

# Essay on Local Government of Bangladesh

Hints: Introduction, Defining local government, Evolution in Bangladesh, Present structure of local government, Expected level and responsibility, Local government in socio-economic development, Women participation in local government, Local government in rural development, Conclusion

## Introduction

Today, the state is being operated by fragmentation of government. It means small units as the government have been created to decentralize the government or administrative mechanism. This fragmentation management system, as a whole, is called the local government. City Corporation, Pourashava, District Parishad, Upazilla Parishad, Union Council are the units of local government.

## Defining local government

Professor R.M. Jackson said, "Local government is a media through which various welfare and service are obtained." Jackson further added, "This service and welfare is obtained by the local or decentralized institution. The United Nations Organization defined local government as a determinant of the decentralized constituency and political smaller units. It has the right illegally to imply say and to appoint labor."

## Evolution in Bangladesh

The idea of local government is old enough. Even in the Indian sub-continent, the idea has been made or imparted long ago. Since the British period, the idea was brought in our country. Though it has been late enough to be established for the lack of necessary

infrastructure and environment, the invention of the whole context has proved that there are four stages of evolution of local government in Bangladesh.

The stages of local government idea's evolution in Bangladesh are as follows

**Pre-British period:** In earlier ages, the Indian local government system was in the form of 'village panchayet', where there is one or more person would have been elected to execute the law, rules, and regulations. Besides, the regulatory body called 'panchayet' had to execute the festivals and other socio-cultural programs. During the medieval age or the Muslim rulers, this form of local government got accomplished. There was a four-layer local government system in the country during the Mughal empire. The units had the responsibility of drawing tax mainly. The four layers are Province, District, Paragona, village. Subadar, Shikdar, Founder, heads of the village were respectively the source of the power of these four layers.

**British period:** Changes and transformations came when the British took the power of rule. There was a rule declared in 1870 named "Gram Chowkidari Ain" (village defense law) to rule the villages. The force was usually formed with five men called the 'Chowkidar' with the direct supervision of the 'district commissioner'. Later 'in 1885, the law of local autonomous government had been passed. Lord Ripon had announced some reform lately during his regime named, Local Board, District Board, Union Committee, etc. Before this reformation, the 'Chowkidari' system was independent.

**Pakistan period:** Until 1956, after the Independence of Pakistan, the local government went back to its previous form. In 1956, General Ayub Khan announced the idea of basic democracy when there was another shift in local government. This shift transformed the Union into a "Union Council". There was a Thana Council amid the District

Council and Union Council. At that time, Union Council became inactive indeed.

Bangladesh period: When Bangladesh became independent, the president of Bangladesh termed at his 7th (ordinance) a change number one and by his 22 ordinances made a change number 2 in the local government system. Firstly the Union Council was changed to 'biliary committee' and next to 'panchayet committee' where the head and other numbers had to be selected. In 1973, there was another shift in local government, which had made the 'Union Panchayat' the 'Union council', and the nine members including the vice-chairman was made subject to be elected in direct poll. In 1973, the first Union Council election was held in Bangladesh.

The 'Local Government Ordinance of 1976 replaced the previous form of vice chairman' and newly introduced several representatives, two from women and two from the peasants, so that, their correspondence might be ensured. In 1980, there was an addition in the 'Local Government Ordinance' named "solidarity village government". There were provisions for ahead of the village, a couple of women representatives, and a total of eleven members of that body. Thana Council was made Upazilla Council in 1982. In 1988, the District Council Ordinance had been passed and, therefore, some changes were made. There was mention of 9 units or wards instead of 3 wards. Complete entrepreneurship in local government reformation is the Local government (Gram/village council) Ordinance, 1997. According to this change, there was proposed to have a chairman with 9 male members and 3 female members. The last change in the local government system was in 2007.

The present structure of Local government in Bangladesh

The local government structure would be four layered. The layers

would be, (1) District Parishad (2) Upazila Parishad (3) Union Parishad (4) Village Parishad. Theoretically saying the present form of local government is restrained up to Union Council. Experts also comment that the district council is not a form of local government as there are different methods of electing or appointing the head.

