



Evolution of Local Government in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The rural system of local government of Bangladesh has three tiers – namely Zila Parishad, Upazilla Parishad and Union Parishad. The important aspect of local governance is that decentralization should occur at three different levels - political, administrative and fiscal. The primary responsibility of the Zilla, Upazilla Parishad (UZP) and Union Parishad (UP) is to carry out functions needed for the overall development of the rural areas. In this paper the system of Local Government system is discussed, at the same time the charter of duties of the responsible persons are discussed briefly.

Introduction:

Local governments have existed in some form or another across the Indian subcontinent for ages. Village government in the Indian subcontinent took on various forms and functions at various times and locations. Despite the differences in the forms, India had two distinct systems: Headman and Panchayat. The headman was not an elected official, but he hailed from the village's most powerful family. He was important for two reasons: all political and administrative connections between villager and authorities had to go via him and he was involved in tax collection from the village. The Panchayat was a democratically elected body that had both executive and judicial powers. The village Panchayats remained unaltered in their functions despite changes in kings, emperors, and dynasties. Several experiments with the local government system were conducted throughout the nearly 200 years of British control over the Indian subcontinent (1765-1947). The spirit and tradition of Muslim government were not altered by the British. In the early years, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 and later enactments established a system of rural local administration that helped to keep the British Raj in India afloat. Later, local government reform became favourite phenomena among Pakistan's and Bangladesh's military rulers, who discovered that these institutions are useful in achieving their own hegemonic ambitions.

Perception of Local Government System:

Local government refers to elected or appointed local entities with regulatory and development responsibilities, as well as central government staff. Local government units are subdivided into smaller units that are more accessible to local residents. The Bengal Local Government Act of 1885 established the first legal foundation for local administrations at three levels: union, thana, and district. A local government system has two major components:

- Discretion allows local governments to perform essential functions such as representing citizens' (local population) preferences in decision-making processes.
- Mechanisms to hold local governments accountable for using their discretion appropriately.

Decentralization at three different levels - political, administrative, and fiscal - is another key feature of local governance. The institutional arrangements for separation of powers among the executive, legislature, and judicial bodies, election laws and the structure of electoral competition, and the characteristics of party systems all influence the local government's political discretion over non-elected members of local government. Fiscal discretion, on the other hand, implies that local governments have sufficient income to provide services, and is influenced by intergovernmental transfer systems and borrowing and revenue collection constraints. A local government has the following characteristics:

- It is established by law.
- It is generally made up of elected officials.
- It has administrative control over a specified area and the authority to manage the specified subjects.
- It has the authority to levy taxes within its jurisdiction to raise funds.
- It reports to and is subordinated to the national government.

Local Government according to the Constitution of Bangladesh:

Several provisions of our constitution express the idea of encouraging local governance in Bangladesh. "The State shall foster local Government institutions formed of representatives of the areas concerned, and special representation shall be given, as far as feasible, to peasants, workers, and women in such institutions," says Article 9. The essence of this broad notion may also be seen in Article 14, which states that "it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to emancipate the toiling masses—peasants and workers—and backward sections of the people from all forms of exploitation." Articles 59 and 60 of the constitution provide a more elaborate wording, which states in Article 59:

- Local government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.
- Everybody such as is referred to in clause 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-
 - Administration and the work of public officers.
 - The maintenance of public order.
 - The preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.

Local Government System in Bangladesh:

Except for the Divisional Council, all local government bodies in Bangladesh were dissolved by President's Order Number 7 of 1972 shortly after the country's independence. Later, the Divisional Council was disbanded, and each division was given its own Divisional Development Board. Union Council has been renamed Union Panchayet, Thana Council has been renamed Thana Development Committee, and District Council has been renamed Zilla Committee. The name of the Union Panchayet was changed to Union Parishad by President's Order No. 22 of 1973. The Local Government Ordinance of 1976 established three types of local government bodies. Union Parishad represents the Union, Thana Parishad represents the Thana, and ZillaParishad represents the District. The following are the main characteristics of these bodies:

