Original Research Article

The Political Nexus: How Politics Fuels Public Sector Corruption in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Politics is an essential element of a country. Bangladesh is no different. Politics must work in a way that the people can get benefits from it and help them to improve their quality of life, address their concerns, and contribute to the development of a fair and just society. This study explores the existing connection between politics and corruption in Bangladesh, focusing on their underlying motives and objectives. It explores the corrupt practices of politicians in Bangladesh and their influence in public sectors' corruption. A qualitative research approach is implied to get secondary data from investigative reports, newspaper articles, and research articles. The article goes through extensive case study analysis and finds out how the corruption is intertwined with politics. The findings of this study reveal that politicians leverage their positions for monetary gain, creating patronage networks, and the exercise of power and influence. The study also highlights how corruption undermines governance, disrupt services, and create inequality among the people of the country. The insights of the findings put emphasize for systemic reforms in anti-corruption commission, judiciary as well as to form independent oversight bodies and build citizen engagement to restore public trust and promote accountability.
Keywords: Corruption, Politics, Public sector, Patronage, Monetary gain, Accountability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption in public sectors is largely associated with politics in Bangladesh. Corruption is intertwined with politics. Corruption, broadly defined, is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain (Transparency International, 2020). The World Bank further expands on this by describing corruption as "the misuse of public office for private gain," where public officials or those in authority exploit their positions to accumulate benefits (World Bank, 2021). According to Nye (1967), corruption is defined as behavior that deviates from official obligations for the purpose of obtaining personal profits, either directly or indirectly. This definition may be found in scholarly literature. The aforementioned definitions highlight the multifaceted character of corruption, which encompasses immoral activities that undermine institutions, damage governance systems, and destroy public confidence.

Strong political ties and favoritism have been primarily responsible for the widespread propagation of corruption inside the public sector in Bangladesh, which has become firmly ingrained at this point. Here, the political-bureaucratic link creates a situation wherein state resources are frequently diverted for personal benefit, therefore beyond legal and ethical limits. Corruption in Bangladesh has various forms such as embezzlement, bribery, nepotism etc. Political ties typically shield those involved in such corruption. In this setting, the link between politics and corruption produces a special 'nexus' where power dynamics generate both opportunity and protection for corrupt behavior. Scholars say that political favoritism in Bangladesh's public sector leads to corruption that hurts service performance, economic growth, and people's trust in the government. This kind of deep-seated corruption not only hurts government, but it also causes underdevelopment and unrest, with disadvantaged groups being the ones who suffer the most.

Analyzing this junction of politics and corruption provides insightful analysis of how political elites, often via co-optation of bureaucratic professionals, shape state institutions to keep influence and power. Examining case studies of well-known political leaders engaged in corruption can help us to

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224

better grasp the processes by which political ties support public sector corruption, therefore compromising governance and impeding national development. This study attempts to expose and analyze these trends thereby providing a better perspective of the difficulties in reaching openness and responsibility within Bangladesh's political and administrative systems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corruption in Bangladesh is a hot political and controversial issue, and political parties often charge each other with being corrupted (Islam, 2020).

Corruption in Bangladesh is heavily influenced by a patronage system, where personal connections with key decision-makers often bypass competitive processes in awarding major contracts. Politicians put pressure on civil servants to carry out illegal and unfair orders. They even give threats like transferring or removal from office, which force the officials to compromise their ethics and public interest. Even honest officials often feel powerless in the face of such pressures, while others collude with politicians to share in the gains from corrupt practices. The government is weakened by this system. This system also undermines fairness and transparency in government operations (Zafarullah & Siddique, 2001).

Corruption in the public sector of Bangladesh is closely tied to the actions of political leaders, with administrative corruption being an extension of political corruption. Many politicians put pressure on bureaucrats to comply with them and carry out illegal orders. And many bureaucrats often accept what they are told to do as they fear of losing jobs or other punitive measures like transfers. This mutually beneficial relationship undermines accountability as corrupt bureaucrats are shielded by their political connections. Ministers rarely accept responsibility for corruption and inefficiency inside their ministries, instead defending their stances and resolving failures. As a result, the public sector falls short of acceptable norms, with poor service quality, low client satisfaction, and a clientelist and paternalistic culture. Ordinary citizens suffer from inadequate governance, maladministration, and a lack of access to the resources and services they are entitled to from the government (Zafarullah & Siddique, 2001).

The bureaucracy's function as a neutral agency has been compromised by politics; appointments and promotions based on political allegiance rather than aptitude have resulted. This has undermined the professionalism and integrity of the public service, therefore undermining governance and producing a system whereby career development is dictated by allegiance to the governing party (Arfina Osman, 2010). The corrupt nexus of politicians and officials raised the cost of essential services and seriously hampered the supply of public goods, thereby sustaining inequality and

erasing confidence in both political and administrative institutions (Hasan, 2007).

Bangladesh's bureaucratic politicization has produced a patron-client system whereby government workers give political allegiance first priority above public service, therefore encouraging corruption and lowering bureaucratic efficiency. Absence of merit-based appointments and efficient supervision strengthens the monopoly of the ruling party on state institutions and compromises government (Arfina Osman, 2010).

Sometimes the political systems of Bangladesh are considered to be extractive, meant for a small number of individuals rather than the total population. Extractive institutions, according to Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), fall short in offering inclusive governance—a necessary condition for democratic responsibility and openness. This extractive tendency is evident in Bangladesh as a small group of elites who exploit the system for personal gain concentrates political power. This concentration of authority generates an atmosphere where corruption might flourish uncontrolled (Akhter, 2015).

Clientelism and patronage networks define Bangladeshi political systems. Politicians often use dishonest methods to get allegiance from voters by offering favors or money in return for votes (Khan, 2017). This framework helps corruption to become more firmly rooted in the political system as electoral success is connected to corrupt behavior. Akhter (2015) claims that these dynamic compromises democratic ideals and shapes public policy in favor of those who can provide political support instead of attending to the interests of the whole public. Legislation and institutional changes enhancing responsibility in political, legal, and administrative institutions have helped many liberal democracies reduce corruption (Brinkerhoff 2000). A fundamental feature of Bangladesh's political scene is the lack of responsibility systems inside the political institutions. With $C = M + D - A$, where C stands for corruption, M for monopoly, D for discretion, and A for accountability, the equation of the Klitgaard (1997) is pertinent for outlining corruption in Bangladesh (Akhter, 2015).

Public officials in Bangladesh have minimal responsibility and a lot of discretion that fuels corruption. Strong accountability systems missing help to preserve a culture of impunity by allowing officials to engage in corrupt activities free from concern about consequences. Reducing administrative corruption calls both political will and the ability to rule effectively. Although general societal reforms and particular anti-corruption policies can help, the prospect of punishment by itself is not enough to prevent the misuse of authority. Confronting institutional incentives that support corruption is crucial;

nevertheless, without incentives for public officials to reform, they will keep gaining from keeping the corrupt status quo (Brinkerhoff 2000).

Strong political will from politicians to support global anti-corruption projects is increasingly emphasized in evaluations of their efficacy (Abdulai, 2009; Pope & Vogl, 2000; Quah, 2013). Sakib (2019) demonstrated especially in the context of Bangladesh the critical relevance of political will in the success or failure of anti-corruption projects. He attributed the failure of isomorphic solutions to fight corruption on inadequate political will among leaders. Unlike Bangladesh, he indicated that nations like Singapore and Hong Kong have been more effective in eliminating corruption as leaders have great political will. Due in great part to differences in the political will of government officials in these countries, Quah (2010) discovered in a comparative analysis that the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in Singapore and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in Hong Kong outperformed the National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC) in Thailand and the Korea Independent Commission Against Corruption (KICAC). Furthermore, a comparative analysis by Ankamah and Khoda (2018) found that political will had a major influence on the different results of Singapore's success and Bangladesh's problems against corruption. Sakib (2019) covered how political interference degraded the 2004 credibility of the Corruption Prevention Committees (CPC). Although the ACC's policy clearly indicates that CPC members cannot be connected to any political party and cannot have a criminal record, the actual selection process usually deviates from this control. Many of the committee members reportedly were chosen depending on their political ties or recommendations from local leaders. This practice compromises the integrity of the CPCs and turns them into institutions mostly shaped by political interests instead of sincere platforms for anti-corruption initiatives (Sakib, 2019). Consequently, members may participate in corrupt behavior themselves or give personal or political priority above their obligations to fight corruption. These ideologically linked CPC members converted their establishments into "lame" ones (Sakib, 2019). Some respondents said that these people sometimes use their positions for personal gain, including getting gifts or favors from public authorities in exchange for quiet over unethical behavior (Sakib, 2019). This environment encourages a corrupt culture, hence erasing public confidence in anti-corruption policies.

Focusing on the functions of the state, the economy, and society, several strategies exist to fight corruption (Michael, 2004). While incorporating media, civil society, the business sector, and foreign bodies, the universalistic approach stresses the requirement of political will and a thorough transformation of state institutions including parliament, the court, and independent anti-corruption organizations. It advocates changes to public service ethics, financial management systems, and electoral procedures. The state-centric strategy emphasizes on changing public financial management, legal framework, economic policies, and openness of public sector operations. Weak political leadership, a disinterested bureaucracy, inadequate accountability systems, and a corrupt anti-corruption agency impede efforts against corruption; the ombudsman remained absent from the governance structure despite repeated attempts (Zafarullah & Siddique, 2001).

Though parliamentary democracy was restored in 1991, Bangladesh's political scene is characterized by strongly ingrained confrontational politics that has encouraged unhealthy competition and a "winner-takes-all" attitude, so enabling the ruling party to monopolize state power, undercut responsibility, and marginalize the opposition in governance (Arfina Osman, 2010).

3. Historical Context

Colonialism has had a tremendous impact on Bangladesh's political institutions. The legacy of British colonial administration contributed to the development of extractive institutions after independence. Instead of promoting inclusive governance or equitable economic progress, these groups were established to extract resources from the broader public. As a result, the historical roots of corruption in Bangladesh may be traced back to colonial legacies that still influence present political activities (Khan, 2015).

The regime (1972-1975) of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was scarred by extensive nepotism and corruption, with his close political associates and family members receiving lucrative positions and financial benefits (Kochanek, 1993). Sheikh Abu Naser who was Sheikh Mujib's brother along with his four sisters reaped enormous benefits from their ties, acquiring fortune through illicit ways (Franda 1982). Awami League leaders exploited the post-war chaos to secure government jobs and engage in illicit activities, creating a troubling legacy of favoritism that influenced future administrations (Kochanek, 1993).

Corruption became institutionalized during General Ziaur Rahman's rule (1977-1981), causing a significant negative impact on public trust and government. Although it is thought that Zia did not personally engage in corrupt activities, his administration is acknowledged for creating an environment conducive to corruption (Khan, 1999). Ziaur Rahman's regime encouraged corruption by employing the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) as a patronage network, resulting in widespread favoritism and nepotism within local party units (Franda, 1982). Despite programs such as the Sawnirvar Gram Sarker to

promote grassroots democracy, his lack of commitment to decentralization and accountability resulted in considerable resource mismanagement, with an estimated 40% of development funding lost to corruption (Kochanek, 1993). Ziaur Rahman's rule established a troubling legacy of normalized corruption in Bangladesh, creating a political environment where public officials could exploit their positions without facing consequences. This era marked a critical turning point, setting a precedent for future administrations to perpetuate patronage networks and corrupt practices.

From 1983 until 1990, General Hossain Mohammad Ershad's dictatorship in Bangladesh was characterized by extensive political corruption, which was fueled by systematic patronage and abuse of power (Blair, 1992). Ershad's government legitimized corruption through patron-client relationships, manipulating the electoral process and utilizing the Election Commission to advance his personal agenda (Kochanek, 1993). In 1982 the 'Upazila' system was introduced which decentralized power and promoted localized networks of corruption (Siddiquee, 1997). Ershad's intimate ties to politics and business, along with claims of personal financial gain, contributed to the criminalization of politics and created a dangerous precedent for future administrations, strengthening Bangladesh's corruption (Kochanek, 1993).

In 1991, the newly elected democratic administration inherited a highly politicized civil service, which had been fostered by Ershad's military rule (1982-1990). Although official recruiting processes, such as written tests, are less impacted by politics, viva voce exams continue to be prone to political prejudice, with the Public Service Commission (PSC) politicized to favor party allegiance. By the BNP's first democratic term (1991-1996), the system had evolved, with all PSC members loyal to the ruling party, assuring political control of the bureaucracy (Arfina Osman, 2010).

Under every regime, the ruling party appears to selectively promote bureaucrats, but the level of politicization reached new extremes during the BNP government (2001-2006). The regime used a "laboratory" approach to identify loyal and disloyal officials, promoting those with "green signals" while sidelining those with "red signals" indicating disloyalty (Arfina Osman, 2010).

The local government was dominated by a common strategy which is to provide insufficient funding to opposition-backed local institutions and diverting the majority of development projects to governing party-supported authorities. Furthermore, programs such as Food for Work (FFW), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), and old age pensions are frequently managed to benefit the ruling party's

followers, rewarding grassroots workers who contributed to electoral triumphs (Arfina Osman, 2010).

The restoration of democracy in the early 1990s heralded a period of competitive clientelism, with two major parties rotating in power. While this system resulted in some economic growth (known as the "Bangladesh paradox"), it also produced significant levels of corruption because both parties participated in clientelist practices to obtain voters' support. The political landscape evolved again following the controversial 2014 elections, ushering in a new age of fragile authoritarianism under the Awami League. This period is distinguished by decreased political competition and greater persecution of opposition groups, which has exacerbated corruption in governmental institutions. The change from competitive clientelism to fragile authoritarianism has worsened corruption while also posing serious hurdles to long-term economic progress. Addressing these issues requires tailored anti-corruption strategies that consider the unique political context and power dynamics at play in Bangladesh's governance landscape (Khan, 2017).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data sources to analyze the nexus between politics and public sector corruption in Bangladesh. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of complex socio-political phenomena, allowing for in-depth exploration of corruption within its real-world context.

4.1 Data Collection

Secondary sources, including investigative reports, newspaper articles, government documents, and peer-reviewed journal articles are the sources for this research. These sources were chosen to provide a comprehensive but detailed overview of public sector corruption and its relationship to political dynamics. Reports from credible international and national watchdog organizations, such as Transparency International, were also incorporated to confirm the accuracy and depth of the material. In addition, historical and legal materials were analyzed to acquire a better knowledge of Bangladesh's institutional and regulatory context regarding anti-corruption activities.

4.2 Data Analysis

The gathered data underwent content analysis using a methodical, interpretative framework. By means of content analysis, this paper investigated textual patterns, themes, and narratives that clarify the link between political connections and corrupt behaviors in public sector organizations. Key themes like "political patronage," "regulatory manipulation," and "institutional corruption," were found and assigned codes to provide understanding of the systems allowing and sustaining

public sector corruption. Particularly in light of financial misconduct and favoritism, specific emphasis was paid to trends of coordination between bureaucratic elites and political leaders.

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Data for this study came from reliable, respected national and international journals to guarantee its validity. Priority was given to using many sources for cross-verification in order to provide a fair and believable image of the sociopolitical aspects of corruption. By reducing prejudices that can result from a single source or viewpoint, triangulation through the use of many secondary data sources increases the validity of this study.

4.4 Limitations

Secondary data analysis has some limits even if it provides insightful information. The dependence on publicly accessible data implies that certain forms of corruption especially those covered by political networks or without media coverage may go unquestioned. Furthermore, the results are prone to the prejudices of media sources or organizational reports; while several data sources help to balance these points of view.

