

# FROM CHALLENGED BEGINNINGS TO STANDING TALL

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2021, MAGH 28, 1427 BS

## Socio-political evils of corruption: Not everything is lost yet



IFTEKHARUZZAMAN

Bangladesh is often mentioned as a development dilemma for its commendable performance in terms of GDP growth and socio-economic indicators on the one hand, that on the other, contrasts strikingly with pervasive corruption and poor performance in nearly every governance indicator. The country's GDP growth has remained consistently high at around seven percent for several years, while in terms of such indicators as Human Development Index (HDI), Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Gender Development Index, population growth reduction and life expectancy at birth, Bangladesh has performed better than comparable countries in the region of South Asia and beyond.

Bangladesh's performance in growth and socio-economic transformation could have been much better if it could achieve higher standards of governance and effectively controlled corruption, the cost of which is as high as 2-3 percent of GDP, as revealed by a former finance minister. Add to this, the skyrocketing illicit financial outflow to the tune of USD 10 billion annually as per credible estimates, not to underestimate the likes of the Canadian Begum Para and Malaysian second home, of which Bangladeshi money launderers are among the leading clients.

In fact, the country has witnessed weaker performance than its South Asian and many other peers in terms of most



of the well-known governance indicators. These include the Rule of Law Index (112th out of 126 countries in 2019), Regulatory Quality Index (-0.83 in 2018 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5), Government Effectiveness Index (-0.75 in 2018 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5), Political Stability Index (-1.03 in 2018 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5), Voice and Accountability Index (-0.73 in 2018 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5), Press Freedom Index (151st in 2020 among 180 countries), Political Rights Index (5 in 2020 on a scale of 7 to -1) and Civil Liberties Index (5 in 2020 on a scale of 7 to -1).

According to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Bangladesh continues to be ranked among countries where corruption is perceived to be most pervasive. According to the 2020 CPI report, Bangladesh has scored 26 out of 100, well below the global average of 43, the benchmark for moderate success in corruption control. We are embarrassingly the second worst scorer in South Asia after only Afghanistan, and fourth lowest among the 31 countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to macroeconomic costs of corruption in terms of loss of GDP

as mentioned above, people's sufferings from bribery and other forms of corrupt practices in key sectors of service delivery remain very high. 66.5 percent of the respondents were victims of one or other forms of corruption according to the National Household Survey on Corruption launched by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in June 2018. It further showed that more than 89 percent of those who paid bribes were forced to do so because bribery was the only option for being able to access public services—an unbearable daily life burden of immorality of the corrupt.

The government recognises combating corruption as critical to progress towards realising the Perspective Plan - Vision 2021, the successive Five-Year Plans and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Vision 2021 asserts that "the Government is determined to confront and root out the scourge of corruption from the body politic of Bangladesh... (and) intends to strengthen transparency and accountability of all government institutions as integral part of a programme of social change to curb corruption."

As a signatory to the UN SDGs, Bangladesh has pledged to "promote a peaceful and inclusive society... provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Implementation of SDGs demands a paradigm shift towards the qualitative compared to quantitative measures of development. Under target 16.5 Bangladesh commits to "substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms"; under 16.4, to significantly reduce illicit financial flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets; and under 16.10, to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms." Such lofty commitments as well as the SDG pledges of inclusive society, leaving no one behind, accountable and inclusive institutions and fundamental freedoms, can only be achieved through higher levels of participatory governance and corruption control.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

**SMC**  
Live better

জীবনে আমার সবকিছু মানায়  
ভালো আছি ফেমিকনের ছোঁয়ায়

প্রকৃতির মতোই নারীর শরীরের সাথে  
মানানসই স্বল্পমাত্রার জন্মবিবর্তিকরণ পিল ফেমিকন

এই বংশধরদের নব্বম ছোঁয়া

ফেমিকন  
স্বল্পমাত্রার জন্মবিবর্তিকরণ পিল

© স্বাস্থ্যের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তই আপনার জীবনের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তের মতো। সর্বদা ডাক্তারের পরামর্শ নিন। © স্বাস্থ্যের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তই আপনার জীবনের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তের মতো। সর্বদা ডাক্তারের পরামর্শ নিন। © স্বাস্থ্যের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তই আপনার জীবনের প্রতিটি সিদ্ধান্তের মতো। সর্বদা ডাক্তারের পরামর্শ নিন।