

AMIRUL RAJIV

re-building is still left undone, a sincere commission should really be trying to make the judicial and police systems strong enough so that the commission itself in the long-run becomes irrelevant.

However, so far, the anti-corruption drive itself has largely left the judicial and police systems to their own devices. There are indications that the police and the justice systems have internally become less averse to individual-level corruption since this caretaker government took over, but leaving these crucial institutions out of the anti-corruption drive equation in many ways leaves its most vital element out.

While the commission can leave much of the implementation of the anti-corruption drive inside these institutions to the respective executives of these institutions themselves, it is important that the commission perceive this as a fundamental pillar of the drive. Not too long ago, there was much attention paid to the case of Ali Hussain, who spent 15 years in jail without a trial--a somewhat dismal reminder of an unjust judicial system. Also, there have been repeated uproars against controversial judges whose neutrality towards political interests have been brought into question.

According to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer 2007 findings, "the general public believe political parties, parliament, the police and the judicial/legal system are the most corrupt institutions in their societies." In the current context of Bangladesh, when the political parties are like crownless princes and the parliament good only for housing high-profile political prisoners, what we have with respect to "corrupt institutions" are the police and judicial/legal system -- and without reform, no anti-corruption drive can gain full credibility.

IT systems in the government

Another point of consideration for the government is to utilise the power of information technologies to address endemic problems of corruption in the government. Going back to the example of "eraser-action," if the entire system of data entry and update had been in a computerised system with several levels of security access to minimise chances of manipulating data, then we could go from a "pencil world" directly to a "computer world" without the need for passing through the "pen world."

Several advisors in the current government come from professions which have equipped them to clearly see the power of IT systems to re-haul the efficiency and accountability of government institutions in many cases. Talking to them about what IT systems in the government can achieve in terms of fighting corruption would seem like preaching to the converted. However, it is again sad to see that this is an area that this government has put relatively little emphasis on.