5. FINDINGS

This chapter shows the findings of the research where the focus is on the relationship between politicians and public sector corruption in Bangladesh. Some high-profile cases are analyzed across various sectors like banking, education, health, and power. The findings reveal how political power and influence helps to commit the crime of corruption. The political elites exploit their position for personal gain, creating patronage networks, and the exercise of power and influence. Corruption thrives at the cost of public resources and citizen welfare and thus creating systemic failure of the public institutions.

Bangladesh is a country of corruption since the beginning of its independence. Bangladesh has been constantly placing higher in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) which is created by Transparency International. Figure 1 & 2 shows the CPI scores of Bangladesh from 2001 to 2011 and 2012 to 2023 respectively. From 2001 to 2011 Transparency International measured corruption on scores between 0 to 10. And from 2012 to 2023 the scores varied from 0 to 100. Countries which got lower scores meant that they are more corrupt than the countries which got higher scores. In both these time frame Bangladesh had been a country of low scores meaning that it was a country full of corruption and thus placing it lower than other countries.
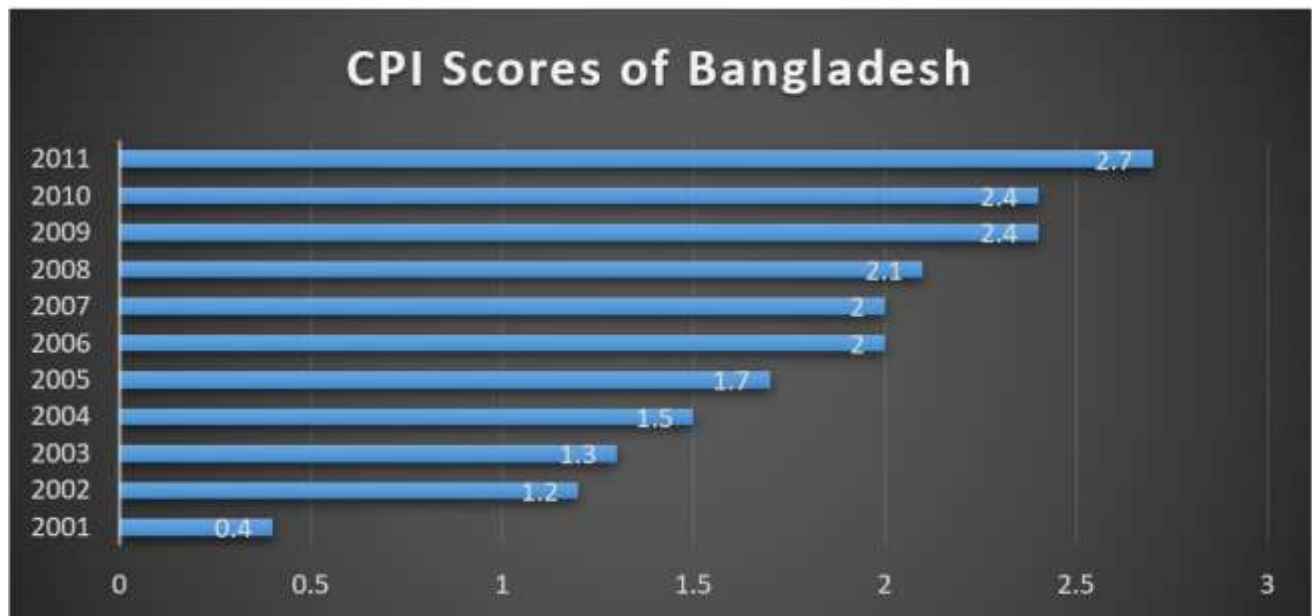

Figure 1: CPI Scores of Bangladesh (2001-2011)
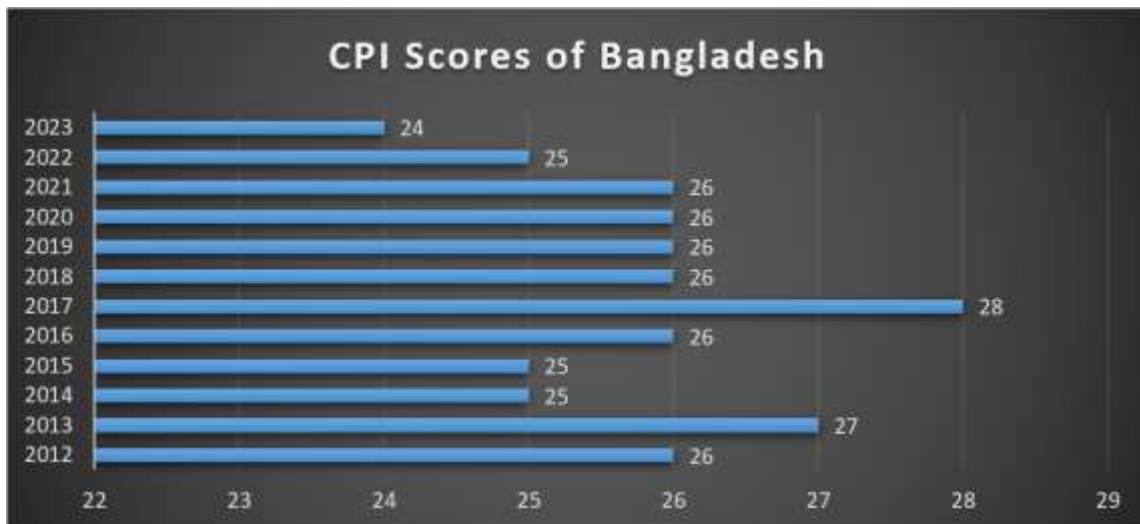**Source: Transparency International**

Figure 2: CPI Scores of Bangladesh (2012-2023)
Source: Transparency International

Bangladesh's rank based on CPI scores is a matter of shame for the people of the country and the government. Since Bangladesh's inclusion in CPI scores by Transparency International in 2001, the country has been securing higher positions of corruption. Figure 3 shows Bangladesh's rank based on CPI scores from 2001 to 2023. From 2001 to 2005, Bangladesh had secured first position continuously which means that the country was the most corrupted one during that period. From 2007 to 2023, the rank of Bangladesh saw ups and downs but not so much because the position did not move up higher than 17 and lower than 7 which means that the country could not improve much to battle corruption and curb it out.

Figure 3: Bangladesh's Rank based on Corruption Perception Index
Source: Transparency International

The following sections will examine specific cases and conduct a sectoral analysis of the manifestations of political corruption, along with its extensive implications for governance, institutional integrity, and public trust.

5.1 Banking Sector
5.1.1 Salman F Rahman

Salman F. Rahman was a close advisor to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He used his political ties to run his shady businesses, most notably through his Beximco company. Because of his political power, he was able to change banks rules and not pay back huge loans without getting in trouble. One big example of his dishonesty was when he drew nine times the amount of money that Janata Bank had paid up in capital, which put the bank's finances at risk. In 2014, he pushed for and gained from loan restructuring policies, which gave him better terms even though he had already missed payments several times. Beximco took out a third of the revised loans

worth Tk 15,000 crore, but they kept not paying back the loans, and state-owned banks like Sonali Bank did nothing to stop them. Salman used his political power to get the central bank to change the rules for sukuk bonds. This let Beximco raise Tk 3,000 crore in a way that raised eyebrows. This unfair impact even went as far as forcing big buyers to take part in the bond sale even though they didn't want to. Despite his known corrupt practices, his political ties have protected him from responsibility, allowing Beximco to grow while hurting the wider economy (The Daily Star, 2024).

Salman F Rahman is the vice-chairman of Beximco Group and used to be Sheikh Hasina's private sector assistant. His companies owe about Tk 36,865 crore to seven banks, four of which are public and three of which are private. Some big loans are to Janata Bank for Tk 23,070 crore and to IFIC Bank for Tk 11,000 crore. Because of his political power, loans were rescheduled many times, which kept late payments from being considered failures. Salman's political ties have caused him to mess with state-owned banks, which has hurt their finances and shown the systemic risks that come with them. His recent arrest highlights the magnitude of his financial misdeeds (Alo & Prince, 2024).

