

## **Good Governance & Bangladesh**

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Governance ordinarily means power of governing or method of government. There is a view that it mainly refers to running governments and other public agencies or private ones with social purposes.

Various agencies have defined governance and something of an intellectual “cottage industry” has arisen around the term.

The 1992 Commission of Global Governance defines governance “as the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs.” The World Bank defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources.

The UNDP views governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. Tokyo Institute of Technology describes governance as the complex set of values, norms, processes and institutions by which society manages its development and resolves conflict, formally and informally.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan defined good governance as ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, promoting transparency and capacity in public administration.

One golden thread runs through all the definitions is the accountability and transparency in government actions and emphasizes the necessity and relevance of public morality in the conduct of the government for the welfare of the public.

In this connection, it is necessary to distinguish between the scope of state activities, which refers to the different functions and goals taken by the government and the strength of state power, or the ability of states to plan and execute policies and to enforce laws cleanly and transparently, what is now commonly referred to as state or institutional capacity.

The problem of many developing countries is that in the process of reducing state scope they either decrease state strength or generate demands for new types of state capabilities

This new recognition of the priority of strength/capacity over scope is reflected in a comment made by Milton Friedman, dean of orthodox free market economists in 2001. He noted that a decade earlier he would have had three words for countries making the transition from socialism, “privatize, privatize and privatize”. But “ I was wrong”, he continued. “It turns out that rule of law is more basic than privatization.”

*Democracy in Bangladesh:*

Democracy in Bangladesh has not been institutionalized. Politics continues to be dominated by big money, goons and people with little background and training in formal politics. Furthermore politics is confrontational between the two major parties.

Elections have become such an expensive affair that ordinary citizens act only as passive voters. Power and authority are concentrated at the top echelons of government. Corruption has become so endemic that it has engulfed the entire society.

The dominant position of the executive is widely known. The parliamentary system that is in existence can best be termed a prime ministerial system. The parliament is content to play second fiddle to the executive. The powers of the President and that of the Prime Minister remain unbalanced, the President being only a ceremonial head. Some of President's powers were taken away by the 1991 Twelfth Amendment Act of the Constitution.

Democracy is inextricably linked with good governance. Democracy promotes the rule of law and human rights, transparent and fair elections coupled with a competitive political process, a free and independent media, stronger civil society and greater citizen participation in government, and governance structures that are efficient, responsive and accountable.

#### *A Year of Change: 2007 in Bangladesh:*

One of the major commitments of the Caretaker government headed by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, installed on 12 January, 2007 is to set in motion the process of good governance in the country and prepare the stage for building a corruption-free society. The Care-Taker government began fighting against what it described as 3-M, meaning muscle power, money power and misuse of power.

The Institute of Governance Studies, BRAC University, has released its second report on the state of governance in Bangladesh 2007, in May 2008 with its sub-title 'Expectations, Commitments, Challenges'.

The report attempts to depict objectively the issues of good governance by the Non-Party Care Taker government. It calls the year 2007 a "Year of Change" in Bangladesh that may set a precedent in shaping new contours of governance in the country.

The report contains six chapters and totals 174 pages. Chapter one deals with an overview leading to the state of emergency in January 11, 2007. Chapter two describes a change in political governance. Chapter three gives a brief account of perception of governance. Chapter four enumerates crime, violence and insecurity. Chapter five discusses governance of NGO and Chapter six contains conclusions.

Chapter two of the Report reviews a process of reforms adopted by the Non-Party Care-taker government. The government has adopted reforms that include some of the key government institutions, vital for good governance. For example, the Anti-Corruption

Commission, Public Service Commission, and the Election Commission together with the Election Commission Secretariat have been re-constituted.

The report concludes indicating that the “Care-taker government has demonstrated its desire to rid the system of undemocratic elements by launching an ambitious anti-corruption drive”. More than 150 top politicians were arrested on charges of corruption and misuse of power. Some of them have been convicted by the courts.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has devoted all its energy under its able leadership of Chairman Lt. General Mashhud Choudhury (retd) to make the public aware how much cost corruption does to the nation’s welfare. Some economists say that Bangladesh would have double-digit economic growth if it were a corruption-free government.

More importantly the long-awaited separation of judiciary from executive, a requirement of Article 22 of the Constitution, was finally implemented by the Care-taker government with the agreement of the Supreme Court.

The four new regulations are the Judicial Service Commission Rule 2007, Bangladesh Judicial Service Pay Commission Rule 2007, Bangladesh Judicial Service (Service Constitution, Composition, Recruitment, Suspension, Dismissal and Removal) Rules 2007, and Bangladesh Judicial Service (Posting, Promotion, Leave, Control, Discipline and other Service Condition) Rules 2007.

The report indicates that one sector where improvements in governance “will certainly have the largest impact is the human security and crime and violence prevention... It is now up to the community to decide the policies that will most effectively identify and address the sources of human security.”

Human security, according to UNDP, includes economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, political security. Attempts to implement this human security agenda have led to the emergence of two major schools of thought on how to best practice human security — "Freedom from Fear" and "Freedom from Want.”

#### *Conclusion:*

The Caretaker government has made some of the state institutions effective and dynamic. The actions taken against the corrupt people are likely to have long-term impact on the society. It demonstrated that no one is above the law and the so-called “untouchables” can be accountable under the laws.

Often NGOs generate new and innovative ideas for the community to address the social problems. They tend to mobilize the community and enable individuals to take an active role in community activities.

The BRAC Report on governance is a commendable addition to resources for scholars, academics and government officials.