

# Corruption corroding governance

## BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

**G**OOD governance means setting targets, achieving goals, and delivering results. Despite pledges by the present government to rid the country of the scourge of corruption, it continues to corrode the country's political structure, bringing in its wake an apparent collapse of governmental and political institutions.

The people brought this government to power because there was a groundswell of faith, and it was up to the government to turn that popular faith into performance. It didn't happen. The last years of the government saw only instances of hope abandoned and trust betrayed. Most worryingly, there seems to be acceptance of corruption!

Reports published in the dailies suggest that people in both the political arena and the administration were involved in bungling like Rajuk plot allotment. The Anti-Corruption Commission conducted investigations in Rajuk affairs and found 22 persons guilty of such bungling but, except for one high bureaucrat, no one was booked.

People in the administration have been flouting rules and regulations at their will. If there was a semblance of administration, it would not have been possible to give illegal gas connections to outlying areas about 200 km from Dhaka. Nobody denies their entitlement, but the fund collected should go to the public coffers. Even after this scam came to the spotlight, the drive launched by the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company came to an abrupt halt because of the pressure exerted by some politically influenced people.

People believe that the country is faced with the crisis of governance, the root cause of which is our flawed democracy. While committing ourselves to the dictum of development and taking measures that would enable us to ensure law, order and stability, we tend to think that everything is fair in politics.

The stock market scam resulted from lack of vigilance and failure of the government in booking the guilty persons. Neither the government nor some politicians-cum-businessmen could understand why 30 lakh small investors, mostly in their 30s, flocked to the share market with everything they had, but in just a year they lost all their assets because of someone else's greed and machinations. These youths had no jobs and no access to business opportunities, but many dependants. All their hopes for survival were dashed to the ground because of flawed government policies, total callousness and indifference from all responsible quarters in the government.

Businessmen, who understand the nuances of corruption better than most people, are forced into a conspiracy of silence that makes it impossible for them to admit publicly

how much they pay to build a power plant, to get an environment clearance for setting up a factory, to build a bridge, or even to get a loan from a bank. Nothing moves in government offices and utility organisations without greasing of the right palms.

There are allegations that for a teaching job in a non-government primary school, one has to pay a hefty sum of money to the management board. As the world has become frenetically competitive, nations realise the value of quality education. Most people who had schooling in the earlier days are not happy about the level of education of the students these days. Most high profile schools and colleges are losing their image as producers of national talents in different services.

Reports about school authorities charging high fees in admitting students in both Bangla and English medium schools are very alarming. In response to a writ petition, the High Court directed the government to prevent the English medium schools from charging the students readmission fees for the next three months until a monitoring cell was formed to supervise all such fees. Unhappily, the authorities in the secondary and higher education directorate took no cognisance of the guardian's complaints, although it was their primary responsibility to investigate the matter and take proper education. It seems that opening schools and running coaching centres has become a viable commercial enterprise!

Some top-level bureaucrats in the administration are now declaring themselves as freedom fighters in a bid to have extension of their service length. These bureaucrats proved themselves most efficient and capable to the administration of the day and nurtured the hope that they would be shielded by the government under all circumstances! What is more ominous is that people indulging in such malpractices seem to be supported by influential quarters. This shows the breakdown of moral fabric even in the high echelons of the government and society at large. Wherever there is too much concentrated power and too little accountability, there is plunder and payoffs.

People of newly democratising countries are getting tired of being exploited by their public servants. And as more countries reform or undergo wrenching economic change, angry citizens are flushing out the mucky residue of old regimes that dragged them down. Corruption is not just a moral problem. Economists and international organisations are beginning to point out the serious damage that corruption can do to economic growth and prosperity. International investment is the lifeblood of many economies, and because information travels so quickly these days, reputations can be made or destroyed by a single headline.

Rarely has a person guilty of such misconduct in our country been meted out proper punishment. People also feel that the endeavour to curb corruption, abduction, terrorism and looting of state properties is fruitless because of interference by people in the administration who receive their strength from political bosses.

In a fledgling democracy like Bangladesh, instituting a genuinely honest government is tough unless the politicians change their mindset. The top tier of bureaucracy constructed by the colonial rulers and often referred to as "steel frame" has now turned into "rubber frame." Politicians often use the threat of transfers and punitive postings to bend the officers and make them comply with unethical and illegal orders.

In a country that is governed by rule of law and can give

severe punishment to those found guilty, corruption will automatically take the backseat. But in most places, what we see is that corruption is the rule, and honesty is naivety. The most corrupt are likely to walk away with their amassed wealth. The lesser ones run the risk of being caught, suspended, or arrested. Bigger corruption is a sure route to increased pelf and even a position in governance.

