

# Corruption and Parliamentary Oversight in Bangladesh



Curbing Corruption in South Asia: A Workshop for Parliamentarians

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# Corruption in Bangladesh

- For Bangladesh corruption is a key national challenge .
- Corruption, especially political corruption, has become a convenient way to echelons of power
- What is striking about Bangladesh is that hardly the corrupt is punished
- Given that politics is the other name of investment for making quick money, embedded network of corruption is getting stronger, corruption tends to be protected and promoted, not punished.

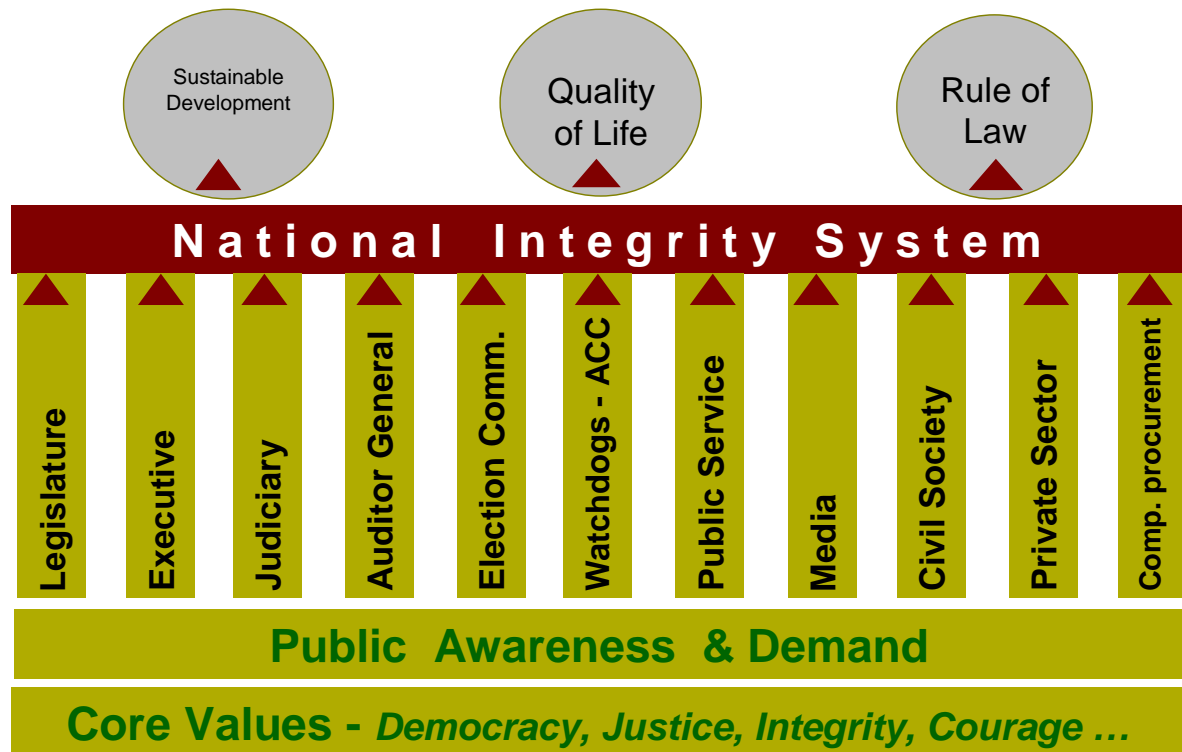
# The National Integrity System



Transparency International  
Bangladesh

## Anti-corruption Edifice

(adapted from: [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org))



[www.ti-bangladesh.org](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org)

# Parliamentary Democracy in Bangladesh

- Within fifteen years of restoring parliamentary democracy, the Parliament of Bangladesh an effective national integrity system - faces a huge credibility crisis.
- Confrontational politics and a “winner takes all” attitude have led to a situation that “boycott” of successive sessions – an act unprecedented in the annals of parliamentary democracy - has been imposed as a regular practice in Bangladesh

# PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT IN BANGLADESH

- The Parliamentary Committees, by exercising their oversight function not only prevent corruption and irregularities and ensures transparency, but also uphold the fundamental principle of democracy that the Government is accountable to the people for its policies and actions.
- Parliamentary committees are a constitutionally mandated system of facilitating law making and overseeing how the executive exercises its role according to the law.

