

Policy stance

Critical infrastructure list questionable: TIB

Dhaka, 04 October 2022: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) raised questions about the rationality of the list of 29 organisations declared as Critical Information Infrastructure by Information and Communication Technology Division.

The statement came two- days after the ICT division had declared the list under the jurisdiction of section 15 of 'Digital Security Act (DSA)-2018'. Terming the list as 'questionable' and 'misleading', TIB said that no policy of the state could ratify such a list.

In the statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said that Digital Security Act empowered the government to declare any computer network, system, and infrastructure as critical information infrastructure. But in the recent gazette, only 29 organisations had been declared as critical information infrastructures where important ministries and institutions like Ministry of Defence, Home Ministry, Armed Forces, National Parliament, judicial department, audit, health sector, customs and ports were not included in the list.

He said also it was not clear what consideration led to the declaration of the list. The listing in this way plays down other government organisations in terms of importance.

Underscoring the need to formulate a policy regarding National and Public Security, Dr. Zaman said, "In almost all areas of discussion, including national security, there is a lack of clear policy or conceptual clarity. In such a reality, TIB feels that it is important to put national and public safety policies first. Because if there is no clear policy guidance, safety will not be ensured, and the law will continue to be arbitrarily misused."

Dr. Zaman further said the provisions of Section 16(3) of DSA might create a risk of hindrance in gathering information about the institutions listed in the notification under the Right to Information Act. Because in the gazette, instead of the computer network of an organization, an entire organization had been declared as critical information infrastructure.

"With the publication of this list, another weakness of the new DSA has come to the fore as section 17 of the Act provided punishment for "unlawful access" to critical information infrastructure," he added, calling upon the government to stop misusing the act and amend it.

Policy stance

Most of Bangladesh's leading international trade partners are worst performers in taking action against foreign bribery; TIB calls for stringent law enforcement

Dhaka, 13 October 2022: Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed grave concern that most of the leading trade and investment partner countries of Bangladesh have been systematically failing to take action against bribery in international trade. Referring to a report released by the Berlin-based TI Secretariat on 11 October 2022, on "Exporting Corruption 2022: Assessing Enforcement of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention", TIB calls upon the defaulting countries to address weaknesses in their relevant laws and ensure stringent enforcements. It has also alerted the Government of Bangladesh of the need to play its due role to be vigilant and take all preventive measures against corrupt deals in foreign trade and investment.

The biennial report assesses the performance of 47 leading global exporters of which 43 are parties to the OECD Anti-bribery Convention and four other leading global exporters, e.g., China, India, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Quoting the main findings of the report that 20 of the assessed countries which together account for nearly 40 percent of annual global exports have taken little or no enforcement action against foreign bribery during the period of the survey, Executive Director of TIB said, 'what is most important for Bangladesh is that the defaulting countries include some of the top trade and investment partners of Bangladesh like India, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. This must be treated as an alarm bell for Bangladesh.'

Iftekharuzzaman said, 'it is deeply disappointing that our trade and investment are so worryingly exposed to corruption due to continued failures of our partner countries, many of whom are ironically perceived to be ranked better than us as per most of the available internationally credible corruption indicators. We call upon them to practice what they preach, and ensure that their legal and institutional systems are strong and effective enough to be consistent with their international pledges. We expect them to be able to do everything in their capacity to ensure that their corruption is no longer exported to countries like ours.'

He further said, 'on the other hand, TIB also strongly believes that Bangladesh doesn't need to remain hostage to the failure of its trade and investment partners. We call upon our government to be robustly vigilant to ensure that all measures are taken to prevent corruption-driven illicit deals in our international trade and investment relations'.

The report has ranked only Switzerland and US as 'active enforcers', though far from perfect. Countries in the lowest performers category include Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey. Notable among the second worst category of 'limited enforcers'

include Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and Sweden, while those among ‘moderate enforcers’ are Australia, France, Germany, Norway and UK.

‘Overall, the report depicts a frustrating picture of the state of compliance of international commitments of countries that are expected to be global leaders in anti-corruption efforts’, the statement said.

Press release

Inter-University Debate Competition 2022 ends with flying colours; youths renew their vows against corruption

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), jointly with the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology Debating Club (RUETDC), organised the TIB-RUETDC Inter-University Debate Competition 2022. Thirty-two teams from thirty universities from all over the country participated in the competition from October 28-29.

Rajshahi University Debating Forum (RUDF) became the champion, while Jahangirnagar University Debate Organisation (JUDO) secured the runner-up position. The title for the best debater of the competition went to Surja Das from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). The best debater in the final round was Shahriar M Fahim from the University of Rajshahi.



The lively events started with general students, participants, and organisers taking an Anti-Corruption Oath highlighting their zeal for integrity and accountability. The youths also promised to do their part in protecting human rights, resisting discrimination, and ending the exploitation of the people.

With the theme -- “Invincible Youth against Corruption: Logic, Commitment and Unity”, a total of 96 debaters and 52 judges participated in the competition from different universities this year. Teams from the University of Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Barisal and engineering universities BUET, CHUET, RUET, and KUET participated.

In multiple rounds leading up to the finals, debaters discussed numerous topics related to the proposed Data Protection Act (which is deemed controversial by civil rights protection groups), equity in economic development, gender discrimination, pro-people journalism, the nation's development projects, relevant anti-corruption laws, and socio-cultural reasons behind corruption.



Speaking as the chief guest at the closing ceremony, Dr. Md. Sazzad Hossain, Acting Vice-Chancellor of RUET said, "The debaters use their sharp intellect to stand against various inconsistencies in the society. If the young debaters speak out against corruption, this will work toward the well-being of all. I believe these young debaters will stay away from corruption themselves and play an active role in preventing the corruption of others." During the closing ceremony, the Director of TIB Outreach and Communication Division, Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam told the audience, "Young debaters have always been at the forefront alongside TIB in the social movement against corruption. The participants' clear and concise ideas on good governance and corruption, logical, analytical abilities, and anti-corruption mindset will inspire us to carry on our anti-corruption movement in the coming days."

The champion and the runner-up teams of the debating competition were awarded prize money, crests, and certificates during the closing ceremony.

Response to rebuttal

Critical Information Infrastructures: ICT Division's explanation not clear, says TIB

Dhaka, 10 October 2022: TIB welcomed the clarification by ICT Division in response to the TIB' concern over the recently announced list of 'critical information structures'.

However, the explanation did not provide any clarity regarding the list of 29 institutions which were declared as 'critical information structures'.

In the statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said, "The gazette declared an entire institution as 'critical information infrastructure' and this raises questions. It even contravenes Section 15 of the Digital Security Act. Therefore, as per Section 16(3) of the Digital Security Act, any information collection, information disclosure, and expression of opinion in regard to the listed institutions could be considered as 'threatening and harmful'. As a result, the matter will be in conflict with the Right to Information Act. Therefore, it would be logical to amend the gazette and identify only the computer

systems and networks of the listed institutions as critical information infrastructures according to the Digital Security Act.”

He also pointed out that only 29 institutions were identified as ‘critical information infrastructures’, however, computer systems and networks of important establishments, including the National Parliament, the defense ministry, and the state ministry were out of the list. “The reason behind is not clear, and therefore, this is questionable,” he added.

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