

## Decentralization of Local Government in Bangladesh: Issues and Practices

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### Abstract

Bangladesh has been carrying out trial with decentralization for a long period of time like many other developing countries. This paper is an attempt to deliver a better understanding of decentralization practice at the local level in Bangladesh. This paper put emphasis on whether much autonomy has been practiced in the decentralization process. Moreover, this paper mainly concentrated on the secondary published reports and documents along with local government commission reports. The findings of the study also relate with the Constitutional guarantee in establishing of a strong and a self-governing local government arrangement, for the sake of decentralization the political direction of Bangladesh. However, the central intentions after most of the reform efforts have been to make stronger their political base in the various areas. Accordingly, these organizations cannot adequately be recognized as a central point of change where people would have the influence to observe and regulate their areas. Local Government of Bangladesh suffering from various problems as practicing colonial maintenance pattern, poor political leadership, dependency on central government, lack of authority and power, administrative weakness and lack of political will, lack of competent personnel, lack of essential discourse on local governance, patron-client relationship, insufficient infrastructure and communication facilities. Finally, the paper made some recommendations to overcome this situation.

**Keywords:** Local government, decentralization, Bangladesh

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## การกระจายอำนาจของรัฐบาลท้องถิ่นในประเทศไทย: ประเด็นและแนวปฏิบัติ

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### บทคัดย่อ

ประเทศไทยบังคับใช้การทดลองใช้การกระจายอำนาจมาเป็นระยะเวลานานเช่นเดียวกับประเทศกำลังพัฒนาอื่น ๆ บทความนี้พยายามให้ความรู้ ความเข้าใจที่มากขึ้นในเรื่อง การกระจายอำนาจในระดับท้องถิ่น ในบังคับใช้ บทความนี้ให้ความสำคัญว่า ความเป็นอิสระมากได้รับการปฏิบัติในกระบวนการการกระจายอำนาจ นอกจากนี้ บทความนี้ยังมุ่งเน้นเป็นพิเศษไปที่รายงานและเอกสารที่เผยแพร่พร้อมกับรายงานของคณะกรรมการท้องถิ่น ข้อค้นพบของการศึกษานี้ยังเกี่ยวข้องกับการรับรองรัฐธรรมนูญในการจัดตั้งรัฐบาลท้องถิ่นที่เข้มแข็งและเป็นอิสระในการปกครองตนเอง เพื่อประโยชน์ในการกระจายอำนาจทางการเมืองของบังคับใช้ อย่างไรก็ตาม ความตั้งใจหลักหลังจากที่มีความพยายามในการปฏิรูป ได้สร้างฐานะทางการเมืองที่เข้มแข็งขึ้นในหลายพื้นที่ ดังนั้น ท้องถิ่นเหล่านี้จึงไม่สามารถได้รับการยอมรับให้เป็นศูนย์กลางของการเปลี่ยนแปลง โดยประชาชนจะมีอิทธิพลในการสังเกตและควบคุมพื้นที่ของตน รัฐบาลท้องถิ่นของบังคับใช้ ฯ เช่น การฝึกอบรมแบบการบำรุงรักษาในยุคล่าอาณานิคม ภาวะผู้นำทางการเมืองต่อไป การพัฒนารัฐบาลกลาง การขาดอำนาจและพลัง จุดอ่อนในการบริหารและการขาดเจตจำนงทางการเมือง ขาดบุคลากรที่มีอำนาจ ขาดการอภิปรายที่สำคัญเกี่ยวกับการปกครองท้องถิ่น ความสมมัพนธ์ของระบบอุปถัมภ์ โครงสร้างพื้นฐานและสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกในการสื่อสาร ที่ไม่เพียงพอ สุดท้ายนี้ บทความนี้ได้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะบางอย่างเพื่อઆનનસનાનારની

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## Introduction

Decentralization is a broadly used idea and also a comprehensive theme that appeals a lot of consideration (Khan, 2009). It has been functioning fairly well for generations in developed countries; lots of developing countries are lagging far behind, bounded by socio-economic and political influences. After the Second World War, concentrated determinations were directed towards developing decentralized arrangements in some countries. Though, these efforts did not create the preferred consequences. Measures since 1980s once more have been able to bring some optimisms in the domain of governance. The collapse of the socialist commands in Eastern Europe, human rights activities in many states in the world and the revival of democratic governance to swap, military roles have paved the way for many national governments to construct participatory establishments at diverse levels of society (Sarker, 2003). Currently, many development groups have acknowledged “decentralization” as a way of refining the excellence and availability of local facilities, and of stimulating local progress, therefore making it a vital aspect of governance structures. In point of fact, ‘decentralization’ offers some space for local populaces to contribute in local advancement that can confirm the effective allocation and utilization of local capitals with a well accountability arrangement (Panday, 2011).

