how, it is we ordinary folks who have the power to kick-start the process.

A survey by Bangkok University shed some light on where to start. The survey revealed that more than 70 per cent of Thais support reforms, with most pinpointing law enforcement as the area in urgent need of attention.

I couldn't agree more.

On my daily commute from Ram Intra Road to Bang Na via the outer ring-road, I regularly see cars cutting into traffic to make it onto the U-turn, often narrowly avoiding accidents.

A friend of mine was recently caught on camera turning into a "no-turn-left" lane. The fine and the photo arrived at her home with a warning that it would be doubled to 1,000 baht unless paid soon. With incontestable proof in front of her, she hurried to pay.

I just wish there were a camera at the outer ring-road's Chon Buri exit. I'm convinced the fines collected would soon pay for the "eye in the sky".

Drive for long enough in Thailand and you are likely to encounter traffic police trying to extort bribes in return for waiving a ticket. I know some drivers are happy to make that deal, even boasting later about negotiating the lowest fine. But how are we to strengthen law enforcement if both officials and citizens show such a lack of respect for the rules?

Then there's the fiercely competitive environment of education, where many parents buy places at good schools for their kids, believing that it a worthwhile "investment" to secure a good future social status for their children. Of course, they care nothing about the children whose scores may be higher but who stand no chance of quality education because their parents are poor.

Businessmen can also make a start in cracking graft. From now on, I would urge them to immediately report any official who tries to extort money from them to an anti-corruption agency. Given the deep-seated corruption that has now led us into political crisis, businesspeople are being irresponsible when they claim that under-the-table payments are standard and necessary.

The public is quick to complain about politicians being corrupted by power that always lures wealthy backers and hangers-on. But we like to keep it quiet when we are asking for a politician's help to get our children into a famous school. The bottom line is that if we didn't ask, they wouldn't be tempted.

Yes, power does corrupt. But the bigger truth is that everybody has their price - if the people around them are willing to pay it.

— ACHARA DEBOONME
Asian News Network/ The Nation



PHOTO: AFP