topics on journalistic challenges in restrictive environments, encouraged media leaders to invest more in data analysis in

news reporting. The paper also pointed out that capacity building for journalists can help them utilise data more effectively.



This year, awards were given in 4 categories – local print and online media, national print and online media, news on electronic media, and documentary series on electronic media. In total, there were 99 submissions from different journalists from an array of media platforms.

Of the four awardees, Abul Hasan Himaloy won for his investigative series report on water management projects in Khulna, Asaduzzaman for his three-part series report on the misuse of the Digital Security Act, Md Alauddin Ahmmed for his two-part report on how public highways were auctioned off by vested quarters, and the Searchlight television programme for its investigation on how a parliamentarian amassed huge amounts of money and laundered them out of the country.



Speakers at the awards distribution programme said the reports were highlighted because of their utilisation of data, information, and proper investigation. While speaking at the awards distribution event, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzamna said, “Data

journalism plays an important role worldwide. Reports like the Pandora Papers and Paradise Papers prove that. Data can establish trust in investigative journalism, but it has not expanded in Bangladesh that much. If utilised, data journalism can be a strong tool against corruption.”

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman also talked about the challenges faced by the media in Bangladesh. Mentioning that civil societies and media are being treated as threats instead of supporting structures in accountable democratic processes, he added, “The practice of shooting the messenger is taking place, and there is a culture of fear regarding freedom of speech, opinion or information. Instead of taking action against perpetrators, there is a trend of harassing the ones who broke the news. This is an alarm bell for democracy and a big obstacle for establishing human rights.”

TIB has been awarding the best investigative reports since 1999. In the last 24 years of the awards, TIB has received 1,327 investigative reports for the awards.

## **Nationwide programmes mark the International Anti-Corruption Day**

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has commemorated this year’s International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) by carrying out various programmes across the country at local and national levels. In line with the United Nation’s theme ‘Uniting the World against Corruption’, TIB has engaged people in Dhaka and 45 working areas with the slogan “United Against Corruption”.



TIB’s Civic Engagement division worked alongside local government administration, law enforcement agencies, and civil society leaders to spread the anti-corruption message.

Anti-corruption activists participated in human chains organised jointly by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and TIB. The human chains also chanted slogans calling for the end of irregularities and corruption in all sectors. The social movements against corruption also involved school children from different localities.

TIB's YES volunteers, Active Citizen's Group (ACG), and Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) from 45 areas also participated in rallies, discussion sessions, and information fairs.

A group of volunteer cyclists also carried the anti-corruption message across their Upazila to make people aware of the unity against corruption.



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