In this paper decentralized local government practices in Bangladesh is highlighted. The decentralization is not a new concept in Bangladesh. Its presence in diverse forms was deep-seated in the past. Several efforts to reform local government organizations centered on the devolution of power have been assumed over the ages. But active, influential and decentralized local government has not so far developed in Bangladesh. Numerous issues, clarify this set of circumstances.

The central concentration of this paper is to examine the situation of decentralization in the local government institutions. Efforts have been made to disclose whether or not the much required independence has been made in the decentralization practice. Some theoretical concepts of decentralization, local government institutions and related issues are discussed in the following subsections.

## Conceptual Framework

### Local Government

Local government is concerned with the governance of the local area. It carries out functions as an agent of the state. Lockard (1968) defines local government as “a public organization authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within a relatively small territory, which is a sub-division of a regional or national government”. Talukder (2009) expresses, “Local governments are nothing but sub-national territorial units of the state,

which should have expenditure responsibilities and revenue assignments. And more importantly, a local government must be a legal persona as a body corporate, and it is expected to have democratic control on its affairs by locally elected representatives". In the South – Asian perspective, local government is known as local self-government. It originates from the British government through managing the South-Asian local (Hasan, 2007). Clarke (1948) defines "Local self-government as that part of the government of a nation or state, which deals mainly with such matters as concern the inhabitants of a particular district or place, together with those matters, which parliament has deemed it desirable should be administered by local authorities, subordinate to central government."

So, "Local Government" or "Local Self-government" may have following features:

- A legal, political body;
- Part of the government of a nation or state;
- A representative elected body of people of the local territory;
- Have some delegated power and each of them continues for a specific period of time;
- Have the power of revenue earning on some sectors and have the right to manage their own matters and issues;
- Ultimately accountable to the national government of the state.

### **Decentralization**

Decentralization is a political sensation encompassing both government and administration. It includes the delegation of power higher to lower levels in a state hierarchy. In other words, it expresses the transference of planning, decision making or managerial power from the central administration to its field administrations, local organizational entities, semi-autonomous and parastatal organizations, local administrations or nongovernmental organizations (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). As decentralization denotes to the territorial dissemination of power, it involves the sub-division of the government's authority into smaller regions and the formation of administrative and governmental organizations in those regions. It is as well concerned with the degree to which command and authority are disseminated through the territorial hierarchy of the government, and the organizations and methods through which such distribution takes place (Smith, 1985).

Mawhood (1983) pointed out -"Decentralization as a structure of government where bodies are created at the local level separated by law representatives are given formal matter from the national centre in which local power to decide on a range of public". It can be stated here that the heart of centralization and decentralization depends on the dissemination of powers for getting decision or conclusion and the difference between them is one of degree, not of kind. In fact, there is no regime, which can entirely be centralized or decentralized.

Comprehensive decentralization means withering away of the government (Fesler, 1968). Both centralization and decentralization have effect at the same time and hereafter “should therefore be envisaged as the processes of movement in either direction along a continuum which has no finite ends” (Conyers, 1985).

Decentralization can be a multiplicity of forms liable upon the mode in which the power to organization, decision making and accomplish public tasks is conveyed from the central government to local government or organizations at provincial or local levels. The grade of responsibility for and freedom of choice over decision making that is conveyed by the central government can differ a great extent. It varieties from merely flowing workload to field level of a principal ministry to the final transmission of administrative and political authority to officially instituted local government bodies (Siddiki, 1997).

## Forms of Decentralization

Based on the nature of the organizations to which the regime of an independent country assigns some of its tasks or activities with at diverse levels. There have been recognized four broad sets of decentralization: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization.

### Deconcentration

In the past decades, deconcentration has been the most often used terms of decentralization assumed by several of the African and Asian nations, like as Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan, The Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand (Ahmed, 2012). Deconcentration can take various practices:

- a) Simply flowing of workload from a central level of government ministry to its agencies external to the state capital. The local employees do not have the power to make any decisions on personal wish or to carry out them.
- b) Transfer certain decision-making power to an arrangement of field administration, permitting it some freedom to design, to sort routine assessments and fine-tune the operation of central directions to local settings, within strategies fixed by the central ministry.
- c) Formation of subsidiary levels of government to accomplish local tasks, but under the procedural administration and control of the principal ministry (Siedentopf, 1987).