In Upazilla Council there should have a chairman who would have to be elected by the adult voters of an Upazila area; another chairman for the municipality if may, and 3 women representatives elected by the women poll. There should be a chairman, elected by the direct poll of the adult voters, one member from each ward, and three women members in a Union Council body.

#### Expected level and responsibility

Though effective, there are three layers of local government existing now in Bangladesh. In fact, as an effective body and an old form, only the Union Council has been privileged, till now. Due to various lacking, the current form of the Union Council cannot reach its utmost level. If we make a comparison of duty, government, we shall, no doubt, find some imbalances. For example, the compulsory duty of the District Council is to build locality, culvert, bridge, guest house, etc. in places that are not reserved by the government or Upazilla or municipality. There are 23 to 25 kinds of works that Upazilla Council is liable to do. Among those two important are civil and criminal cases. Besides, Upazilla Councils are also liable to do administrative work, revenue collection, taxation, expansion of agriculture, development of agriculture, etc.

The works or duties or responsibilities of Union Council include not a less volume of tasks. To protect government properties, law & order-preserving, protest illegal actions, the health of mass people. public arrangements, sports, and cultural activities, environmental

works and so many tasks mainly related to social welfare are included in a list of Union Council's tasks.

Village government is liable to take the burden of sharing Union Council's task in many cases, though there are some legally affiliated tasks for a village government; for example, Birth and death regulation, marriage and divorce, various kinds of surveying, primary education ensuring, to communicate with the guardian of the students of madrasah and primary schools; sanitation management, healthy toilet management, etc.

#### Local government Socio-economic development

Indeed, every unit of the local government has some common tasks.

Revenue-tax collection: If the collection of tax and revenue is well, the income of the government becomes increasing and as a result, socio-economic progress becomes easy.

Controlling over the law and order situation of certain areas: As a result, terrorism, robbery, theft becomes decreasing and peace with security and stability remains sound around the country.

Consequently, the image of the local areas will be enlightened and the people will get employment opportunities in industrial and other sectors. Thus, socio-economic development may occur.

Development of agriculture, that means, well equipment in cultivation, management in fertilizer, seed, pesticide, insecticide, etc.

Promoting poultry, hatchery and farming might be fruitful to develop socio-economic context. Because Bangladesh is an agricultural country.

Protection of government properties, various social-economic development and welfare activities, such as bridge construction, culvert, road, and high ways, library, gardening, sports ground,

helping poor people, education, family planning, co-operative activities, etc.

So, whether the socio-economic development relies vastly on the proper and effective operation of the local government and non-active local government is responsible for the backwardness of a socio-economy.

### Women participation in local government

Presently the women are enjoying better participation in the local government units. In 1997, the Union Council regulation was amended according to the policy of increment of women participation. The Union Council Act of 1997 had been adopted to provide women participation at the ward level. In that act, it was strongly recommended to create a member for each of the nine wards of which every three wards must have a woman member. A woman vice-chairman is also a recommended post. During the 1999 and 2003 Union Council elections, women participated spontaneously. The National Parliament has passed the 'Municipally Amendment Bill-98'. The ministerial decision has been made on the deviation of the main ward of the municipality into three words where each of the wards would be headed by an elected commissioner, but also one-third of the commissioners will be reserved for women.

### Local government in rural development

The socio-economic development of the country mainly depends on the effectiveness of the local government bodies. As, the major part of Bangladesh is a rural area, so the local government mainly deals with and acts in the rural areas. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the success, failure and to reform local government units according to demand. Local government has many responsibilities in advancing the

sectors like education, health, agriculture, family planning, report and survey regularly, socio-economic stability, social awareness, youth development plans, cultural and sports program of villages.

The local government has the responsibility, and it ought to arrange and manage the above-mentioned areas highly progressive. To make the youth of the rural areas, local government can take various initiatives like farming, co-operation, etc.

## Conclusion

The local Government Act is an organ of the national government. The responsibility is of the central government to decentralize power and tasks properly and effectively. Not only to activate a government at the grass-root level but also to change and develop the country's original approach which is spiked with poverty, ignorance, etc. should be eliminated with a better function of local government.