5.1.2 S. Alam Group

One of Bangladesh's major companies, the S. Alam Group, has engaged in certain corrupt behavior; the most severe of which is large money laundering and illicit financial activities. Most notably Union Bank, where it allegedly took TK 180 billion—64% of the bank's total loan portfolio—the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) looked at claims that the group laundered around TK 1,130 billion (about $13 billion) abroad through organized crimes and fraudulent schemes, including fictitious transactions to secure loans without enough collateral from different banks (Sakib, 2024). Moreover, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) found that over Tk 1 trillion had been deposited in accounts linked to S. Alam and his family members at several banks, casting questions on the validity and origins of these money (The South Asian Times, 2024; Shah, 2024). In Singapore and Cyprus S Alam group have allegedly syphoned money through offshore accounts and shell companies which has complicated the investigation into the group's financial operations (The Daily Observer, 2024). These activities draw attention to a concerning relationship between political ties and business behavior, which helps the S. Alam Group to run somewhat free despite allegations of financial misbehavior and corruption.

Political connections of the S. Alam Group have substantially helped it to be able to act corruptly in Bangladesh. These ties have allowed the company to negotiate favorable contracts, evade legal processes, and conduct questionable financial activities with somewhat relative impunity. S Alam group have secured government contracts because of its close ties with the Awami League (The Mirror Asia, 2024). For instance, the company has been working on big government-supported infrastructure projects and energy sector improvements. This agreement has positioned S. Alam as a preferred partner for a range of government operations, therefore avoiding competitive bidding processes that would otherwise guarantee fairness and openness. Political links of the group have also provided access to government subsidies and concessions not enjoyed by less well-connected businesses. S. Alam's unique status has helped him to control fields like edible oil and energy production, thus improving its market position and lowering competition.

Reports state the S. Alam Group convinced authorities to overlook its financial difficulties. Allegations state that the boards of banks connected to the corporation were lending money without enough examination, allowing the organization to withdraw big amounts of money without according to ordinary banking guidelines (The Mirror Asia, 2024). This control of regulatory processes has created a scenario wherein the company may act with minimal accountability. Strong influence of the organization even reaches the judicial system, where it is said to have gotten favorable rulings despite ongoing financial investigations. Investigation against S Alam of bank looting and money laundering which was directed by a High Court order was dismissed, therefore attesting to the degree of political influence over court processes (The Business Standard, 2023).

The S. Alam Group has been accused of tricking financial institutions into granting credit by means of questionable methods like shell corporations and inflated asset evaluations (Sakib, 2024). Reports state that several loans in the names of companies connected to S. Alam's family or local businesses in Chattogram were taken out under suspicion about the legitimacy of the transactions (Rahman, 2024). Alleged debt of Tk 2000 billion (approximately $24 billion) have raised questions over probable money laundering and dishonest activity in the group's financial practices (Shah, 2024). S. Alam allegedly dodged consequences for these debts because of political ties, which let him keep borrowing from banks even with growing outstanding debt.

5.1.3 The Hallmark Corruption Case

The Ruposhi Bangla branch of Sonali Bank between 2010 and 2012, was involved in a scam where around Tk 4,000 crore (about $454 million) was embezzled via fictitious loans to the Hallmark Group and other businesses using fake documentation (Hossain, 2024). Hallmark corruption scandal is an example of the junction of political power, financial fraud, and systematic corruption.

Thanks to high authorities who collaborated with Sonali Bank, the Hallmark Group obtained around TK 27 billion. Often supported by falsified evidence and without appropriate control by bank management, the loans were given under questionable conditions (Hossain, 2024). Investigations found that the fraud included many aides to then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Especially, Syed Modasser Ali, a health affairs consultant, was often cited as having strong links to the Hallmark Group and other bank executives. His participation is a perfect example of how political links may shelter corrupt behavior from scrutiny so that it might grow unchecked without regard for consequences (Salman, 2024).

Coordinating bank personnel who helped loans to be issued using fraudulent documentation enabled the fraud. This scam was enabled in great part by senior management of Sonali Bank, particularly Ruposhi Bangla branch manager AKM Azizur Rahman. Reports show that several officials who tried to reveal the forgeries were quickly moved, implying that politically powerful people blocked their activities (Hossain, 2024; The Business Standard, 2024).

The Hallmark case exposes systematic problems in Bangladesh's banking industry where political ties might affect responsibility and supervision. Absence of solid rules allows well-connected businesses and people to use the system. Many Sonali Bank board members and high-ranking officials, for example, avoided punishment despite strong evidence against them, suggesting a lack of responsibility for influential people (Salman, 2024; The Business Standard, 2024).

Managing director of Hallmark Group, Tanvir Mahmud, his wife Jesmin Islam, and numerous others engaged in the fraud were convicted by a Dhaka court to life imprisonment in March 2024. Emphasizing that individuals who take advantage of public confidence should pay harsh punishments, the court criticized the defendants for wiping out the financial system (The Business Standard, 2024).

Public confidence in the court system is still poor even if some people were finally condemned to life imprisonment for their participation in the fraud. Many people feel that folks with political ties often avoid punishment or get mild treatment. The fact that none of the Sonali Bank board members were prosecuted despite their apparent participation during investigations fuels this impression (Salman, 2024).

5.2 Bureaucracy

Bangladesh's bureaucracy is often accused of corruption, in where even simple operations like acquiring certifications or submitting complaints call for bribes or favors, while more difficult tasks like gaining utility connections or government employment involve great lobbying and significant bribery. This culture, known as 'tadbir', has paralyzed the administration, with progress on tasks often halted unless this form of influence is applied, leading to delays and misplaced files (Anisuzzaman, 1985).

Political influences have historically dominated the Bangladesh government servant hiring process. Political parties have been trying to assemble devoted cadres into the public service from the early days of freedom. For instance, the hiring of the "Tofael Bahini" in 1973 established a standard for selecting politically devoted officials. Under other governments, particularly General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who appointed judges loyal to his rule thereby strengthening political favoritism throughout the bureaucracy, this practice persisted. Civil officers are therefore often seen as pawns of the governing party rather as unbiased public servants (Arfina Osman, 2010).

Under an interview with Afrina Osman (2010), a bureaucrat presented a bleak image of the political meddling in the viva voce test for public service employment under the former BNP government (2001–2006):

During the viva voce of BCS examination the board was supplied with a list of preferred candidates allied to the student wings of BNP and Jamat-e-Islam, accompanied by an instruction to exclude the candidates allied to the student wing of AL, Hindu minority and the pro-independence force (synonymous with AL). Accordingly, in many cases it was seen that despite obtaining higher marks than others, the Hindu minority groups and the offspring of the freedom fighters were disfavored by the members of the viva board, let alone the supporters of the AL.

5.2.1 Motiur Rahman

Senior NBR officer Motiur Rahman was caught in a corruption controversy after his son sought to purchase a sacrifice goat for TK 1.5 million, casting doubt on their inexplicable affluence. This set the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to look into Rahman for money laundering and corruption (Ittefaq, 2024). Senior official Rahman, who joined the government in 1994, was director of Sonali Bank and president of the Customs and Excise Tribunal among other positions. Though he claims to be innocent, his stock market investments and commercial activities have constantly generated questions that have resulted in many Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) investigations over years (Ittefaq, 2024).

Alleged corruption of Rahman includes insider trading. Rahman said he accepted placement shares from firms like Fortune Shoes at pricing below their market value, a habit restricted for a small number of influential people (Islam & Suman, 2024). Using their intimate

information, Rahman and his family bought millions of shares from at least 15 companies—including chemicals, clothing, and drugs—engaging in speculative trading—which government officials are forbidden from doing (Islam & Suman, 2024). Though aware of these deals, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has not yet taken action against Rahman, therefore underscoring regulatory incompetence and the influence of powerful people in influencing the stock market (Habib, 2024).