The practices of deconcentration define the character and scopes of this kind of decentralization. Firstly, power is definitely reserved by the central government in a deconcentrated system, Secondly, certain tasks are decentralized to administration’s field representatives or institutions. Thirdly, decentralization is managerial in nature as no alterations occur within the central government and its representative in relations of control mechanism.

### **Delegation**

Delegation denotes to transference of authorities or tasks to organizations that are not in the straight control of ministries of central government. It denotes the “transfer or creation of broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activities within specific spatial boundaries to an organization that is technically and administratively capable of carrying them out without direct supervision by a higher administrative unit” (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). In spite of the UN’s suggestion that “the area organization of field units and the channel of authority between headquarters and field units will substantially affect the form and nature of popular participation” (UN, 1962). In comparison with deconcentration, ‘delegation’ contains transference of authority, though final authority rests with the central power. As, for example, many of the developing states apply this exercise in the form of panels, authorities, organizations or any other discrete assistance for functioning definite tasks like power generation and delivery, water supply, agricultural improvement and road transportation. Thus, the delegation of power to semi-autonomous organizations external to the usual ministerial arrangements are reflected in decentralization in the system of delegation.

### **Devolution**

Maddick (1963) defined devolution as “the legal conferring of powers to discharge specified or residual functions upon formally constituted local authorities”. Devolution denotes to the transference of power to lawfully created regional, district and local organizations. It represents the most common kind of sincere decentralization. The central government surrenders certain tasks or generates new units of government that are external to its straight regulation through devolution (UNDP, 1997). Devolution in its genuine form has some fundamental characteristics, which are described below:

Firstly, local parts of administrations are sovereign, autonomous and obviously apparent as distinct levels of government over which principal authorities use slight or no straight control.

Secondly, the local governments have perfect and lawfully documented geographical frontiers in which they use power and carry out public utilities.

Thirdly, local governments have corporate eminence and authority to protect assets to accomplish their tasks.

Fourthly, devolution indicates the essential to improve local governments as organizations in the sense that the local people notice them as administrations provided that facilities that satiate their essentials and as administrative entities over which they have certain effects.

Lastly, devolution is a procedure in which there is shared, reciprocally advantageous and harmonizes connection concerning central and local governments.

It discloses from the features cited above that the local governments have acknowledged geographical frontiers, corporate position and are measured as distinct levels of government. They are not simply subsidiary governments; they have some freedom and sovereignty, and symbolize the perception of the distinctiveness of multiplicity of arrangements contained by the political structure as a whole.

### **Privatization**

Privatization denotes to the transference of public properties, duties and roles in the private sector, as well as non-governmental administrations. From a wider perspective privatization covers a comprehensive series of programmes and activities to inspire private sector involvement in public service delivery and exclude or amend the monopoly standing of public enterprises (Sarker, 2003). This has begun as a key policy recommendation of aid assistances and global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF in recent years for the Third World nations to assist financial development and total growth. From such organizations in the face of solid force, and sometimes influenced by the opinions that private segment organizations can show a vital part in raising economic growth and that non-governmental organizations have a possibly vital role in attaining justifiable development, many regimes in developing nations have followed the strategies of privatization and deregulation (Cook & Kirkpatrick, 1988). Privatization follows diverse forms, for example the sale of government properties to the private sector, deregulation, agreement, user controls, leasing, receipts, contracting-out, commercialization, corporatization and management contracts (Farazmand, 2001; Hope & Chikulo, 2000). It can be said that the observation of privatization as a method of decentralization is ambiguous. For several 'privatization' does not entitle decentralization, which is observed as an adjustment of control and power within the government. Somewhat it denotes a redefinition and a lessening of the part of the government by permitting more and more tasks to be executed by private organizations. After the transference of deeds to such organizations, the regime workouts only a restricted monitoring part or no control at all (Siddiki, 1997).

### **Constitutional and Legal Basis of LG in Bangladesh and Its Existing Structure**

The constitution of Bangladesh is the most important blessing of the independence to the people of the country. There is provision for local government organizations as one of the organs of the government to create democratic standards and to determine social and financial progress of the population (Khan, 2009). Though, local government entities in Bangladesh were not ever recognized at all the layers of management at the same time. These organizations are established by parliamentary presentation. These Acts of local government describe the role, tasks, connection with the central level of government, such as bureaucracy and elected members of parliament, election measures, funding contained resource generation techniques

and other pertinent mechanisms of the local government scheme in Bangladesh. Four articles of the Constitution of Bangladesh deliver the local government, a basic pillar. These four articles are stated below:

Article 9. “The State shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women.”

