Another way to tackle corruption would be to give autonomy to the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC). But giving autonomy must not exclude overseeing the Commission to ensure that it does not become corrupted from inside its own administration. In other words, guidelines and powers for maintaining transparency and accountability must reside within the power of the government. Further, ACC must need to identify politicians, technocrats, and bureaucrats who are corrupt and those who are sincere and honest, who must have power and influence to investigate and prosecute the wrongdoers.

Cultural institutions such as media must also take responsibilities to investigate and report

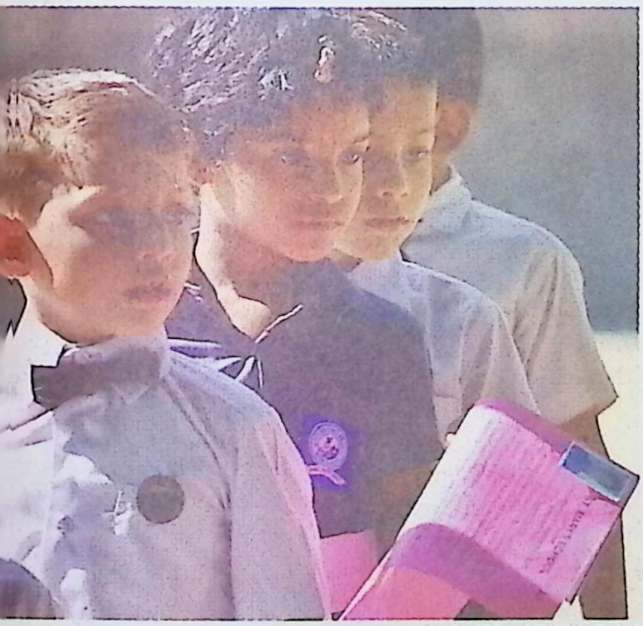


PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

corruption critically. More importantly, they must be impartial and should not influence or be influenced by the political parties to manipulate information.

Bangladesh must move forward with effective policies to set up economic ties with its neighbors. One such collaboration is known as BCIM link, which includes Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar. This economic collaboration will not only connect all four countries through a prosperous trade route, but it will also enhance energy security for all four countries. In fact, enhancing and maintaining energy security is one of the crucial issues of the BCIM link. The collaboration would also provide Bangladesh with an opportunity to establish a strategic economic and political partnership with China. Another important piece of this diplomatic relationship with China would be to move forward with the much-needed Sonadia deep sea project. The proposed deep-sea port will allow bigger and larger ship to enter Bangladesh and will provide Bangladesh access to ports in neighboring Myanmar and India. This proposed seaport has an enormous implication on economic growth through expansion of trade routes and treaties with its neighbouring countries. Currently, China, Japan, United Arab Emirates, India, and US have offered their interest in building the port.

During the last two decades Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in education sector. According to a 2002 Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) report, between 1990 and 1998 primary school enrollment has increased by 33 percent, from 12 million in 1990 to 18 million in 1998. But this is hardly enough. The education policies must be inclusive at all levels of education, from primary to university. Equally important is the quality of education. The government must ensure that students are endowed with the capacity to critically think and solve problems. Quality research at the university level must be promoted and incentivised. To do that, the government must create a platform for researchers and teachers to create need-based development and international publication opportunities. Selection of teachers – from primary to university levels – must be based on merit, not on quota and influence.

More than a decade ago, Bangladesh had an opportunity to set up a fiber optic network infrastructure at virtually no cost. This kind of opportunity may not recur but Bangladesh is in a position to create such opportunities for itself. According to Dhaka Tribune, there are 100 million mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh, with nearly 70 percent penetration rate of the entire population. This is a remarkable feat. But policies must stay ahead of the pace of technological advance. The government must ensure that the public has adequate and timely access to both technology and information through modern infrastructure and availability of investors of technology.

In order to revive and sustain a healthy democratic process, actions must be taken and proposed solutions must be tested against a volatile political climate in Bangladesh by the winning party of the 2014 election. The government and its proposals must establish their validity, political impartiality, transparency, and accountability to the political constituents and the public. Spaces for all political parties must be created and validated. Participation must be facilitated. Dialogues must be initiated and evaluated with conviction and consciousness.

Earning a right to claim an emerging power may seem far fetched. But it is within the limits and capacities of the people and the government of Bangladesh.

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