



TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman speaks at the human chain in front of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

INT'L ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

PM's commitment to anti-corruption drive must be upheld: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's commitment of not going lenient during the ongoing anti-corruption drive should be ensured, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) demanded yesterday.

The demand came at a human chain in front of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban to mark International Anti-Corruption Day 2019, scheduled to be held today.

All kinds of direct and indirect political and government influence on the Anti-Corruption Commission should be stopped to make the graft watchdog stronger and to demonstrate political will towards reducing corruption effectively, said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

All parties, especially relevant institutions like law enforcing agencies and Anti-Corruption Commission, will have to play their roles assertively to curb corruption in the country as it is not

possible for the prime minister alone to do so, Iftekharuzzaman said.

The premier's announcement regarding the drive against corruption, including initiating it within the party, has encouraged them and others who are working against corruption, he said, adding that people of the country want to see results.

Other demands of the graft watchdog include taking effective government steps to ensure encouraging atmosphere so that general people, media, and private organisations can play active roles against corruption.

TIB also demanded removal of controversial sections of Public Service ACT-2018 to curb corruption and irregularities in government sector.

The organisation also called for bringing to book the persons involved with corruption and forgery in the banking sector.

Among others, members of TIB and students of different educational institutions attended the human chain.

BASIC BANK EMBEZZLEMENT

Fate of 56 cases rest on countries where funds were transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fate of 56 cases filed over embezzlement of Tk 2,036 crore from BASIC Bank now depends on replies from countries where the accused reportedly transferred the money.

"We've filed MLAR [Mutual Legal Assistance Request] to some countries to track where the money had gone," said Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Iqbal Mahmood.

However, the ACC chief could neither specify the number of countries to which MLAR had been sent nor give any deadline for completion of the approximately four-year-long investigation of the cases.

Iqbal was responding to queries from journalists at a 'meet the press' programme organised by Reporters Against Corruption

(RAC) at ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters. BASIC Bank was embroiled in financial irregularities following Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu's appointment as its chairman in 2009.

In 2012 and the next year, Bangladesh Bank detected the embezzlement of Tk 4,500 crore from the bank.

The anti-graft authority in 2015, filed 56 cases for the embezzlement of Tk 2,036 crore out of the Tk 4,500 crore. However, Bacchu was not made accused in any of the cases.

'WHO ARE YOU?'

In October this year, ruling party lawmaker Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh came down heavily on the ACC Chairman for not making Bacchu an accused in the cases and asked the latter to resign.

"We're not concerned about who says what. It's a constitutional institution. You can ask for my resignation, that's not a problem," said Iqbal when his attention was drawn to the lawmaker's remark.

"It is under investigation... How can you say Bacchu's name won't come up? It's our mandate to investigate the matter, not yours. Who are you?" said the ACC Chairman.

Iqbal said, "It won't work if you dictate us to implicate Bacchu... We can't accept this kind of suggestion."

He said that investigation officers had submitted reports on the cases related to BASIC Bank to the three-member commission for approval.

"We didn't approve them because the investigation reports lack trails of the money. To prove the case in the court,"

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Foreign aid must be driven by dev demands: speakers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Rising inequality, poor governance and shrinking space of civil society are major challenges in achieving the goals of sustainable development, said civil society leaders and policymakers yesterday.

They called for coordinated actions both by the government and non-government organisations to address the challenges on urgent basis.

The observations came at a seminar titled "Between solidarity and self-interest: the changing patterns of development aid" jointly organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development, Clio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangskriti Foundation (MSF) at the city's Cirdap auditorium.

"While Bangladesh is moving towards a middle-income status, we also see increased income gap," said Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori.

According to a report by Centre for Policy Dialogue, income of the poorest 40 percent of the population in Bangladesh has declined from 17.41 percent in 1991 to 13.01 percent in 2016.

On the other hand, income of the richest 10 percent of the population in Bangladesh increased from 23.3 percent in 1991 to 26.8 percent in 2016.

Khushi Kabir said the concept of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) says none should be left behind.

But the society today witnesses a trend where some people have so much of wealth, while others have so little, she said, calling on authorities to take urgent action to address such inequality.

Aroma Dutta, an MP and adviser to non-profit Prip Trust, said the space for civil society has been shrinking in recent times.

"It is important to look at what went wrong... what's leading to shrinking of such space," she said.

Aroma Dutta said advocacy is very important for taking forward democracy, and civil society can play a vital role in this regard.

She said there may be some tensions in the relationship between the civil society and the state,

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BDR MUTINY

High Court may release full 28,000-page verdict soon

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court is likely to release, within a week or two, the full text of its verdict that confirmed death penalty for 139 accused and upheld life imprisonment of 185 others for their involvement in the massacre during the BDR mutiny in 2009.

The three judges of a special HC bench have already completed writing the drafts of the judgment containing more than 28,000 pages -- in the biggest-ever criminal case in the country's history in terms of the number of accused and people convicted.

The judges are now scrutinising the verdict, court sources said.

Judges of the bench -- Justice Md Shawkat Hossain, Justice Md Abu Zafor Siddique and Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder -- will sign the verdict after completion of the relevant procedures and then the full text of the verdict will be released.

The sources, however, could not share the findings -- including the grounds and observations -- on which the judges announced the verdict in November 2017.

Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer

for more than 400 accused of the case, recently told The Daily Star that his clients can file appeals with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court after receiving the full text of the HC verdict.