Article 11. “The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed, and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured.”

Article 59. “(1) Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law. (2) Everybody such as is referred to in clause (1) shall, subject to this constitution and any other law, perform within the appropriate administrative unit such functions as shall be prescribed by Act of Parliament, which may include functions relating to-

- (a) administration and the work of public officers;
- (b) the maintenance of public order; the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.”

Article 60. “For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59 Parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds.”

Since the independence of Bangladesh, LGIs only at one tier that was at Union Level. The second tier Upazila or subdistrict was created with the break of 18 years later in 2009. The Zila Parishad or District Council has not revitalized in its democratic image form since independence. The LGI has not ever been a matter of concern in Bangladesh at the divisional level. At the divisional level, there were LGIs under the basic democratic structure in the Pakistani period (Panday, 2011).

There are two discrete types of local government institutions at present in Bangladesh: one is standing for rural zones and the other one for urban zones. In rural areas of Bangladesh, the local government signifies a tiered system containing of three layers: Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad, and Zilla Parishad, whereas the urban areas local government contains of Pourashava and a municipal corporation. The table below shows the present local government structure in Bangladesh along with their numbers:

**Table 1.** Local Government Structure in Bangladesh.

Rural System	Urban System
District Council (61)	City Corporation (11)
Upazila Parishad (489)	Pourashava (324)
Union Parishad (4552)	

### Decentralization Practices in Local Government in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is an old nation, but a fresh country with a lengthy history and practice reflected by political chaos and trials often shadowed by fierceness, financial massacres and sufferings produced by manipulative and slow production affairs and also very frequently by unexpected natural calamities. Subsequently, more than 200 years of British Colonial rule and Pakistani rule Bangladesh lastly appeared as a sovereign nation in 1971 through a bloody war against Pakistani military rulers. Later then, the change of the fresh country was categorized by various drastic political and financial reforms and ups and downs (Ahmed, 1987). Bangladesh, India and Pakistan share a mutual past of local government in view of that they entirely had been British colonies for a long periods. However, before arriving at its current state the local government of Bangladesh has its origins in the British regulation, and it distributed through the neocolonial Pakistani period. Thus, the progress of the local government in Bangladesh is chatting in standings of these three phases, i.e., the British era (1757-1947), the Pakistani era (1947-1971), and the Bangladesh era (1971-2014).

#### **The British Era (1757 - 1947)**

The British monarchs in India did not accept the local foundations of local government. The organizations cherished by them were molded on their personal idea. Moreover, local government in rural and urban spaces did not develop along the equivalent shapes. As soon as the British approached to this state, they first developed the trading centers of India. Municipal organizations on the shape of the British urban administration were therefore the first to be imbedded. Conversely, the development of rural local government delivered through numerous phases of experiment and inaccuracy (Siddiqui, 2014).

In the rural areas of Bengal, The local government was reputed with the Bengal Village Choukidari Act 1870. Though, before 1870 the British administrations acquired no inventiveness to establish the self-governing organizations in the villages. The Act shaped a key unit of local government called as union containing of several villages. This was controlled over by five-members committee named as Panchayat. The Panchayat was not an elected group. The District Magistrate employed its members. The District Magistrate was authorized to eliminate

the members of the Panchayat. The Panchayat was responsible for sustaining law and order simply in the villages and Choukidars (watchmen) was to collect its tool. The Panchayat was given authority to consider and collect taxes that is identified as Choukidari tax, from the villagers to encounter the spending of retaining Chouhidars. Lord Ripon, the formerly Viceroy of India, is rightly famous as the predecessor of contemporary local self-government in India (Wahhab, 2002). A three-tier system derived into action: district board for the district, local board for subdivision, and union committee for a number of villages scattering over an area of 10-12 square miles under the Local Self- Government Act 1885. Along the former three-tier system was swapped with a two-tier system containing of union board and district board through the presentation of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act 1919 (Khan, 2012). The nomination system was put to an end in 1946. Union boards were composed of two-thirds of the elected members and of one-third of the appointed members till then. The Union Board was assigned to the charge for law and order conservation, roads and bridges creation, provision of health care, charitable dispensaries, and for maintenance of primary school. Conversely, the District Board became to be liable for water supply and support. Apart from the aforementioned duties of the Union Board, it was given the authority to resolve over trivial criminal cases, and it was even specified the power to put union taxes also (Noor, 1986).

