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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS IN BANGLADESH
AND WHY IT IS UNSUCCESSFUL**

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**ПРОБЛЕМЫ МЕСТНОГО САМОУПРАВЛЕНИЯ В БАНГЛАДЕШ И
ПОЧЕМУ ИХ РЕШЕНИЯ ОКАЗАЛИСЬ НЕУДАЧНЫМИ**

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***Abstract:** The author examines the issue of Bangladesh local government problems as well as why this propulsion is abortive. As Bangladesh is a developing country so that heretofore in theses 45 years whatever government operates still didn't get the aspect ratio of up liftmen. If government wants to make to local government as a effectual administration the light of hope is still subsistent. To overcome all the obstacles only needs some steps to reproduce.*

***Keyword:** Local Government, Democratic Process, Grass Root Level, Decentralization, Implementation, Development, organization, central power.*

***Реферат:** Автор рассматривает проблемы местного самоуправления в Бангладеш, в том числе его неудачное реформирование. Бангладеш является раз-*

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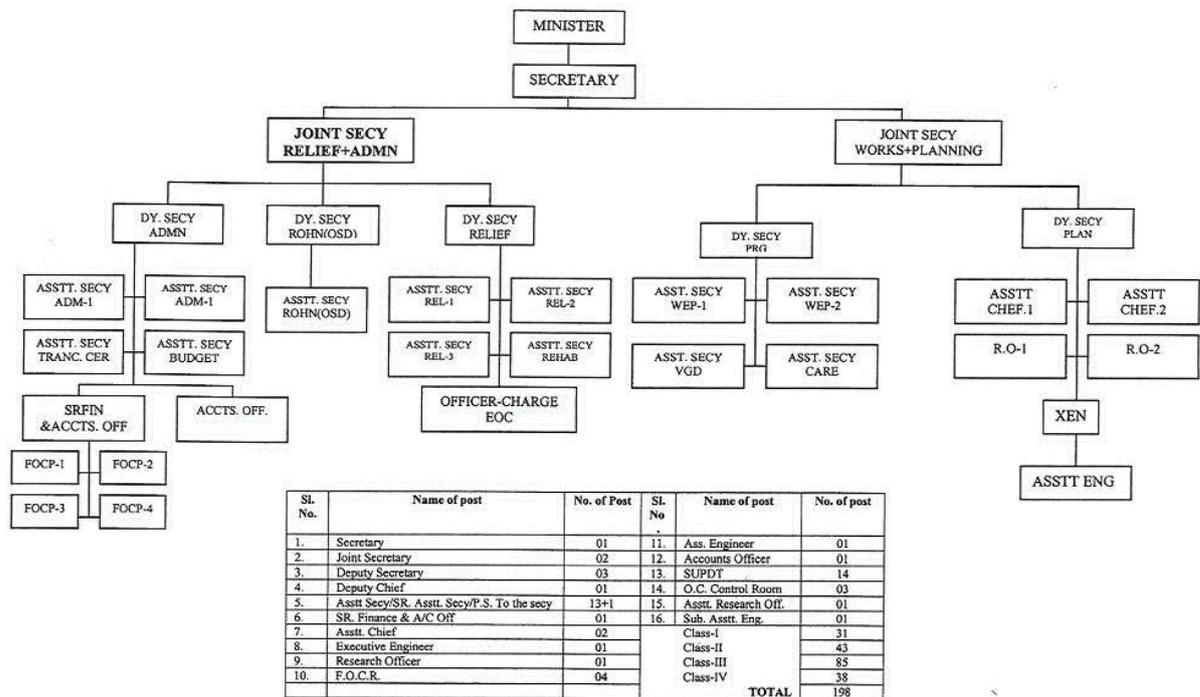
вивающейейся страной, но за 45 лет активной работы правительства эффективность местного самоуправления является низкой. Правительство все же стремится улучшить этот политический институт. Для того чтобы преодолеть все существующие препятствия необходимы кардинальные изменения.

Ключевые слова: *местное правительство, демократический процесс, уровень корня травы, децентрализация, реализация, развитие, организация, центральная власть.*

Local government is a form of decentralization of central power where control remains with central government. Implementation of government project, development work, social work is the main function of LG. Representatives of local government are elected by the voting system. Although they present the local problem to the central government. LG work mostly act as programme implication organization of government. The development of Bangladesh is freezed as because of political negotiation. Visions of working patterns change with the change in political party in government. This paper presents the problems of local government in Bangladesh and why it is unsuccessful.

Historically, local government was always there in Bengal. Only its forms differed from age to age. As it was the British colonial area. The periods are - Medieval Period, Colonial period, Pakistan Period .A result of the long history of struggle for freedom and democracy, Bangladesh saw the importance of developing a sound democracy and increasing people's participation in the political process, decision-making, and development of the country after it emerged as an independent nation. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh reformed their locally organized government .

Local government structure of Bangladesh:



Sources: Asian Disaster Reduction Center

Local Government scenario in Bangladesh: Local government reforms in Bangladesh evolved very distinctly according to the needs of the ruling elites [Westergaard, 2000; Khan and Hussain, 2001]. With change of government, the policy of local government also kept changing. Such changes were generally dictated by the imperative of legitimizing and broadening the narrow base of the power-holders in the national government. As a consequence, LGIs have not had any opportunity to act as effective tiers of governments with man-

dates and funds to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Though several attempts have been made to improve local government in Bangladesh, they continue to be managed and controlled by the central government administrative structures. Independent reviews observed that Bangladesh has not been successful in establishing a decentralized system of governance and accountability. A World Bank review of decentralization process in countries ranks Bangladesh lowest in decentralization scale [Williams, 1998].

Local Governance at a glance:

- Limited understanding of functions of UP held by population at large.

Community members are rarely consulted and have low expectations of what the UP will accomplish.

- Low awareness: UP members are only partially aware of their formally prescribed responsibilities, and in many cases lack the skills and resources required to discharge those functions.

- Power of Chair: UP membership does not itself provide any guarantee of influence over the activities in which the body engages. The Chairman is placed in a relatively powerful position, and often takes decisions in conjunction with a small circle of associates, from which women members, in particular are likely to be excluded

- Exclusion of women: Most studies and assessments have found that women members are generally excluded from major decision-making arenas.

- Limited and insecure revenue base: The UP has limited capacity and

incentive to raise revenue and is therefore highly dependent upon central government grants.

- Lack of accountability of government officials: Government officials located at union level are answerable only to their own line departments and tend not to consult with let alone coordinate work through the UP.

- Highly centralized project and program design: Evidence indicates that the upazila line staff have limited control over the types of projects to be undertaken at Upazila level. Projects are designed and decisions are being undertaken at the Ministry level and relegated to the Upazila based line agencies for implementation only.

- Poor relationship between administration and elected representatives: Relationship between elected representatives and local officials is characterized by mutual mistrust, suspicion and even hostility, but this does not preclude collusion where this is in the mutual interest of the parties concerned.

- Coordination power of UNO is limited: A range of line departments performing both regulatory and developmental roles are located at the Upazila. The UNO, as the senior executive cum coordinating officer, has formal responsibilities of coordination but can exert little practical control over most of the activities undertaken by line departments.

- Increasing power of MPs over the local elected actors: MPs are only expected to perform a relatively minor and advisory role at Upazila level. In practice their influence from the Union and upwards is much more extensive and their views tend to outweigh other actors.

Why Local governments of Bangladesh is not successful:

The local government bodies had never been, in independent Bangladesh, 'self-governing' bodies in the true sense of the term. They could simply be labeled as an extension of the central government with guided and limited local

participation. Consequently, local governments have always been institutionally and financially weak, poorly managed and lacked social and political credibility. Absence of Real Autonomy

A serious constraint on both rural and urban local government is its dependence on central government. One authority describes the relationship between national and local government as a 'clear patron-client relationship' [14]. Limited powers, functions and jurisdiction of local government are all delegated by central government, which retains a high degree of overall control in both rural and urban areas. This effectively limits the autonomy and efficiency of local government.

Financial Control over Local Bodies. Local government bodies have been chronically resource-poor in Bangladesh. Local Government bodies are compelled to take loan or grants from central government at almost every aspect of Union Parishad [2: 382]. Local self-government bodies in Bangladesh

are in constant shortage of funds. The sources of their income are generally taxes, rates, fees and charges levied by the local body, and rents and profits accruing from properties of the local body and sums received through its services. Contribution from individuals and institutions, government grants, profits from investments, receipts accruing from the trusts placed with the local bodies, loans raised by the local body and proceeds from such services are other sources of income. Financial aspect such as; tax, budgetary producer and allocation of money and project have been controlled by Central government through its administration. For example- The Union Parishad has no direct control even over resources generated from their jurisdictions. Such practice of regulating and controlling of the financial resources by the national government functionaries keeps the LG units for ever resource-poor and resource-dependent on the national government.

Excessive Controlling by Central Government. Local self government bodies are being strongly controlled by the higher level authorities. The local governments are subject to control in various matters, such as;

(a). The National Government exacts legislation on local bodies and formulates detailed rules related to conducting of election, business, powers and duties of chairmen, assessment of taxes, preparation of budget, making of contracts, appointment and service matters of local government employment, accounts and audit and many other important areas. The Central Government has the final authority in the determination of the size and boundaries of the local body's territory;

(b). The Central Government has the power to decide on the structure and composition of the local bodies. The Central Government substantially controls the personnel system of local bodies, particularly the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer in City Corpora-

tions and Pourashavas as well as other officials;

(c). The Central Government controls the functional jurisdiction of local bodies. Besides, designated functions (as in ordinance), the government can assign any other function to a local body. Inter-institutional disputes within local body areas are to be settled by the Central Government;

(d). In the field of finance, government supervision and control are wide and strict. In addition to financial control in general, the central government can wield power by reducing or enhancing Grant-in-aid to local bodies, even to city authorities like Dhaka;

(e). The Central Government asserts control and supervision over general administration of local bodies, including large City Corporations. The central government may order an inquiry into the affairs of a local body generally or into any particular affair either on its own initiative or on an application made by any person to the government;

(f). The Central Government has the power to dissolve a local body on charge of gross inefficiency, abuse of power, or inability to meet financial obligations.

(g). In addition, the central government also exercises substantial financial and administrative control over the local government institutions in different ways. The above facts reveal that the local government units in Bangladesh are being constantly controlled by the national government through various mechanisms for almost every aspect of their operation.

Over Controlling by the Administrative Official. According to the constitution, the government should encourage the local government institutions, not control them, but administrative officials run some local government institutions, which is a violation of the constitution. Although laws allow the local government institutions to realize holding taxes, it cannot be possible because of the order of executives.

Limited Budgetary Allocations. Inadequate budgetary allocation for the local government institutions leads to rural poverty, widening economic disparity between rural and urban areas. Stressing the need for transparency and accountability of the local government, it is said that a strong movement should be waged to force the government to give the local government institutions due authority in order to ensure democracy at the grassroot level.

Problems of Decentralization. Dr. Tofael Ahmed and Professor Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan said that decentralization scenario in Bangladesh is little encouraging. In their words, evolution of decentralization in Bangladesh is characterized by: (a) domination by and complete dependence on central/national government; (b) unrepresentative character; (c) grossly inadequate mobilization of local resources; (d) limited or lack of participation of the rural poor in the decentralized bodies; (e) successive regimes' marginal and superficial com-

mitment to devolution or deconcentration in practice.

Problem Related to Present Upazila System:

a). As of the history of local government system of Bangladesh, grassroots were never empowered in terms of financial control, administrative activities and project preparation and implementation process; though these are more informed about local needs than other institutions. And also these bodies have the potentials to be the best service providers in terms of development that includes health to education, infrastructure management to resource mobilization and technology use to social motivation. But these bodies always run under the supervision of central government representative, controlled by the bureaucracy. Presently those local government bodies are going to be handled by the MPs in many ways. It seems that, in center, government has the absolute majority in parliament and the parliament is in a process to establish the MPs as power-

ful supervisors over the local government bodies under their respective constituencies. By doing this, in fact, the government and the parliament are going to establish 300 autocrats around the country.

b). Conflict between the Upazilla (sub-district) Council Chairmen (UCC) and the Members of Parliament (MP) is a much talked about issue in Bangladesh now. It was expected that government and the lawmakers would ensure the rights of local governments as per the direction of Constitution. But it has been observed that neither the government nor the lawmakers empowered local government representative in a proper manner.

c). As Upazilla Council (UC) is concerned, it is the youngest in the local government family of Bangladesh; Union Council known as UP is the eldest. Other members of local government family are the City Corporation, the Municipalities and the half hearted district council. From the very beginning of City

Corporation the Mayor has been enjoying the ministerial status and dignity, but municipality and UP chairmen have not clearly defined status and their dignity is not ensured to the bureaucracy. Rather they have to live under the kindness given by the central government or the bureaucrats working in the locality. These people are also the dependable tools for the national election and election runners as well. It could be said that this is a cultural phenomenon of urban development under colonial rule.

Interruption of Politician. As per the available information parliament is in a move to give MPs almost absolute supervisory authority to UP, UC and municipality activities, which could lead the MPs to be the ultimate administrator of Local Bodies. Through the frequent amendment of Acts, the superiority of MPs is being increased over the Chairman & vice Chairman of Local bodies which would drive it into dysfunction/mood and ineffective nature. Besides, UZP and UP, the Paurashova are

also under consideration to be controlled by MP and they would be the advisor of this body. The drafts of Paurashova Act-2009 are being prepared which allow the PMs as supervisor of Paurashova. According to this Act all the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and members are supposed to follow and implement the advice of the MP. Besides, the Chairman of UZP could not communicate to the government except the permission of MP. If they communicate to the government, that must be informed to MP within 14 days.

Lack of Training. The National Institute of Local Government (NILG), the officially designated training organization for imparting training to the local government functionaries, is in shambles. It is neglected and has low status. It has little autonomy and is treated as an appendage of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Its top leadership comes from the government on deputation. If one looks at the background of Director-Generals of the

NILG for the last fifteen years (1990-2005), it will be obvious that generally non-performing central government officers blissfully ignorant about both local government and training are generally dumped on the NILG on a continuous basis [14:402].

Public training institutes such as the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), the Rural Development Academy (RDA) and the Rural Development Training Institute (RDTI) have been associated with local government training from time to time. However, they have other priorities to pursue and their responsibility for local government training was never defined. So whatever they do in this regard is ad hoc (Ibid).

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er, they have other priorities to pursue and their responsibility for local government training was never defined. So whatever they do in this regard is ad hoc. (Ibid) The training in the local government sector has generally meant stereotyped class-room lectures preceded by sterile speech-making and wasteful expenditure in the name of inauguration ceremonies. Beginning in 1998, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) initiated a massive training program for the Union Parishads. It was much ado about nothing. First, with some exceptions, consultants, both local and foreign were of average quality. Second, the NILG was bypassed in organizing the training program. The NILG faculty, whose expertise was still the best in the country, was not utilized. (Ibid) On the other hand training of local government staff is generally limited to officers. Lower level technical or general staff are rarely given any training or chance to improve their skills. Improper Personnel System Government does not

earmark any officers exclusively for the local government bodies. It does, however, place some civil servants and technical personnel (e.g. engineers and doctors) within local government bodies on secondment for a specified period (normally 3 years). There is as yet no local government service cadre. Any local government body may appoint temporary class IV (lowest level) employees on a work charge basis to meet urgent requirements. In the existing system, local government bodies are subject to strong control from higher-level authorities, especially from the central government. In the case of Union Parishad, there used to be a dual control and supervision exercised by both Upzila Parishad and the central government. In the recently approved system, however, control only comes from the central government, such as auditing of income expenditures. In the case of Upazila/Thana Parishad and Zila Parishad, similar controls prevail. Comprehensive Solution for Effective Local government.

Conclusion. At this modern age the importance of Local government is undeniable as it the government at lower level or government as organized locally. In democratic regime by distribution of power, government try to ensure good governance. It works mostly act as

programme implication organization of government. The problem is Impact of political ideology as well as If ruling party and local representative is not belong to the same party then the action of the local government unanticipated But proper step can destruct these vain.

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