Rahman also exploited his political relationships to evade being transferred from important roles allowing him to keep participating in unethical behavior. NBR chairman tried many times to reassign him, but Rahman used his contacts with high-ranking officials to overturn these transfer orders. Once in 2007, the then army commander intervened and turned down an effort to transfer him. Another NBR chairman's transfer order for Rahman was refused in 2022, therefore creating a similar situation (The Daily Star, 2024). Rahman avoided transfer until the ACC started looking at his riches even after being named director of Sonali Bank without NBR approval (Ittefaq, 2024).

A Dhaka court ordered the confiscation of four apartments and about 10 acres of land held by Rahman and his family while the ACC probe into his assets progressed. Three of the apartments were registered under his first wife, Laila Kaniz Lucky; the fourth under his second wife, Shammi Akhtar Shibli (Ittefaq, 2024). High-value real estate, resorts, and amusement parks that Rahman had acquired throughout his political career were among the items taken (The Daily Star, 2024).

5.2.2 Benzir Ahmed
From April 2020 to September 2022 Benazir Ahmed was the Inspector General of Police. He has held powerful roles like Director General of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Benazir Ahmed's corruption revolved mostly around the purchase of land in Gopalganj and Madaripur, most of which belonged to underprivileged Hindu households. Local reports claim Benazir used both direct intimidation and indirect persuasion, often approaching landowners and coercing sales of their properties using police personnel. Many victims experienced anxiety; others even left their own nation after separating from their ancestral territory. These land purchases were mostly used to build the luxury resort owned by Benazir's family, Savanna Eco Resort and Natural Park (Islam & Bappi, 2024). One of the strategies utilized in the property purchase was covering the area with sand, therefore making it useless or preventing access. Benazir denied, but residents stated that his strong influence left them little option but to follow (Islam & Bappi, 2024).

Among Benazir's great riches were over 600 bighas of land, opulent homes, and stock in many businesses. He gained much of these riches during his role as IGP. Benazir and his family clearly showed their capacity to control property transactions when they bought four luxury apartments in the Gulshan neighborhood of Dhaka at a price far below the market value. Along with significant savings certificates, the ACC also found Benazir had 33 bank accounts and owned shares in 19 companies (Karim, 2024).

Benazir left Bangladesh in May 2024, during the continuous ACC inquiry. This highlighted even more the political junction that kept him safe. Benazir left the nation without any official interference while being under investigation, therefore generating questions about government facilitation (Ahmed, 2024).

5.2.3 Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal
Former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal had allegations of money laundering, bribery and illegal wealth possession in the corruption case filed against him. Referring to allegedly Tk 527.42 crore in suspicious transactions across many bank accounts, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed five cases against him, his wife, children, and personal assistant. Kamal possessed assets worth Tk 60.56 crore that exceeded his known income, with Tk 55.92 crore linked to suspicious transactions in eight accounts which was revealed by investigation. And the bribery and corruption had happened in recruitment processes within the Ministry of Home Affairs. The ACC's probe also connected significant syndicate (Kamal-Harun syndicate) engaging in unethical activity with appointments and law enforcement agency transfers. It is alleged that no police appointments to district or significant posts were made without the syndicate's influence and approval (Rony, 2024).

Kamal used his authority as Home Minister to create a patronage network encouraging corruption by giving political loyalty first priority over merit, therefore generating bribes for promotions and significant positions (Abdullah, 2024; The Business Standard, 2024). High-ranking Home Ministry officials and bureaucrats within this network handled personal benefit under which dedication to the Awami League was occasionally connected (The Business Standard, 2024; Abdullah, 2024). The focus on respecting loyalty created an environment where corruption was abundant. Allegations against Kamal revolve on charging big sums for choosing police personnel to crucial posts, notably Superintendents of Police (SPs) (Ahmed, 2024; The Daily Sun, 2024). Alleged to have accumulated millions of billions of takas via illegal recruitment, transfers, promotions, and other commissions, the Kamal-Harun syndicate Demand for bribes for the appointment of Superintendent of Police in various locations varied from Tk 80 lakhs to Tk 2 crores. Reports state that no police

appointments to district or significant positions were made without syndicate approval and influence (Rony, 2024). Syndicates centered on powerful political figures expose the pervasive corruption in the political structure. This conduct demonstrates how political power might be exploited for personal profit when those in charge use their positions to create a system wherein bribery becomes considered as usual for ensuring important positions.

Maintaining their political position and personal wealth depends on Kamal and his cronies engaging in corrupt activities. Apart from personal investments, the assets they accumulated—such as land and properties—provided methods of exerting influence and building strategic connections within the political scene (The Business Standard, 2024; Ahmed, 2024). Kamal's money shows how effectively political capital might be derived from financial wealth. Making use of his wealth, he could ensure loyalty and influence within multiple political systems, thereby strengthening his grip on power.

Kamal's extreme corruption developed a circle of pals benefiting from his wealth and privileges. Supported by the same system he abused, this connection assured him that he could function with relative impunity (Ahmed, 2024; Abdullah, 2024). The inability of authorities such as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to hold him responsible reveals a flawed legal system in which political relationships cover dishonest officials from scrutiny. Political environments in which controlling parties supervise regulatory agencies as the ACC usually lack accountability for influential people involved in corruption. Kamal's impunity for years was political protection; the ACC only began to investigate him after the collapse of the government, implying delayed action driven by political concerns (The Business Standard, 2024). This highlights how political influence may compromise the effectiveness of regulatory body autonomy and anti-corruption legislation.

5.2.4 Hawa Bhaban

A major case study carried out in order to get greater knowledge of the link between politics and corruption in Bangladesh is Hawa Bhaban, the political headquarters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) during its control from 2001 to 2006 (Sarker, 2023). Following their victory in the elections held in October 2001, the BNP initiated the formation of a coalition government that included Jamaat-e-Islami. During the time when Khaleda Zia was serving as Prime Minister, her son Tarique Rahman assumed the role of de facto power behind Hawa Bhaban. This allowed him to exercise influence over a number of ministries and activities inside the government.

With many accusations tying Hawa Bhaban to bribery, political manipulation, and major criminal activity, it is often used as a symbol of corruption and abuse of power throughout the BNP's tenure. Allegedly channeled to Hawa Bhaban, reports show civil service officials paid bribes to get promotions or reinstatements. Close friend of Rahman, Harris Chowdhury was reported for accepting bribes from businesses looking for government contracts; some of these money went to Hawa Bhaban (The Daily Star, 2009). Business contracts were also affected; businesses looking for government bids had to pay bribes, and a significant amount apparently flowed to Hawa Bhaban. Close friend of Tarique Rahman, Giasuddin Al Mamun reportedly helped greatly with this procedure (Kabir, 2023).

Often circumventing official government channels, Hawa Bhaban was regarded as an "alternate powerhouse," where important political choices were taken. Its impact reached even the results of elections. Allegations state that the BNP used intimidation and pressure to control the voting process during the 2001 elections, therefore guaranteeing favorable outcomes even when public support was lost. Over $200 million was found laundered during this era, linking acquaintances of Hawa Bhaban and high-ranking BNP executives. International interest in this incident prompted investigations by foreign authorities like the FBI (BSS NEWS, 2024).

Aiming to control voting results and discredit the caretaker administration headed by Latifur Rahman, Tarique Rahman developed Hawa Bhaban as a substitute power center before the 2001 elections. With an eye especially on the Awami League, the BNP aimed to guarantee favorable election outcomes by controlling state machinery and crushing dissent by means of repression (Kabir, 2023). The BNP's strategy was changing legislation and using election procedures to support their party. They created a list of fictitious voters and controlled the Election Commission, for example, therefore enabling their triumph even with a smaller proportion of the public vote (Kabir, 2023).