The local government bodies were controlled either by the appointed officials or by the British ruler's agents throughout the British period. Therefore, the mainstream of India's people did not have any opinion regarding the doings of these bodies (Khan, 1997). This method persisted till 14 August 1947 while the Indian subcontinent was divided into two independent countries India and Pakistan.

### **The Pakistani Era (1947 - 1971)**

The Pakistan era is assigned for firming the practically declining local government structure. One remarkable work was the institution of a four tier local government system. Union Council, Thana Council, District Council and Divisional Council were shaped under the Basic Democracy Order (BDO) in 1959 through the autocratic military rule of Ayub Khan (Khan, 2011). The main aim of consolidating the people to pay attention of the complications of their zones and instructing in them the essence of self-help, but formal mechanism at every layer made it tough for the people's agents to role efficiently. The aim of that inventiveness was to (1) organize all improvement workings under the control, (2) articulate advancement strategy, (3) executes development projects, (4) support and inspire the UP in their working, (5) execute the family planning programmes, (6) preserve a free environment, (7) organize training programmes for UP chairmen and members and the secretaries (Khan, 2011a). In fact, this reorganization was made with an assessment to reinforcing the political command base of the then administration in all over the state in the name of basic democracy by the UP organizations and chairmen.

### The Bangladesh Era (1971 - 2014)

From the time when Bangladesh becomes independent in 1971, several efforts were made to mend with the local government system. Variations have been done from different times in the matter of the terminology of tiers of local government, however, almost zero was done to fortify the local governments. Thus, the arrangement of the local government method has persisted more or less unaffected.

The title of the Union Council was transformed to Union Panchayat instantly after liberation in 1971 and an administrator was employed to accomplish the activities of the Panchayat. The title of Thana Council was transformed to the Thana Development Committee whereas the District Council was named as Zila Board or District Board. Yet again in 1973, Union Panchayat's title renamed as Union Parishad. A more noteworthy modification in the local government system was getting through the Local Government Ordinance in 1976. This ordinance delivered for a Union Parishad for a union, a Thana Parishad for a Thana and a Zila Parishad for a district. The Union Parishad contained one elected Chairman and nine elected members, two nominated women members and two peasant representative members. The Thana Parishad comprised of the Sub-Divisional Officer as an ex-officio chairman, the Circle Officer and a Union Parishad Chairman. The Zila (District) Parishad was to comprise elected members, official members and women members also whose figures were resolute by the government. Its tenure of office was five years. The Swanirvar Gram Sarker (village self-government) was presented at the village level in 1980, which is consistent with the modification to the Local Government Ordinance. Though, in July 1982, this was eliminated by the Martial Law Order (Mallick, 2004). After that, numerous local government acts were delivered in the year 1982, 1983, 1988 and 1989. The Upazila Parishad Ordinance of 1982 was predominantly noteworthy as it was invented to support implementing in the government's decentralization programme. As per it came to be known in the Upazila system, the directly elected chairman would have the main power in administrate matters of the Upazila system with a term of five-year. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) worked as his/her subservient. It appeared to be effective, and this system continued for nine years (Siddiqui, 1994). There maintains equilibrium of authority between government officials and the people's representatives. The common people were very much satisfied, after knowing that the management was decentralized and thus reachable and apparent.

After that, the Government formed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (1991-96), through a comparatively fair election, discontinued the Upazila system in 1991. The key determination after such a judgment was to reinforce control of the members of parliament on local matters in their particular areas. On condition that the elected Upazila Chairman was in the Upazila, the MPs see it tough to form their control over local administration. The Government could not deliver a different democratic system of local government throughout its five year term.

Later on through an election in 1996 the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) ruled (1996-2001), and in the beginning the government formed a Local Government Commission. It releases its Report on Strengthening Local Government Institutions in May 1997. The Commission suggested a four-tier local government arrangement comprising Gram (Village) Parishad, Union Parishad, Thana/Upazila Parishad, and Zila (District) Parishad. In 1997, then AL regime started to execute endorsements promoted by the commission. However, this system did not endure very long as the BNP government (2001-2006) after coming to power in 2001 announced modifications in the local government arrangement again. Specially, it presented Gram Sarker (GS) instead of the Gram Parishad at the Ward arenas. Every Gram Sarker characterized one to two villages with 3,000 inhabitants on average. The member of the Union Parishad who are elected from the ward level lead the GS that containing other members, both men and women, elected in a general meeting of the ward electorates under the observation of the “directing authority” (Kamal & Uddin, 2014).

