

Only a little progress in fighting corruption

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As per corruption index 2008, published worldwide by Transparency International Bangladesh has been the 10th most corrupted Country among some 180 countries listed in the index. The good thing is that Bangladesh has climbed up three places and the bad thing is that it is still perceived as one of the most corrupted Countries in the world. The Chairman of TIB cited the following reasons for lack of significant improvement in tackling corruption: parliament not working, graft cases struck in the judiciary, civil society not active in supporting anti-corruption, no advances in institutional reforms, inefficiency in investigating graft cases and finally government failing to aggressively follow-up graft cases. Doubtless the report will initiate considerable debate coming in for considerable criticism from some quarters and praise from others but such debates happen every year without making any affective contribution towards reducing corruption in the Country. The hard reality is that our people have come to accept bribery, extortion and graft as the usual way of getting about life and living and that is why inspite of massive expenditures on mass awareness campaigns against corruption by the ACC, the TIB and others, little if any awareness has been raised and the Chairman TIB is forced to lament the lack of "civil society" participation in anti-corruption. The Chairman TIB is being rather naïve in expecting the civil society's active participation against corruption because members of the so-called "civil society" are not only themselves part of the nexus of corruption but are also its chief beneficiaries and so, they have no reasons to take a stand against corruption; on the contrary the "civil society" would much rather see corruption flourish and continue to provide them with wealth and power. As far as the beleaguered populace is concerned they know that the State they had fought and died for has long been hijacked by a political, economic and social system against which they are getting increasingly powerless and therefore they remain apathetic to everything the "system" does or does not do. The "system" has left them with no options but with the single imperative of survival and to survive it is necessary to either bribe and to submit to extortion or to accept bribe and extort oneself. Much as one would like to overlook these realities one cannot; one may lament the inroads that corruption have made into our lives daily but one is powerless, has been made powerless to do anything against it and so, one continues to live with it, the best way one can.