- Union Parishad.
 - One Chairman and nine elected members, three from each of the union's three wards.
 - SDO has nominated two female members.
 - SDO nominates two peasant members. (The 1979 amendment was dropped in 1983.
 - The UP's tenure was five years. The previous Parishad, on the other hand, might continue to function after its term had expired until the first meeting of the new Parishad.
 - Charged with forty responsibilities. Public welfare, peace and order, revenue collection, development, and adjudication were the key functions.
- Thana Parishad.
 - All of a Thana's UP Chairmen were ex officio representative members. Ex officio members included all thana level officials.
 - The Chairman was the SDO, and the Vice-Chairman was the CO (Development).
 - Prepared a Thana Development Plan by coordinating all UP development efforts.
 - No ability to generate revenue. Only receives government assistance.
- ZilaParishad.
 - Elected members, official members, and women members were to make up ZP.
 - A ZilaParishad is made up of a Chairman, fifteen members and five women members in reserved seats, according to the ZilaParishad Act of 2000.
 - ZPs are in charge of overseeing UpazilaParishad activities, conducting district-level economic, social, and cultural development programs, and preparing road, bridge, and culvert project proposals.
- Government grants, taxes, tolls, and fees were the main sources of revenue.

On October 23, 1982, the administration at the Thana level was reorganized under the Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance. The development operations at the local level were moved to Thana Parishad under the reformed structure. The Thana Parishad Chairmen were given the authority to hold thana level government officials accountable to them. The ancient thanas were first recognized as upgraded thanas and then renamed as upazilas under this Ordinance. The following ordinances and acts were passed during this regime:

- The Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983.
- The Local Government (ZilaParishad) Act 1988.
- The Local Government Parishad Act of Bandarban Hill District, 1989.
- The Khagrachari Hill District Local Government Parishad Act was enacted in 1989.
- The Rangamati Hill District Local Government Parishad Act was enacted at 1989.

Structure and Function of Upazila Parishad:

The UZP is led by an elected chairman and made up of various members, including two vice chairpersons, one male and one female, UP members, the mayor of Pourashava (if any), and one-third female UP members within an Upazila. The chairperson and vice-chairs have been chosen, but women members from various UPs and Pourashavas have still to be chosen. The UZP's adviser is the MP of the concerned Upazila. The UZP's major task is to carry out functions necessary for the Upazila's general development. The following are the key functions of UZP as defined by the Upazila Parishad Act 1998:

- Create a five-year plan for Upazila and other development plans.
- Oversee and coordinate the activities of various government departments.
- Build and maintain inter-union access roads.
- Comply with government directives to ensure that surface water is used efficiently.
- Comply with government directives to ensure that surface water is used efficiently.
- Ensure effective sanitation, sewerage, and clean drinking water.
- Encourage people to continue their education and provide assistance in this regard.
- Monitor and supervise secondary and madrasa education.
- Take steps to support the establishment and growth of cottage and small businesses.
- Promote and coordinate the activities of cooperative societies and non-governmental organizations.
- Work with appropriate authorities to develop and implement programs for the development of children and women, as well as to promote sports and cultural activities.
- Implement agricultural, livestock, fisheries, and forest resource development programs.
- Review the local law and order situation and police activities and submit reports to the appropriate authorities.
- Encourage self-employment, provide assistance for poverty-relief programs, and coordinate existing efforts.
- Assist the UP as needed and coordinate its activities.
- Raise public awareness about terrorism, theft, robbery, and smuggling, and take preventative measures.
- Take care of the environment and engage in social forestry and other similar development activities.
- Carry out any other tasks assigned by the government.

Duties and Responsibilities of Upazila Chairman:

The UZP's governing process involves a variety of actors, each with their own set of responsibilities. The Upazila Chairman (UZC) is the most powerful of the many actors, at least in theory. He has a higher standing and more power than the other actors because he is the chief executive of the UZP. The chairman's functions and responsibilities are defined by the UZP Act and the rules enacted under it. In his absence, a member of the chairman panel takes over as chair of the UZP meetings. The chairman panel includes the two vice-chairs. The UZC is in charge of ensuring that the UZP's decisions are correctly implemented, among other things. She or he can also exert some control. While the UZC has some discretion in choosing UZP workers and enforcing disciplinary measures against them, the UZC's jurisdiction over central government officials moved to the UZP is limited. Before suggesting to higher authorities any action, including withdrawal, transfer, or disciplinary proceedings against transferred officials, she needs the UZP's consent. The UZC's other responsibilities include collecting tax, rates, and fees imposed by the UZP, writing letters to others, and signing agreements on the UZP's behalf. In general, his or her ability to perform anything without the UZP is severely limited. He or she is not above the UZP; rather, he or she is responsible to it. The UZP has the power to dismiss him, but only with central consent.