Though, on 11 January 2007 after coming to command, the army assisted the caretaker government (CTG) directed by Dr. Fakruddin Ahmed, and on 20 April 2008 it eliminated Gram Sarker. It organized thus seeing that the GS was formed to assist the political determinations of the BNP. Entirely these tiers are anxious with the rural level of the local governments in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the caretaker government made a remarkable amendment to the Upazilla Parishad (UP) Act of 1998 by an ordinance to the elimination of the Gram Sarker. Principally, the CTG revised the debatable provision of the Act of 1998 that made it obligatory for the UPs to follow the proposals of the local MPs as advisors.

After the instruction of the last Care Taker Government (CTG), in January 2009 the election to the UPs was done under the freshly elected AL government that got the command on 6 January 2009 when after winning the election on 29 December, 2008. The government placed the Uazila Parishad Bill in front of the parliament, where they created more domineering characteristics. And the UP Act 2009 was passed consistently in the parliament without sanctioning the ordinance circulated by the CTG. One of the very important characteristic of the UP Act 2009 is the provision of creating it compulsory for the UPs to obey the recommendations of local MPs. Clauses one and two of Article 25 of the Act offer that the MPs shall be advisors of their particular UPs, and that their parts of guidance shall be followed as compulsory as specified in the main UP Act of 1998. Furthermore, a clause of the Act forbids the UPs to converse straightly with the government without notifying the particular MPs. It has made mandatory through Clause 27 (kha) of the Act that within 14 working days the minutes of every sitting of the UP need be given to their particular MPs. Thus, the government has reinforced the authority of the MPs over their particular UP, which is conflicting to the basic value of decentralization, democracy, and good governance as well (The Local Government Act, 2009).

## An Analysis on Decentralization Situation in Bangladesh

Assessing the degree of decentralization is not an easy assignment. Yet, an effort has been made to examine the level of decentralization of power in the local government organizations in Bangladesh. The previous assessment of the decentralization discloses that there is an elaborate arrangement of local government in Bangladesh. But it's working undergo from some intrinsic in constancy and the shifting from time to time for political convenience. It is obvious that devolution is the best potent form of decentralization. The central government handovers power for decision-making, funding, and administration to the local government entities when decentralizing tasks. However, in the situation of Bangladesh, it is perceived that the central government decentralizes tasks to the local government entities by control over them. It is a matter of fact, the decentralization policy of Bangladesh is largely grounded in the philosophies of deconcentration and delegation. In these two forms, authority is reserved by the central government to workout control over the events the local government entities. If we think about the LG entities, it is apparent that these organizations have imperfect decision-making authority. But if they have authority, they continue to be responsible to local entities of central government. Decentralization strategies have come into influence on the foundation of an agreed of commendations put onward by the Government-selected commission. Though such recommendations are thought to be prepared after discussions with all interested parties, such initiatives have been inattentive in most circumstances. It has been seen that there is no symbol of the stakeholders. Wholly the commissions gave recommendations to take into concern the government's intention and inclinations over power distribution with the local organizations. In these situations, the requirement and result of decentralization become a myth. Recognizing the matters and complications involved in the exercise design of decentralization in Bangladesh is the main part of the paper. The key matters and difficulty in smooth functioning of LGIs are in the following:

### Colonial Maintenance Pattern of Local Government

The origin of the local government organization in Bangladesh is generally termed as colonial, as it is embedded in the colonial inheritance. Around two hundred years Bangladesh was a colony of the British and nearby about 30 years under Pakistani rule. The colonial form of management, categorized by elitists and indifferent nature, is predominant still now. Organizational officers functioning at diverse level are largely administrative in direction and isolated from the general people. The British monarchs delivered nomination method in the composition of local government. The same exercise followed by the Pakistani rulers. Their determinations were to cover control over the local organizations by the nominated participants organized with the bureaucrats (Hossain, 2005). The nomination arrangement in the constitution of local government has been observed same in Bangladesh. The nomination system practiced in Bangladesh is lacked by democracy and decentralized local government.

### **Political Leadership**

Improper national level political leadership makes the decentralization of local government slow and sluggish. There exists a solid point of view in favor of an MP's part considering their familiarity with the local condition. Participation of an MP in development activities in LSIs confirm selection of the important projects to be executed by the local government organizations. They can play a vital role to communicate local needs in parliament. This is in fact stabilize democracy in Bangladesh (Siddiqui, 1994). Conversely, there are opinions that an advisory role of MP's over local government is not favourable to arrange a feasible local government system (Sarker, 2003). More essentially, their control over local progress projects will generate more prospects for corruption, politicization and patronage dissemination.

