

# Policy Brief

National Integrity  
System Assessment  
Bangladesh

## INFORMATION COMMISSION



TRANSPARENCY  
INTERNATIONAL  
BANGLADESH

*Social movement against corruption*

## Information Commission

Debates regarding the right to information have been gathering momentum in civil society advocacy, public discourse and media coverage for quite a while in Bangladesh. The concern was subsequently taken up by major political parties in their election campaigns. These various efforts culminated in the enactment of The Right to Information Act in 2009 (henceforth the RTI Act), one of the most significant pieces of legislations passed by the Bangladesh Parliament. Pursuant to this law, the Information Commission was set up in 2009 for receiving, inquiring into and disposing of complaints relating to the right to information. The structure, composition and functions of the Information Commission are clearly spelt out in the RTI ACT 2009. The Commission is composed of a Chief Information Commissioner, who is essentially the Chief Executive of the Commission, and two other Commissioners. The Commission has the administrative support of a Secretary and a select number of officers and employees.

The Information Commission plays a critical role in promoting the right to information; however, its ability to effectively play its oversight role depends on a host of factors, such as, its mandate, independence, availability of resources and its relationship with the public authorities they oversee. While the Commission started off well, it has not been quite as successful in coordinating all RTI-related activities in the country and identifying the challenges facing both the demand and supply sides of the RTI law, and find ways of meeting them.

### Strengths

- Engagement in promotional/communication activities.
- Increasing number of requests/appeals for information received and processed.
- Adequate financial resources available.

## Weaknesses

- Government control over staff recruitment impedes independence.
- Concerns over capacity of top leadership to strengthen the work of the Information Commission.
- Lack of personnel with specialised knowledge and skills.
- Under-utilisation of resources and staff positions.
- The law is silent on issues of asset declaration, financial gratification, partisan political activities, gifts and hospitality in relation to Commissioners.
- Lack of proactive initiative to seek information on matters that may be potentially embarrassing or uncomfortable for the government.

## Recommendations

- The capacity of the top leadership of the Information Commission must be strengthened in terms of requisite knowledge, experience and skills and ability to effectively play their oversight role.
- Initiatives must be taken to increase the visibility of the Information Commission and enhance the capacity of its personnel to harness their skills for effective discharge of their role and functions.
- Legal provisions must be introduced to ensure mandatory asset declaration by Commissioners and prohibition on financial gratification, partisan political activities, gifts and hospitality.
- The Information Commission must undertake research on RTI, impediments, openness, technologies, social needs, and public perceptions, so that it can keep pace with the changes taking place at home and beyond.



## About Policy Brief Series

One of the key strategic areas of TIB's research has always been the institutions of democracy and specialized pillars of governance and accountability, which constitute the National Integrity System (NIS), a collective of institutions and practices that are crucial to maintaining integrity and accountability in government, non-government and private sector. The NIS in Bangladesh broadly consists of the following institutions: Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, Public Administration (bureaucracy), Local Government, Police (law enforcement agency), Comptroller and Auditor General (supreme audit institution), Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Political Parties, Civil Society, Media, and Business.

TIB has conducted a series of research, surveys and diagnostic studies on many such institutions, by which it has not only created demand, but also catalysed a number of significant legal, institutional and policy changes. Against this background, this policy brief series attempts to diagnose and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the NIS in Bangladesh and recommend implementable measures to strengthen these institutions.

---

This policy brief draws on *National Integrity System Assessment Bangladesh 2014* available at: <http://ti-bangladesh.org/nicsa/2014/en/>

Policy Brief 28/September 2014

© Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)



TRANSPARENCY  
INTERNATIONAL  
BANGLADESH

*Social movement against corruption*

House # 141, Road # 12, Block # E

Banani, Dhaka 1213, Bangladesh

Phone: +880-2-9862041, 8826036, 9887884, Fax: +880-2-9884811

E-mail: [info@ti-bangladesh.org](mailto:info@ti-bangladesh.org), Website : [www.ti-bangladesh.org](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh](https://www.facebook.com/TIBangladesh)