

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB speaking at the seminar. On his right are Mahbubul Alam former information adviser and Shaheen Anam, convener of RTI Forum and executive director of MJ Foundation among others.

The Long Wait for Accountability

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

It may seem like the biggest irony that despite being bestowed with democratic governments since 1991, it was when the country was in a state of emergency that one of the most crucial tools for a sound democratic process, the Right to Information Ordinance was approved by the existing government. Of course it is an indication of how flawed our previous democratic governments have been and how badly we need to get on the right track.

The draft of the Ordinance was made as early as 2002 by the Law Commission but was kept in the freezer ever since as none of the successive governments wanted to ratify it. Manusher Jonno Foundation became a pioneer to raise awareness amongst civil society about the need for this Act and how it could be drafted so that it would actually work. The earlier draft had been full of loopholes and contradictions which had to be pointed out and corrected. The Foundation has arranged countless discussions and meetings in Dhaka and the rest of the country, with lawyers, representatives from major political parties and the present government, former advisors, journalists and the general public, to talk about the Act and the loopholes in the draft. As part of its crusade to make the RTI ordinance an effective tool for transparency and good governance,