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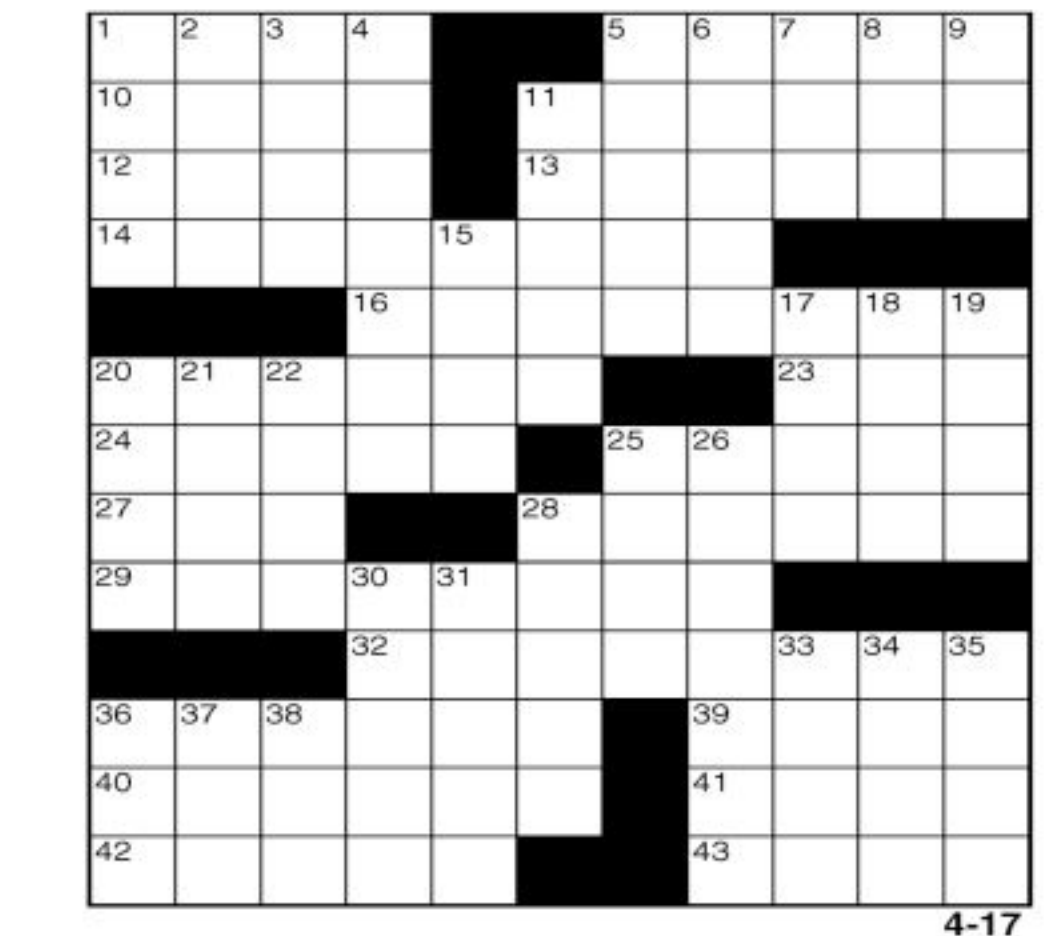
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## CROSSWORD

by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- 1 Bum a bit
  - 5 Russia neighbor
  - 10 Doozy
  - 11 Less modest
  - 12 French articles
  - 13 Decorative
  - 14 Sandwich choice
  - 16 Miniature hourglass
  - 20 Flowery shrub
  - 23 Seine water
  - 24 Fish features
  - 25 "Did you grow up in --?"
  - 27 Rock's Brian
  - 28 Make a bust
  - 29 Brainiacs
  - 32 Soda fountain order
  - 36 Mocking work
  - 39 Not active
  - 40 Oozes
  - 41 Conks out
  - 42 Authentic
  - 43 Make printing plates
- DOWN**
- 1 Detective's find
  - 2 Put on the wall
  - 3 "Break --!"
  - 4 Philosopher Bertrand
  - 5 Jeweler's unit
  - 6 Delhi tongue
  - 7 "Not -- million years!"
  - 8 Volleyball need
  - 9 Verb for you
  - 11 Europe's longest river
  - 15 A long time
  - 17 Brunch or dinner
  - 18 Tombstone lawman
  - 19 Little one
  - 20 Writer James
  - 21 Lively quality
  - 22 Sleep like --
  - 25 "Back in Black" bank
  - 26 Commuter's trip
  - 28 Wise ones
  - 30 Spyri heroine
  - 31 Wading bird
  - 33 Do magazine work
  - 34 Oscar winner Guinness
  - 35 Fit together
  - 36 Salt, to Simone
  - 37 Reduce drastically
  - 38 Gentle pull



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Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit