

Good Governance in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects

Badrul Hasan¹
Munira Sultana²
Md. Nazmul Hasan³

Abstract : In the recent time, 'governance' and 'good governance' are being increasing used in development literature. A dramatic change has come in public administration and the paradigm shift towards good governance and sustainable developments. Day by day, the intellectuals, bureaucrats and civil society members are accepting the spirit of the concept and conceptualizing it in their own experience and environment. In Bangladesh, all the internal and external actors of politics, administration and development are emphasizing on the need for good governance. Good governance is almost imperative for the socioeconomic development of Bangladesh. But our country has been facing virus of poor or malgovernance which is visible in every arena of public life. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to evaluate the overall state of governance in Bangladesh from an institutional perspective. It also analyzes the bottlenecks and prospects of good governance in Bangladesh. Finally, this paper suggests a set of measures to be undertaken in an effort to establish good governance in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Governance, Good Governance, Accountability, Transparency, UNDP, OECD, World Bank.

1. Introduction

Governance means the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resource for the development in an efficient and transparent way. It has now become a fashionable term in the contemporary global politics and economy that ensure goodness and quality of governance. In the recent times, particularly from the second half of 1980s, the issue of governance and good governance has been emerging at the forefront of the global agenda for development. Quality of governance is being considered as the

1 Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka

2 Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Jagannath University, Dhaka

3 Assistant Professor, School of Business, University of Information Technology & Sciences (UITS).

principal prerequisite for solving many problems and for the socio- economic development in the developing countries. This is due to fact that in spite of having abundant resource, manpower, institutions, etc., the major objective of economic growth and human development is not taking place in some countries to confront problems of poverty, civil strife, community development and above all the provision of basic services essential for the well-being of society. That is why several international organizations like the World Bank, UNDP, IMF and a good number of NGO's have started emphasizing good governance as a precondition of delivery of their services and funds. Bangladesh like other developing countries has been marked by the failure of the public sector to meet the demand of its citizens, ineffective public services, and unfavorable environment for the proper growth of the private sector, leadership crisis, lack of transparency and accountability in administration, ineffective political institutions and so on. For such poor performance in governance mechanisms, effective democratic governance continued to be the elusive golden deer that the nation doggedly sought but could not find. Against this backdrop, it is essential to examine how far Bangladesh lags behind the good governance. In this context, the focus of the present paper is to critically analyze the current state of governance and also to sketch out the impediments in the way of good governance in Bangladesh.

This paper consists of six sections. Following the introductory section, section two develops a conceptual framework on governance and good governance, including major parameters of good governance. Section three attempts to evaluate the current state of governance of Bangladesh, focusing on poor governance. Section four analyzes the major problems, especially institutional problems in the path of good governance in Bangladesh. Section five identifies the prospects of good governance in Bangladesh. Concluding remarks, including a set of recommendations for the improvement of the quality of governance in Bangladesh are provided in the section six.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study has been made with the following objectives;

1. To develop an understanding of perspectives, issues and concerns around good governance
2. To analyze the current state of governance in Bangladesh
3. To diagnose the major obstacles on the path of good governance in Bangladesh.
4. To suggest some policy and institutional measures to be undertaken in an effort to improve the governance situation of Bangladesh.

2. Conceptual Framework:

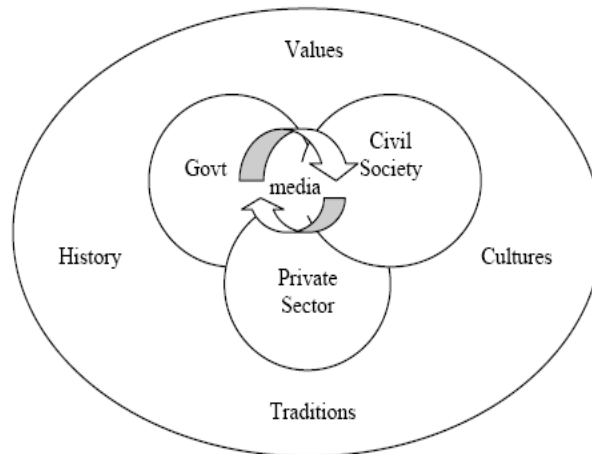
2.1 Concept of governance:

The term of governance has been derived from the Greek word "Kubernan" which means to pilot or steer (boats) and it was first used by the Greek

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philosopher Plato with regard to how to design a system of rule.¹ Governance is a multi-faceted concept that encompasses a number of political, economic and social issues concerned in the government and administration. It is an ever-changing issues of which meaning has been changing over time. Since the days of Plato and Aristotle, governance has been meant the task of running government and administration. Subsequently, governance took the different meaning and dimension. Different governance theorists and international organizations have defined the term of governance from different angles. Despite many attempts, there is still no clear-cut unanimity as to its meaning. However, to simply put it, Governance means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. The concept of governance can be applied in different contexts- global, national, institutional community.² The following figure describes governance at the national level by depicting different entities, or players that occupy the social and economic landscape.