### **Dependency on Central Government**

Traditionally, developing states did not have much anxiety for local organizations under colonial rule considered by centralism, administrative control, and greatly dependency of local-level on the central level. The colonial institution having inadequate independence and reliance of local organizations persisted throughout the postcolonial era in spite of several administrative reform activities for decentralization (Haque, 1997). However, Bangladesh has a past of decentralization for the former more than a few decades, the arrangement of government remains centralized even at present. There is inadequate freedom of the entities at the sub-national level in the matter of spending duties and allocation of resources. Local government entities do not perform a noteworthy role in providing public facilities, such as education and health facilities. It is quite debatable whether devolution of power to local authorities would increase the worth of public properties; stimulate local resource deployment or promotion of local opinions in public service assessments. The arrangement of local government is as well very complicated. There exist two - three transitional layers of administration as deconcentrated local agencies of the central government. These intermediary layers do not work the determination of decentralized intermediary authorities. In fact, no decentralized intermediary governments are in exist in Bangladesh (Paul & Goel, 2010).

### **Lack of Authority and Power**

The LGIs organizations in Bangladesh have continued to restrict within the authority of particular development tasks from the very beginning. These organizations have no ability to use power over governing administration (Panday, 2005). Even diverse organizations of the central government manage diverse development tasks including education, welfare, social welfare, public health, etc. that fall in the purview of the LG. Thus, laws do not permit the UPs to be included in executing the development projects originated by diverse government divisions. Even the arrangements of affiliation among the LG and different field level organizations of the central government are not properly described. In this situation, it can be assumed that the LG

has been provided authority to arrange with the matters associated with the development management only. In general, their functions and duties are administered by the local entity executives of the central government. Therefore, the LG kept under the continuous observation of officials and devolution of power was not exercised.

#### **Lack of Accountability**

The accountability level of local government organization is very poor. Politically elected representatives are incapable to control their staff and cannot serve the local services properly. Civil service officers and local level leaders blame one another for inadequate service supply. It reduces their accountability to the local people. Furthermore, the local body of voters does not even identify about the resources available to the local government and how the funds would be used.

#### **Administrative Weakness and Lack of Political Will**

The political will is the best need for the policy formulation and execution. But the national leaders are not willing to make decentralization and the improvement of local government. In the execution procedure of decentralization the political will of the state appears to be so narrow. Decentralization is a first political urgency, however, it can be observed that the executive organ, parliamentary and local level bureaucrats are its prime promoters or rivals. No one of the past efforts was settled upon by the political leaders and a greater portion of the administration.

#### **Lack of Competent Personnel**

With the purpose of making strong the LG organizations, the formal capability on the issue of equating human proficiency and logistic support need be reinforced. Mainstream of the members and chairmen of the LG entities does not have sufficient understanding and knowledge of the working processes and tasks of LGIs. They also have lacked in the appropriate knowledge that is compulsory to sort out the difficult instructions on planning, budgeting and operation of funds. Besides, the elected administrators and salaried employee of the LG entities do not provide sufficient training to make them proficient of carrying out a huge work.

#### **Lack of Essential Discourse on Local Governance**

Ideally, local government is an essential part of the whole governance in a state. In contemporary days in Bangladesh, many discussions have focused on the catastrophe of governance. Rule of law, corruption, illegalization of politics, increase of political intemperance, privatization, commercial segment reorganization are the utmost programme of the reform dialogue. But unexpectedly, reforms of local government have not got much consideration from any interested party, as well as the international donor organizations (Sarker, 2006). As a result, there is a noticeable nonexistence of supporters who can careful to initiate the local government programme as a regular planned objective. Puzzlingly the reform consideration has dropped.

### **Patron-client Relationship**

At the local level, the political structure is reinforced by a method of patronage. A patron-client relationship always exists there. Usually, local government assistances have been under the regulation of the rural elite class. These elites have their supporters in the rural area. Then again, they are affiliated with the political leaders of central level. These central level political leaders treat these rural level elites as junior followers and utilize them for legitimate the control, generating a power base, and pleasing them as vote banks by way of these elites have active control over the poor segments of the people (Sarker, 2006). Resource distributions from upper levels of government to rural level local government entities are decided to a great degree, by private or party political requirements rather than by necessity.