"My clients will file appeals with the Appellate Division seeking acquittal of the charges on which their convictions and sentences were upheld by the High Court. The appeals will be filed in 30 days from the date of receiving the certified copy of the High Court verdict," he added.

On November 27, 2017, the special HC bench pronounced the verdict that confirmed death penalty for 139 of the 152 accused who were awarded capital punishment by a lower court for their involvement in the carnage during the mutiny by the paramilitary force members.

The HC commuted death sentence of eight to life imprisonment and acquitted four others. One died during the HC hearing of the appeals and death references.

The court upheld life imprisonment of a total 185 convicts and 10 years' jail sentence of three.

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Three-way collaboration needed to stop sexual harassment at workplace

Speakers at roundtable demand implementation of landmark HC directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three-way cooperation among the government, workers and employers' organisations is required to properly implement the High Court guidelines to prevent sexual harassment of women at workplaces and educational institutions, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

Besides, the government needs to ratify the International Labour Organization's "Convention Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work" and bring necessary changes in existing laws in line with it, they said.

CARE Bangladesh and The Daily Star jointly organised the roundtable on "Preventing Discrimination and Harassment of Women at Workplace" at The Daily Star Centre.

In a landmark judgment in



Participants at the discussion, held at The Daily Star Centre.

2009, the HC issued a guideline to prevent sexual harassment of women. It also directed the government to make a law based on the guidelines, and ruled that the guidelines will be treated as law until the law is formulated.

Addressing the roundtable, Advocate Salma Ali -- who filed

the petition that resulted in the judgment -- said it needed to be seen how much the directive has been followed.

The guidelines termed sexual harassment a punishable offence, and directed organisations and educational institutions to form committees to prevent it, she said.

Whether this has been followed should be checked, she said, adding that it needs to be found why the government did not formulate the law yet, she added.

CARE Bangladesh Director (women and girls' empowerment) Humaira Aziz said prevalence of gender gap was highest in Bangladesh among South Asian countries in 2017 and 2018.

Ratifying the ILO convention will be a significant step to prevent harassment against women, she said.

It is the reality that many victims of sexual harassment cannot share their ordeals because of social obstacles, said Ain O Salish Kendra Executive Director Sheeba Hafiza.

She said prevalence of sexual harassment against women is high in garments sector, and organisations and industries have to create favourable environment

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Model UN inspires Bangladeshi youths

Curtains rise on student conference at Scholastica

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the aim to make students aware of contemporary global issues, English medium school Scholastica yesterday launched a three-day conference simulating the structure of the United Nations.

About 400 students from different schools and colleges in the capital took part in the event, playing the roles of delegates from different countries and UN specialised organisations.

It was the fifth season of the conference, titled "Model United Nations Conference". With the theme "Change Begins with You", the event took place at the senior campus of Scholastica in the city's Uttara.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam was present as chief guest at the inaugural session of the programme, which will end tomorrow.

Speaking at the event, Mahfuz Anam emphasised the significance and contributions of the United Nations, and urged students to follow the UN's spirits of collaboration and cooperation.



Around 400 school and college students attended Model United Nations Conference at Scholastica in Uttara.

PHOTO: STAR

"United Nations has some failures, but there is no other way that sovereign countries can work together. From airspace management to combating epidemics like Ebola, millions of people are collaborating under the UN," said The Daily Star editor.

"Despite the flaws, the world would have been far worse off without the UN," he added.

About the impact of forming the UN, Mahfuz Anam said the fundamental lesson of the United Nations is international cooperation.

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CORRUPTION ALLEGATION

BCL-backed Ducsu members demand VP Nur's resignation

DUI CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-three Ducsu members -- who won the election from Chhatra League's panel -- yesterday demanded resignation of its vice-president Nurul Haque Nur over corruption allegations brought against him.

Ducsu General Secretary Golam Rabbani, who was removed from the general secretary post of BCL over allegation of corruption, and the other 22 members at a press conference at Ducsu office said they are "ashamed" that such an allegation was raised against the VP.

"Nur has clearly tarnished the image of the vice-president post; we have got proof of that. We, the other members of Ducsu, do not want to take the responsibility of his misdeeds," said Rabbani.

"We urge him to step down from the post. If he does not resign, we are urging the Ducsu president to expel Nur [from Ducsu] on grounds of moral degradation," he added.

On October 15, Prothom Alo reported that Golam Rabbani was enrolled to an MPhil course of the university by violating admission rules ahead of the Ducsu polls.

Asked if it is moral degradation, Rabbani claimed he

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DHAKA TODAY

SEMINAR

Commemorating life of Begum Rokeya
Organiser: Women for Women
Venue: Jatiya Press Club
Time: 10am

WORKSHOP

Gender Sensitivity at Workplace
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 5pm

HUMAN CHAIN

Demanding justice for Rumpa murder
Organiser: Socialist Students' Front
Venue: Bangladesh National Museum
Time: 3:30pm

CONFERENCE

Indo-Pacific Association of Law, Medicine and Science Congress
Organiser: INPALMS Congress Committee
Venue: KIB, Farmgate
Time: 9am

CAMPAIGN

End Violence, Act Now
Organiser: Population Services and Training Centre
Venue: Rabindra Sarobar
Time: 4:30pm

CONFERENCE

On Preventing Violent Extremism
Organiser: Cyber Security and Crime Division, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit, Dhaka Metropolitan Police
Venue: International Convention City Bashundhara
Time: 9am

FILM SCREENING

The Girl and The Picture
Organiser: Liberation Docfest Bangladesh
Venue: Liberation War Museum
Time: 5pm