Policy Brief

National Integrity System Assessment Bangladesh

POLITICAL PARTIES

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Social movement against corruption

Political Parties

There are more than 40 registered Political Parties in Bangladesh as revealed by records until 2013. There is an elaborate legal framework that provides the basis of democratic functioning of Political Parties. However, compliance with the legal framework is weak and in many cases, non-existent. Political culture in Bangladesh is characterized by confrontation and intolerance. The Elections of 1996, 2001 and 2008 and 2013 were preceded by extended Parliamentary boycotts by the major Opposition.

The role of Political Parties in Bangladesh in strengthening democratic practices and good governance has been diminishing due to its poor image, lack of credibility and low public trust. The political parties are nowadays considered a safe abode for criminals and terrorists. The political system has been ruined by a new process of "criminalization and commercialization" of politics. Political Parties suffer from centralized decision-making and personalization of internal party structures and absence of intra-party democracy. The ruling parties in Bangladesh have been almost always engaged in establishing their hegemonic control over the use of public resources to further their partisan interests under the facade of public interest.

Political Party finance in Bangladesh is not transparent, as is the case with electoral finance. Political Party funds are also allegedly collected directly from leading businessmen and industrialists. Such funds are often donated for vested interests in anticipation of favors in return, or through extortion. The reporting on finance within the Party or to the Election Commission is weak. Such reports, when submitted, are far from comprehensive and lack depth. Disclosure by Parties or the candidates in elections is flawed and thus not reliable. Sanctions contained in RPO are hardly applied. State and civil society oversight are yet to become functional.

Strengths

- Political party formation relatively easy.
- Regular audit returns by registered political parties.

Weaknesses

- Confrontational political culture.
- Tendency amongst elected political parties to treat Government as an apparatus of their own political party.
- Lack of transparency in political fundraising and use.
- Lack of internal democracy (centralised decision-making, personalisation of party structures).
- Criminalisation and/or commercialisation of politics.

Recommendations

- Political Parties must inculcate the practice of internal democracy. The Party constitution must include a provision for transparency, disclosure and accountability of the Party Leaders to its members.
- Political Parties must not give Party membership to identified criminals or convicted persons (at least for a certain period after their punishment) with a view to decriminalising the country's political arena.
- Financial transactions and audit reports of political parties must be submitted to the Election Commission and disclosed in time as per law. Legal sanctions for non-compliance must be strictly executed.
- Political parties should be subjected to Right to Information Act.

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/

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