### **Insufficient Infrastructure and Communication Facilities**

The capability of local areas in our state to perform development duties was restricted by adversarial physical situations and infrastructure adversities, lack of shipping facilities, roads and communication networks. Due to poor infrastructural situations in the rural area, the communication between local and central government was inadequate. In the earlier, it comes to be very tough for local bureaucrats to assemble assets, manage field staff, distribute facilities and circulate information.

### **Recommendations**

It is essential to overcome in such situations that can aid in reduce the suffering. According to Ahmed (2015), “Nothing other than a ‘political settlement’ of the current stalemate can put the policy makers and LG functionaries back on their feet, or to a point from where fresh thinking can be linked with the existing development”. Thus, the following recommendations are made to overcome this situation.

#### **Maintenance of Democracy in Political Process**

Local government is ordered on the essence of devolution, is a substructure of a superior political structure of a state. Local government organizations need democratic arrangement at the local and urban levels. Currently political front runners of both the ruling party and the opposition party should put emphasis on the democratic political courses in the state and that should be sustained.

#### **Administrative Reform**

Several efforts were made to reform the administration structure and develop the proficiency of public administration over the past few decades. Though, these efforts have not as so far brought about the preferred results. However, the matters concerning to administrative reform are wide-ranging and multifaceted. Delivery of service is of serious significance for refining the living condition of the poor people. The matter of harmonizing social parity with development

may create the foundation for the preparation of macro level policy and its execution to ensure local government decentralization.

### **Stronger Political Leadership**

The central government utilized the local government organizations as their comprehensive support at the local level. In Bangladesh, diverse government procedures may from the same philosophy. Consequently, they carried structural variations to the local government organizations to assist their political determination. Thus, such tiers were not proven as autonomous units. In such conditions, a strong political dream is required to sort the local government structure powerful by decentralizing power from the central level.

### **Sound Planning of Decentralization Strategy**

Decentralization strategies have to be sensibly planned, carefully administered and powerfully supported by stone of managerial and political arrangement of the state. Government should gather data by opinion group, open discussion, parliamentary debate, etc. before taking any programme. After that, an orientation programme might be taken for the officials. Vital political, financial and communal debate matters concerning decentralization strategy essential to be determined before executing decentralization programme.

### **Harmonization**

The harmonization method at the local level essentials to be much reinforced. Different development projects committees of the local organizations should be formed involving the related departments and together with participation of local people in such committees need to be ensured.

### **Proper Decentralization**

Decentralization of authorities and tasks to local government organizations cannot be confined in paper rather definite strategies and instructions should be generated for proper decentralization. For attaining this, the tasks, authorities, distributions and accountabilities of local government organizations should be indicated.

### **Consensus Building at National Level**

In a country like Bangladesh, it can be stated here that a simple constitutional protection for local government is not sufficient where the constitution is repeatedly amended. It requires a national consensus among the diverse authority owners and their contestants about the sound political system along with local political system. Thus, it is essential to have a national consensus at every administrative unit such as union and upazilla, and this should be assimilated in the constitution.

### **Planning and Implementation in Participatory Way**

It is indispensable that the planning method of the government is sound and harmonized. The government should reflect the decentralization strategy as a portion of the all-inclusive planning of the state instead of an isolated policy. The government should combine the opinions of diverse civil society groups into planning, formulating and executing the local government strategies. Thus that should be representative policy of the general people.

### **Participation of Women in Decision-Making Process in LGIs**

The organization of the local government bodies should be planned in such a technique as to confirm attendance of more women in the course of decision-making. Though there is a reservation provision for women of three seats in Union Parishad, more women should be involved in the decision-making process as women found a half of our total population. Thus, the government has to add one more amendment to the prevailing acts.

### **Capability Development of the Elected Representatives**

Empowerment devoid of is worthless, and therefore, the government requires organizing the capability development programmes for the elected representatives of LGIs so that they can perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

### **Establishment a Local Government Commission**

A distinct and autonomous local government commission could be created to supervise all the matters concerning to the local government institutions (Panday, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The Decentralization in Bangladesh has exposed that the stability of the local government has entirely been reliant on the political views and approaches of consecutive rules. Very efforts to transform local government designed for aiding the personal gain of the rulers than the gain of the ruled (Jahan, 1997). It is obvious from the aforementioned explanation that Bangladesh, in spite of its fairly long history of decentralization, unable to stimulate a perfect apparatus of a decentralized scheme of governance. Finally, it can be said that at the moment, no complete representative decentralization is found in Bangladesh, relatively there is some existence of administrative decentralization. If the government or respective authority follows some proposed procedures for execution of the decentralization as guiding principle in the immediate future, it could be sustain.

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