Following her victory in the 2001 elections, Hawa Bhaban essentially replaced the formal administration run by Khaleda Zia as the true power center. By means of corrupt tactics involving extortion from companies seeking government contracts, Tarique Rahman was able to exercise major influence over several ministries and state activities, hence influencing appointments and business operations (Kabir, 2023; Manik, 2009). Following the 2001 elections, Hawa Bhaban was linked in planning violence directed at minority groups and Awami League supporters. This systematic terror campaign sought to entwine the BNP's supremacy over the political scene even further (Kabir, 2023). The objectives of the campaign were to unite authority and eradicate resistance. Moreover, connected

to many well-known conspiracies, like the notorious grenade assault at an Awami League conference in 2004, Hawa Bhaban has also been connected to several additional conspiracies. Liton *et al.,* (2018) and Manik (2009) claim that important people are believed to have attended meetings at Hawa Bhaban in order to organize this assault. This emphasizes their responsibility in organizing political violence meant against competitors.

5.3 Power sector
5.3.1 Summit Group
Head of the Summit Group, Muhammed Aziz Khan is strong in Bangladesh's energy landscape and intimately linked with political elites, notably former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. His impact on the national energy infrastructure largely explains his great fortune, which ranks 41st among the richest billionaires in Singapore. Over the last 15 years, Khan has created more than 20 power plants with 3,000 MW capacity. His political ties, especially with the Awami League, helped him to traverse a system beset with nepotism and corruption—especially help to explain his success (Raana, 2024).

Allegedly, Khan altered energy policies to serve Summit Group, particularly with regard to the building of fast-paced rental and commercial power plants. These power plants were often useless initiatives and produced long-term contracts, higher service costs, and significant tax exemptions. Summit Power Limited increased its dominance over the energy sector by landing contracts without competitive bidding (Raana, 2024).

Under supervision of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), Summit Group ventured in gasoline imports. Apparently manipulating BPC during early discussions, Summit obtained independent import rights despite BPC's monopoly. Although BPC had to pay greater import taxes, this technique helped the company to avoid paying taxes on gasoline imports, thus skews the competitive environment (Raana, 2024).

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has recently undertaken investigations revealing corruption in three important power projects. Tk 390 crore were cost overrun at the Barisal Coal-based Power Plant, Banshkhali SS Power Plant, and Matarbari LNG-based Power Plant. This methodical collaboration increased construction costs, therefore affecting the overall functioning of these significant infrastructure projects (The Business Standard, 2022). The corruption and incompetence in these projects have generated electricity rates well above global rates. For instance, the Barisal and Banshkhali plants charge Tk 6.61 and Tk 6.77 respectively, respectively, compared to rates in neighbouring countries like India and China, which range from Tk 3.46 to Tk 5.15 per unit.

In 2016 Khan's name was involved in the Panama Papers scandal which has raised questions about financial misconduct implying suspected money laundering. Political pressure ended inquiries; this represented the security his ties to the Awami League offered him (Islam, 2024).

Summit Group was also accused of boosting oil import expenses and of over-invoicing to conceal funds abroad. Allegedly, earnings from these operations were directed via a company incorporated in Singapore, therefore highlighting Khan's international scope of corruption (Raana, 2024). Especially his brother Muhammad Faruk Khan, a senior party figure, Khan's close links to the Awami League leadership allowed him to boost the influence of Summit Group. Political friends of his commercial endeavors were often granted business employment, therefore creating a patronage and favoritism network shielding Summit from accountability (Raana, 2024).

5.3.2 Niko Corruption Case
The corruption charge against Niko Resources, a Canadian company with operations in Bangladesh mostly related to gas exploration contracts, centers on its activities in Bangladesh and especially those involving contracts. Foreign experts found Niko not qualified from a technical and financial aspect when it initially tried to enter the Bangladeshi energy sector in 1997. This happened during the period of Awami League rule. Conversely, Niko was able to organize a joint venture between Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX) in 2003, which gave them access to significant gas reserves (Gupta, 2024). This happened after the 2001 BNP arrival to government. The lawsuit clarifies a complex maze of corruption involving top officials of the BNP political party. Investigations carried out by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) revealed Niko had engaged in bribery to get his contracts (Ghani, 2018).

The Niko corruption case has significant financial ramifications due to the estimated $1.06 billion in mismanagement and environmental harm caused by Niko's activities. The blowouts at gas fields not only caused enormous financial losses, but they also brought attention to the dangers of awarding contracts based on political connections rather than expertise. This scenario highlights how extensive consequences of political dynamics-driven corruption might be on national resources and economic stability (Ghani, 2018; Gupta, 2024).

Alleging huge state financial losses resulting from their connections with Niko, Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) sued several BNP leaders, including former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. While a Bangladeshi court judged its contracts unlawful

on corruption grounds, a Canadian court fined Niko over CAD 9.5 million for its unethical behavior (Ghani, 2018).

Niko's activities were surrounded in corruption by a sophisticated network of bribes connecting powerful government leaders to unethical corporate practices. According to investigations, Niko paid off powerful authorities via middlemen in order to get contracts. For example, close friend of Tarique Rahman, Giasuddin Al Mamun served as a sub-agent for Niko and acknowledged to being paid to help the firm run in Bangladesh (Ghani, 2018; Gupta, 2024.). Such agreements show how political leaders used their positions to get payments from foreign businesses looking for contracts, therefore normalizing corruption within the political system.

Powerful political players helping Niko to engage in unethical behavior seriously compromised Bangladesh's regulatory control. Tasked with looking at corruption, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) struggled with political influence and intervention (Ghani, 2018). High-profile people connected to the Niko case often used slow-moving strategies to avoid responsibility, therefore highlighting how political authority may impede anti-corruption initiatives and impede justice (Iftekharuzzaman, 2020; Kabir, 2023). This atmosphere of impunity allowed corrupt behavior to grow uncontrolled, hence strengthening corruption in public institutions.

5.4 Education Sector
5.4.1 Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel
Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, the son of former Chattogram mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and a well-known Awami League member, became the deputy minister for education in 2018. Within a year he also acquired control of Premier University. Originally sponsored by Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), with an expenditure of around Tk 430 million for land, building, and wages, the institution was founded in 2001 when his father was the mayor. Despite the public funding and CCC's ownership, Mohibul used his political influence to take over the university, with his family controlling the trustee board. This board includes Mohibul's mother, brother, and controversial businessmen from the S Alam Group. This acquisition came at the same time the institution made a profit of more than TK 10 million annually. Mohibul positioned himself as chairman of the trustee board, displacing the mayor, and seized complete control even though CCC had significantly made investments in the institution. September saw the CCC formally claim possession after the collapse of the Awami League administration. Since then, Mohibul Hasan has disappeared and is under many legal claims, including murder. Despite public financing, his dominance over the institution exposes the abuse of

political power for personal gain (Chowdhury & Ghose, 2024).

5.4.2 Dipu Moni
Former Bangladeshi Minister of Education Dipu Moni is said to have engaged in allegedly improper land purchase connected to the projected Chandpur Science & Technology University. Prominent people connected to Moni, including head of the Lakshmipur union Selim Khan, have been charged with purchasing 62.5 acres of land at rates up to 20 times the official value. These people bought the land before formal government authorization for acquisition, then sold it to the government at outrageous rates. Local citizens have recorded cases of forced land acquisition coupled with supposedly insufficient compensation, suggesting a propensity of power abuse and exploitation. A district administration analysis found that this project may cost the government extra TK 3.59 billion, unlike a reasonable projection of TK 1.94 billion. Notwithstanding denials from the accused, even local Awami League officials have branded this "land acquisition trade" criminal profiteering connected with the building of the institution illegitimate (Mostafa, 2022).

Under Dipu Moni, Bangladesh's educational system has been riddled with corruption—particularly with relation to the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) and other teaching positions. Claims show astonishingly high levels of bribery for positions ranging from 50 lakhs for college heads to up to two crore takas required for VC appointments. Referred to as Tipu, Moni's brother is said to be central in this corrupt recruiting system, coordinating sales of instructional roles for between two lakhs and 20 lakhs and managing transfers. According to anonymous reports, landing a principalship at Mirpur might call for a payment of 55 lakhs. This widespread corruption in the education system stands out from past norms, in which such money transactions were rare in VC appointments (Daily Bangladesh, 2024).