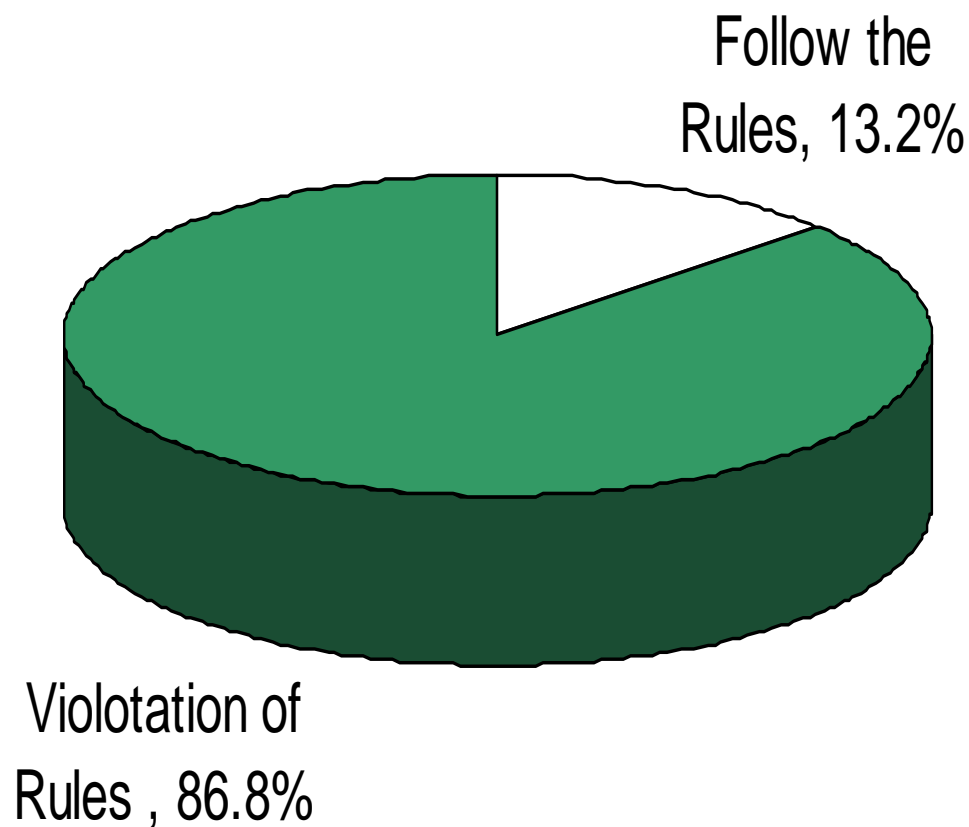
# Practice of Secrecy

- Rule 199 provides that “the sittings of the Committee shall be held in private”.
- Rule 201 provides that “all *strangers* to withdraw when Committee deliberates”.
- This provision reflects the culture of secrecy dominating the high echelons of the Government and political leadership.
- The examples of countries like Canada and South Africa should provide strong arguments for review of the provisions that limit the scope of transparency

# THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES: Have they made any difference?

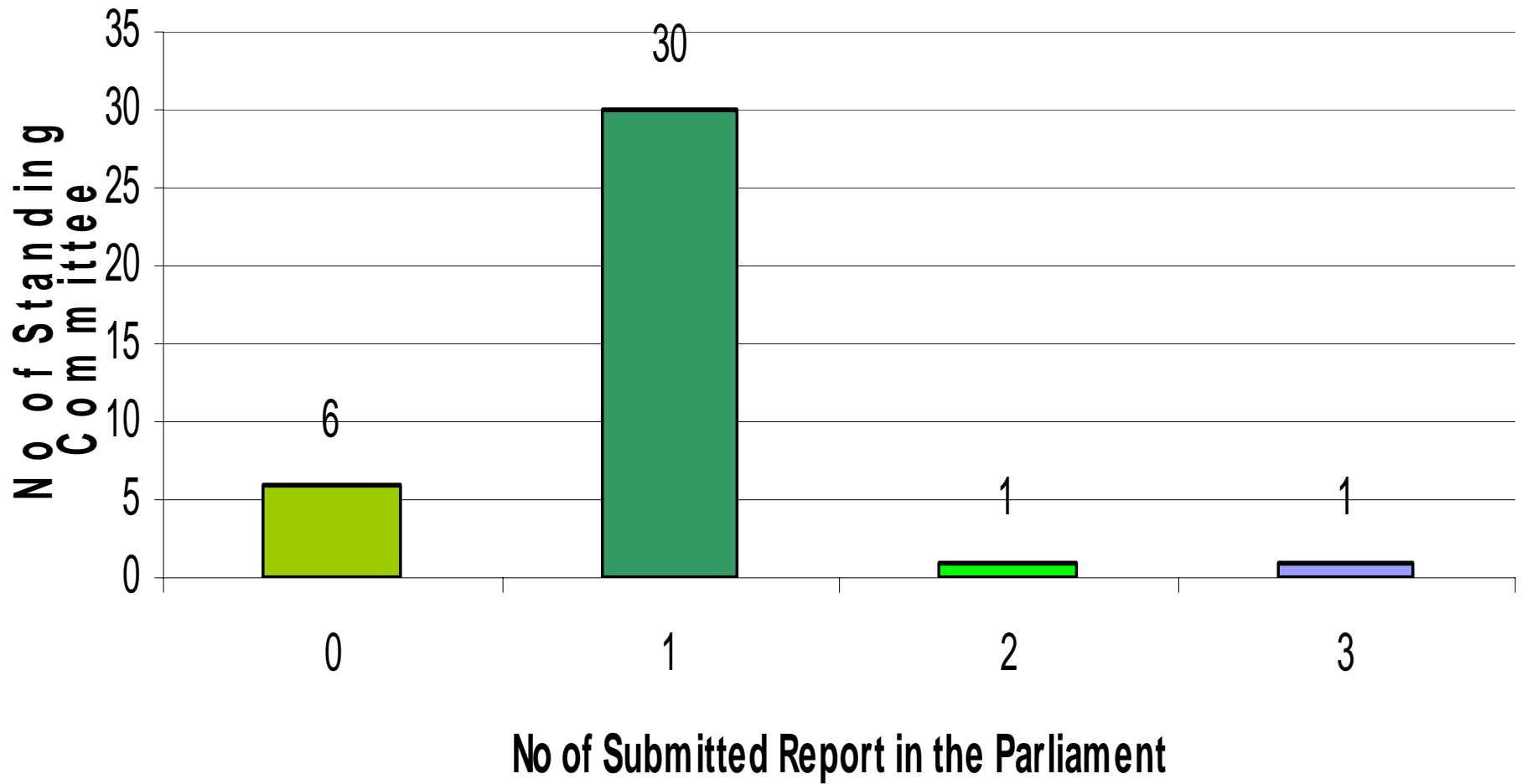
- Chairmen of all Standing Committees in the 8th Parliament were from the Treasury Bench
- It was further observed that most of the Standing Committees were formed after about 18 months of the first sitting of 8th parliament .
- Chairpersons of the Committees are selected by the House while the members of the committees are generally selected by the speaker.
- This provision is a potential entry point for conflict of interest, and is indeed inconsistent with Rule 188 (2)

**Figure 1: Status of the Standing Committees in terms of Meeting as per rules of procedure**





# Report Submission by the Standing Committees to the 8th Parliament



## An Overwhelmed Public Accounts Committee

- During July 2003 to February 2005, the money involved in 149 audit objection reports were Taka 13,154 crore 54 lakhs
- It was possible to collect/realize Taka 63.76 crore only and while unrealized due amount was Taka 12,581 crore 42 lakhs
- They were able to achieve very little in terms of outcome

# Parliamentary Committees: Good for nothing?

- Nearly 77% committee reports were submitted during towards the closing months of the Parliament – June to October 2006;
- Most of the committees (e.g. Communication) could not make any significant contribution in terms of investigation against corruption or other irregularities of different ministries under their jurisdiction;
- The Chairmen of different Committees identified non-cooperation of the ministers and high officials of various ministries as the main impediment ;
- The Chairman of a committee in 8<sup>th</sup> parliament termed the parliamentary committees as “good-for-nothing”

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- All political parties aspiring to be represented in the parliament must make a firm political pledge to make the Parliamentary Committees effective;
- They must be committed to the formation of all Committees in the first session, at least within three months thereof;
- They should also make a firm political commitment against the practice of boycott, absenteeism and delayed attendance in the sessions of the parliament;
- The office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman as provided in the Constitution must be appointed without delay;
- A Parliamentary Code of ethics should be adopted and enforced with special emphasis on conflict of interest and declaration of assets and interest;
- MP who do not disclose and update their assets and liabilities, interests should be barred from becoming members of the Parliamentary Committees.

# RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

- Article 70 of the Constitution must be reviewed to ensure objectivity and integrity of the parliamentary practice;
- Chairpersonship of the Standing Committees from the opposition bench should be no less than 50 percent of all Committees including the PAC;
- The proceedings of the Committees should be made public; wider participation of other stakeholders especially media
- There should be a “Committee of Committees” to undertake periodic evaluation of the performance of the Parliamentary Committees and their oversight functions ;
- Finally, the politicians should themselves realize their own stake in fighting corruption



Thank You