Working System in UZ Parishad:

In general, as the leader of the UZP, the UZC is responsible for setting the agenda, which must be distributed to members at least seven days in advance. All matters must be settled in general meetings of the UZP and/or its committees, according to the Rules. Special gatherings are also possible. Financial (e.g., all matters relating to the Parishad fund, annual budget of the Parishad, proposals relating to the levy of taxes, rates, tolls and fees, etc.) and developmental (e.g., all development proposals and schemes pertaining to transferred subjects, all matters relating to annual budget of the Parishad, etc.), operational (for example, matters dealing to UZP workers, including those moved to it, formation of committees and subcommittees, review and approval of vice-chairs' suggestions, and review of the Upazila's law and order situation

SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE:

At the macro level, numerous factors influence a country's development, including health, education, income, and the expansion of diverse economic sectors such as industry, agriculture, energy, transportation, and fiscal and monetary policy. Higher levels of development result in a much higher likelihood of democracy and stability. Increased national income also expands the middle class, which has historically been associated with moderation, tolerance, and democracy in political thought. The following are some of the important areas where local government can play a vital influence in socioeconomic growth. Those are listed below.

Program on Population Control:

The government, donors, and non-governmental organizations are all working together to reduce the birth rate. The current Crude Birth Rate (CBR) is 19.2%. This needs to be drastically reduced. In the areas of business loans, education loans, stipends, free books, and the nourishment for education program, it has been intended to provide special consideration to parents with one or two children.

Maternal and Child Mortality:

The infant mortality rate is currently 3.5 percent, and the maternal death rate is .209 percent. The government and others are implementing special efforts to lower child and maternal death rates. UZP shall continue to monitor the Community Clinic Service and special nutrition initiatives that have been implemented in this regard.

Nutrition Program Based on Education:

Nutrition program based on education. The literacy rate in the country is 49 percent. This is insufficient for a country aiming to achieve middle-income status by 2015. Furthermore, 94.83 percent of primary school students and 53.61 percent of secondary school students enrol. After primary school, 39.8% of students drop out. As a result, an education-based nutrition program should be prioritized from the start.

Disadvantage Group Education Program:

Physically challenged children require special attention and education. Furthermore, due to the low pay of child labour, some poor families do not wish to send their children to school. Governments, NGOs, and donor countries and organizations have all launched special programs in this area.

Regulate and Monitor Local Labour Force:

Bangladesh has a labour force of 56.7 million people, with 11.8 million unpaid family workers and 10.6 million day labourers. Furthermore, the country has 4.5 million unemployed youths. Unemployed or underemployed workers is a hindrance to a country's progress. As a result, these individuals must be recognized and encouraged to enter the skilled local and worldwide labour market.

Vocational and Technical Training Institute:

The country requires an adult population with the necessary skills and technology to work both at home and abroad. Due to a lack of skills, almost 80% of the labour force is employed in low-wage jobs. As a result, technical and vocational training centers at the Upazila and Union levels are required.

Various Income Projects:

Locals may seek employment in small-scale businesses. The population eligible to participate in the work force is 56.7 million people. 54.1 million people are employed, whereas 2.6 million are unemployed. There are also 26.83 million people employed in domestic employment and 14.67 million who are unemployed. The appropriate institution to survey, plan, and execute such projects will be the local government.

Urban Local Government:

City Corporations and Municipalities has some specific responsibilities as follows:

- Maintains water, drainage and sanitation system.
- Maintains marriage, death and birth registrations.
- Maintains public health, medical facilities, hospitals, clinics and various health centers.
- Maintains public bathing places and various dhobi ghats.
- Maintains dairy sectors and fisheries.
- Maintains various slaughter houses.
- Controls various farms, animal husbandry and stray animals.
- Prepares regulation and control, developing plans and various projects on community development.
- Maintains various streets including controlling of traffic.
- Maintains fire service and civil defence.
- Maintains burial cremation places.
- Maintains government gardens, agriculture and forests.
- Maintains and controlling various educational institutions and libraries.
- Organized various cultural programs, shows and fairs.
- Any other social welfare.

Conclusion

System of local government of Bangladesh has changed via numerous examinations. Though the current approach appears to be quite effective, several enhancements are required. For example, concentration at the upazila level should be strengthened to eliminate coordination failures and improve localized services. Balancing the executive and monitoring tasks of LGIs, reforming local political institutions to strengthen local councils, maintaining local control over local functionaries, and creating a streamlined local government grant system in Bangladesh.

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