5.5 Health Sector
National Household Survey-2007 shows that while 44.7% of Bangladeshi respondents had visited health institutions in the last year, 41.8% of them had encountered numerous sorts of corruption, including bribery and neglect (Knox, 2009). Among the typical dishonest practices in the medical industry were doctors invoicing additional fees for prescriptions, transferring patients to private clinics, and asking extra money for tests at public hospitals. These unethical behaviors substantially impair the legitimacy of public health services and lower public trust in the government (Knox, 2009).

5.5.1 Zahid Malek

Benefiting from his strong relationships to influential political people, Zahid Malek was Minister of Health and Family Welfare for two consecutive administrations. Malek's corrupt behavior peaked during the COVID-19 epidemic, when immediate medical supply needs arose. Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) report exposed significant health sector corruption including the supply of inferior PPE and masks at outrageous costs. Working with top health ministry officials and commercial companies like as JMI Group, Malek reportedly planned fictitious importation of vital medical supplies, therefore benefitting from inflated costs and inferior products (The Country Today, 2024).

Apart from wrongdoing connected to COVID-19, Malek is suspected of influencing other spheres of the health ministry. From the acquisition of medical equipment and services in hospitals all throughout Bangladesh to recruiting and promotion anomalies, their efforts included everything. Malek amassed enormous riches by using the weaknesses in the health system for both financial and personal benefit via a well-run syndicate (The Country Today, 2024). Investigations found Malek established multiple companies using his political clout, usually fronting his family. Allegedly established on earnings from illicit operations were businesses such Sunlife Insurance Company Limited and Bangladesh Thai Aluminum Limited. Family-owned Sunlife Insurance has also been linked to fraud charges including money theft and neglect of policyholders (The Country Today, 2024).

Former Health Minister Zahid Malek and his family had around 6,053 percent of land in Manikganj, worth at hundreds of crores of taka, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC.). Serving many times as a member of parliament under the Awami League administration, Malek utilized his political influence to gather this fortune via corrupt practices. Using their positions, Malek, his son Rahat Malek, and daughter Cynthia Malek bought large tracts of property, said the ACC. Government projects, most notably a delayed manufacturing project in Manikganj that would have benefitted their land holdings, coincided with these purchases.

Malek's activities including his participation in medical supply chains, government procurement manipulation, and recruiting are being investigated by the ACC and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU). His political allegiance to the governing party gave his syndicate cover for these actions, allowing it to evade responsibility for years. His election affidavits reveal a clear discrepancy between his claimed income and his illegal profits, which rose more than 10 times in only 15 years (Kaler Kantho, 2024).

5.6 Other Sectors
5.6.1 Saifuzzaman Chowdhury

Despite earning just $13,000-year, close political ally of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, former Land Minister of Bangladesh, established a luxury real estate empire worth over $500 million in places like London, Dubai, and New York. His political power and ties allowed him to avoid Bangladesh's currency limits, which limit citizens to take only $12,000 out of the country yearly, and he failed to register these significant foreign assets as required under the Bangladesh constitution. Based on I-Unit investigation, Chowdhury purchased 360 homes in the UK alone since 2016, raising concerns about money laundering. His political history shielded him from public scrutiny until Hasina left; thereafter, Bangladeshi authorities stopped his bank accounts and looked into his laundering of "thousands of crore taka" (hundreds of millions of dollars) abroad.

Chowdhury worked with a network of London-based experts including Charles Douglas Solicitors LLP, Paresh Raja from Market Financial Solutions, and DBS Bank's Rahul Marde—who helped him secure and refinance property loans. These advisers said that despite anti-money laundering laws identifying high-ranking politicians like Chowdhury as high-risk people due to the use of stolen state funds or bribes, Chowdhury's money came from respectable businesses outside Bangladesh. Chowdhury said the wealth originated from long-standing companies in the UAE, the US, the UK, not from illegal activities in Bangladesh, thereby defending himself. But after Hasina's government fell apart, Bangladeshi authorities began investigating claims that Chowdhury had amassed enormous riches by dishonest means. Referring the investigation as a politically motivated "witch-hunt," Chowdhury departed the country in August; yet, the sheer size of his wealth and lack of transparency hint to significant financial misconduct linked with his political position (Al Jazeera, 2024).

5.6.2 Zia Orphanage Trust Case

Allegations against former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Khaleda Zia, about the theft of money meant for orphan welfare from a trust set under her late husband's name, constitute the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case. Initiated by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2011, the lawsuit claims that Khaleda Zia and three associates stole over 31.54 million taka (about $375,000) from the trust (Liton & Halder, 2018). Convicted in 2018 on allegations pertaining to the Zia Orphanage Trust case, where she was accused of abusing money meant for charitable use. She got a total term of 17 years across many instances, including a ten-year sentence. In this one, following an appeal procedure where her original five-year sentence was doubled by a higher court (Liton & Sarkar, 2018). Her acts during her

time as Prime Minister were said in the court's ruling to constitute an abuse of authority (Liton & Halder, 2018). Many people and political experts see these judicial processes as part of a larger Awami League attempt to quell opposition and unite political power. The BNP has often alleged that these prosecutions are acts of "political vengeance" meant to keep Zia out of politics and lessen the impact of her party (Tipu, 2018). Released on August 6, 2024, Khaleda Zia followed her opponent Sheikh Hasina out to India a day earlier.

The Zia Orphanage issue is inextricably linked to the bitter political dispute between Awami League and BNP. Bangladesh's court system has come under fire for being used as a weapon against political opponents. Khaleda Zia's supporters argue that the charges against her are techniques employed by the then-ruling party to eliminate competition before of elections, rather than genuine efforts at justice (Al Jazeera, 2024). She has been accused by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of misappropriating cash meant for orphans, among other politically motivated manoeuvres rather than objective legal proceedings (The Business Standard, 2020; Liton & Sarkar, 2018). Released from home imprisonment on August 6, 2024, Khaleda Zia followed the ouster of her long-time adversary, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, amid general demonstrations (Al Jazeera, 2024). Her release after the political change casts questions on the legitimacy of the case as it implies that political intentions influenced the court system. As political leaders use the judicial system to target competitors and pay off debts, this weaponising of the legal process impedes justice and encourages corruption.

5.6.3 The Janata Tower Case

A major corruption scandal in Bangladesh, the Janata Tower case linked prominent political figures including former first lady Raushan Ershad and President HM Ershad. Beginning in 1991, this trial emphasized the extent of political corruption under Ershad's leadership, particularly addressing illegal activity involving the development and ownership of Janata Tower in Dhaka (bdnews24.com, 2008).

The Supreme Court upheld a High Court ruling in November 2008 confirming fines and jail sentences imposed on the defendants, including HM Ershad, first condemned to five years in prison, Ershad's sentence was then lowered to two years along with a hefty fine of TK 5.50 crore. Raushan and the others named were fined TK 10,000; non-payment will result in a two-year jail term. Reversing previous High Court decision meant to transfer Janata Tower to a consortium led by Shukur Ali Pradhan, the court decided that it will remain designated as government property. This verdict reaffirmed the government's hold on the property and continued to underline the legacy of corruption during Ershad's tenure (bdnews24.com, 2008).

6. DISCUSSION

Politics should work for the people. The people of a country give their votes to the politicians they prefer and think that they can do something to turn their life in a better way. But in the case of Bangladesh, we see the complete opposite to the expectation of the people. And sometimes the people cannot give their votes because of the rigged elections. The right to vote is often hijacked by the corrupt politicians. To add to the sorrow of the people they even exploit their power and extend their hand to corrupt the public sectors of the country.

The findings of this research point out three prime motivations that drive the politicians or their associates to engage in corrupt practices in Bangladesh. Those are the pursuit of monetary gain, to create a patronage network, and the grasp of power and influence. These factors are closely connected to the country's political and social scenario thus creating an environment where corruption not only gets normalized but also becomes essential to sustain the political and economic influence of a country. To address the root causes of corruption and to eradicate them, we need to understand these factors and motivations.

6.1 Monetary Gain

Driven by the possibility of accumulating riches far beyond their official pay, political leaders involved in corrupt activities have a major incentive in monetary gain. Often showing itself in the banking and power industries, where politicians use their positions to drain public money for personal benefit, the drive for financial enrichment shows itself in other spheres. The case of Salman F. Rahman, for example, shows how a political person uses his clout to get favorable loan conditions, build fortune by loan defaults, and support state projects under dubious pretext. Politicians guarantee financial advantages with little responsibility by grabbing large amounts of money from banks, especially from state-owned companies. This phenomenon not only strains the public sector but also distorts funds from vital development projects, therefore compromising the national economy.

Moreover, the educational field shows how financial incentives inspire corruption. Political leaders engaged in higher education institutions such as Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury's influence over Premier University showcase the manner in which financial success comes first over public service and educational excellence. Politicians use educational institutions as means of income; their family and friends may gain from tuition and other fees, therefore strengthening the financial attractiveness of political corruption.

6.2 Creation of Patronage Networks

The second factor that motivates the politicians to engage in corruption is the creation and maintenance of patronage networks. These networks enable

politicians to reward loyalists, secure future support, and establish a network of dependent allies thus consolidate political power. The patronage systems in Bangladesh are mostly evident in appointment and procurement process. Politicians create a network of loyalists who rely on them for job security and career advancement. This process not only consolidates the power of the politicians but also creates a cycle of dependence and loyalty among civil servants, businesspersons, and other stakeholders.

The healthcare sector provides a stark example of this patronage-driven corruption, as politicians appoint loyalists to key positions within the ministry. Zahid Malek's actions during his tenure as Health Minister reflect the entrenched nature of these patronage networks. By facilitating the appointments and promotions of loyal individuals within the health sector, Malek created a network that enabled him to manipulate health resources and procurement processes without opposition. These networks of loyal officials serve to reinforce politicians' influence, shielding them from scrutiny and creating an environment in which corruption can flourish.

Additionally, during the time that the BNP was in power, the patronage system was used in the instance of Hawa Bhaban in order to channel money from companies who were looking for contracts into the realm of politics. This network not only allowed politicians to get financial support, but it also made certain that loyal people were placed in positions of strategic importance. It is via the consolidation of this network of supporters that the political elite are able to ensure their control over essential sectors, so eroding transparency and contributing to a culture of government that is not responsible to others.

6.3 Exercise of Power and Influence

Beyond patronage networks and financial benefit, the need to exercise and maintain political power and influence drives corruption three-fold. Using their positions, political leaders project control and keep power over state resources, therefore asserting domination over public and private sectors. Politicians clearly show this drive in how they use administrative and regulatory systems, thereby enabling them to control policy, supersede legal limitations, and so maintain their hegemony within the political system.

For example, Dipu Moni's claimed manipulation of land acquisition at Chandpur Science & Technology University shows the use of power to influence resources and decision-making procedures in the education sector. Moni showed how political leaders put their power above the moral use of public resources by helping her allies to purchase property at outrageous rates. This kind of control not only shows personal benefit but also acts as a declaration of influence over the sectors and institutions that should preferably stay objective and public-serving.

As the Niko corruption case shows, political leaders also utilize their authority to neutralize such challenges. In this case, high-ranking officials were able to block regulatory control and enable favorable agreements for foreign businesses in return for cash payments. This exploitation of regulatory authorities points to a more advanced degree of control in which institutional integrity is subordinated to power wielding skills. Establishing themselves as gatekeepers of state resources helps political leaders confirm their supremacy within the political system, therefore creating a culture in which corruption becomes a strategy for preserving power.

7. Recommendations

Overcoming political corruption in Bangladesh requires a multifarious transformation. These recommendations aim to enhance accountability, increase transparency, and limit the misuse of political power within public institutions.

7.1 Strengthen Financial Oversight and Transparency Mechanisms

Strong financial oversight policies are required to combat money-driven corruption, particularly in banking, healthcare, and education where corruption is very prevalent. Clear audits of public projects and a combined database of government contracts could help to reduce financial misbehavior. Transparency and a controlled public procurement process including competitive bidding will help to eliminate financial advantage and prejudice. Public release of findings should come after regular independent audits. Moreover, public officials should report their assets and financial interests before, during, and after their terms of work.

7.2 Reformation of Public Sector Recruitment and Promotion Systems

To reduce corruption caused by patronage networks, it is essential to implement merit-based recruitment and promotion policies within the public sector. This will ensure that choices are based on merit rather than politics and stop patronage from dictating public resources. Open recruitment and standardized hiring policies might help to reduce political prejudice in the public sectors. Establishing an unbiased organization to oversee important appointments especially in the fields of health and education could help to eradicate favoritism and increase professionalism. Establishing secure, anonymous whistleblower reporting mechanisms might also inspire government personnel to reveal political activity without fear of retaliation. These processes must to be safeguarded by legislation, and reports should be swiftly examined by autonomous regulatory entities.

7.3 Independence of Regulatory and Anti-Corruption Bodies

Absence of power for regulatory bodies such as the Anti-Corruption Commission fuels general corruption in Bangladesh. These agencies must be politically autonomous if we are to have efficient responsibility and oversight. Laws should guarantee operational and financial independence of the ACC. This may include open selection of ACC officials, guarantees of political neutrality, and provision of agency resources required for thorough investigations. Strengthening judicial independence would help to lower political influence on legal processes. Separate courts for corruption investigations might preserve objectivity and discourage political elites from shunning accountability.

7.4 Citizen Engagement and Civil Society Empowerment

Citizen participation and a strong civil society is needed for transparency and accountability of civil servants. Invite public involvement in government and help them to demand responsibility in order to challenge political elites that are corrupt. Working together, government and civil society should educate the people on the detrimental consequences of corruption. Programs teaching individuals their rights and how to expose corruption might help to foster openness.

7.5 Stronger Punitive Measures for Corruption

Strict punishments for individuals found guilty of corruption are crucial to discourage politicians and public officials from participating in dishonest behavior. Strong deterrents made from effective punitive policies underline that corruption will not be accepted. Clearly defined sentencing policies for corruption offenses especially for high-ranking officials would help to establish responsibility. Policies on sentencing should include actions to recover pilfers as well as penalties and jail sentences. One way to discourage corruption may be to provide a publicly available register of those found guilty. Promoting public responsibility and openness, this register should record the kind of infractions committed, fines issued, and any recovered assets.

7.6 Technology for Greater Transparency and Accountability

Digital technology makes information more available and allows real-time monitoring of public sector actions, improving openness and reducing corruption. E-governance systems may improve service delivery and reduce bribery and favoritism. For instance, a public procurement internet platform available to all stakeholders may reveal bidding procedures and contract outcomes. Blockchain technology in public financial transactions may monitor and safeguard public cash, decreasing misappropriation. Blockchain's immutability makes fund manipulations visible.

8. CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is beset with corruption since its independence back in 1971. Corruption has grasped several public sectors in the country. Through detailed case studies, it is evident that corruption has a lot to do with the political influence in Bangladesh. Politicians are so much involved with corruption that it has not only broken the public trust in state institutions but also disrupts essential services. Political elites exploit their power and positions for personal benefit which ultimately impact the development negatively. The lack of accountability and regulatory oversight allows corruption to flourish. Public institutions become places of political exploitation and profit for the corrupt politicians. Citizens try to battle the situation in which quality of education is diminished, healthcare system is compromised, utility costs are inflated but it only leads them to more disappointment. Bangladesh needs to take a comprehensive approach to battle this corruption which is heavily caused and backed by the corrupt politicians. Strengthening anti-corruption commission, enhancing transparency and accountability in governance, and promoting citizen engagement are some of the ways to combat corruption. Only by creating an environment which promotes accountability and integrity, the country can hope to rebuild trust in the public institutions and guide the way for sustainable development.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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