Figure-1: Governance at national level.



Source: Hye, A. H. (2000) Governance: South Asian Perspectives, Dhaka.

Table-1: Definitions of governance

Governance means the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resource for development'.³

'Governance is the capacity of a country's institutional matrix (in which individual actors, firms, social groups, civic organizations and policy makers interact with each other) to implement and enforce public policies and to improve private sector coordination'⁴

'Governance presumes a perspective on politics and government, a way of thinking about how things happen in a polity'⁵

'Governance means those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and settling conflicts over such rules'.⁶

'Governance means how people are ruled, how the affairs at the state are administered and regulated; it refers to a nation's system of politics and how this functions in relation to public administration and law'⁷

'Governance refers to strategy, tactics, process, procedure or program for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over others in a nation, organization or locality'⁸

In view of the definitions stated above, it can be observed that governance does not mean a single thing, rather it means the interaction amongst the solution of a bunch of queries which are;

- How power is exercised?
- How power is legitimized?
- How authority is utilized in providing basic rights of its citizens?
- How authority is exercised in mobilizing the national resources towards development of its citizens as well as the state?
- How does the authority ensure security of its citizens?

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2.2 Good Governance: a conceptual voyage

The concept of governance is as old as the concept of government itself. However, in the recent times, particularly during the last decade of the twentieth century, widespread poverty, rampant corruption and other socioeconomic problems prevailing in the Sub-Saharan African countries and its linkage with the quality of governance has brought about an interest in the discussion of good governance. Since 1978, due to Un-international standardized management, i.e. especially of some countries in Latin America and Africa the super state World Bank then proposes the term of good governance.⁹ Governance has three major components: that of process, contents and deliverables. The process of governance includes factors such as transparency and accountability. Content includes values such as justice and equality. Governance cannot be all process and values. It must ensure the basic needs and security of its citizens. In this sense, it is only when all these three conditions are fulfilled that governance becomes good governance. Good governance implies an administration that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people is effective in coping with emerging problems in society by framing and implementing appropriate laws and policies.

Table-2: Definitions of Good Governance

‘Good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlighten policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of the government accountable for its action; and a strong civil society participating in the public affairs; and all behaving under rule of law’¹⁰

‘Good governance involves the self-organizing and interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state’¹¹

‘Good governance means the effective management of a country’s social and economic resource in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable equitable’¹²

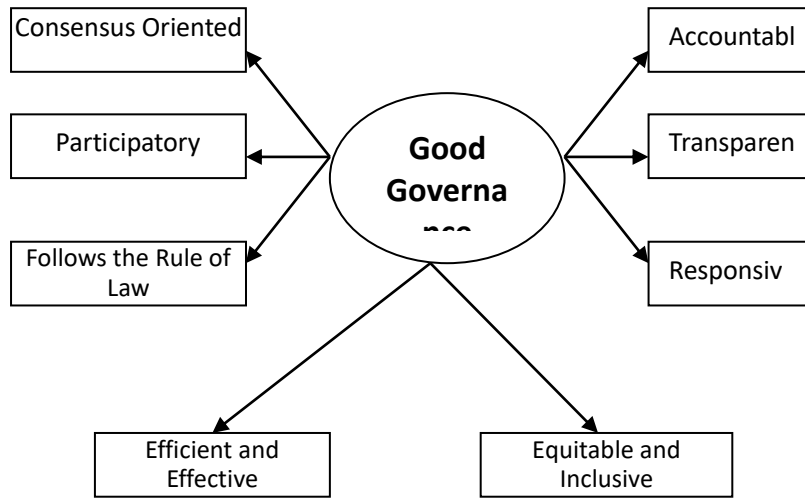
‘Good governance is the exercise of economic, political, administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It encompasses mechanisms, process and institutions through which citizens' groups articulate their interests exercise their legal rights, meet their legal obligations’¹³

2.3 Parameters of good governance

Good governance has a number of political, economic and social parameters through which the state of governance of a country can be diagnosed. Different international organizations and good governance theorists have identified different criteria of good governance from different angles.

Dhiraj Kumar Nath has identified eight major parameters of good governance, which has been depicted in the following picture.¹⁴

Figure 2: Major parameters of good governance



The World Bank has identified a number of parameters of good governance, which have assumed significance for the developed and developing countries.¹⁵These are:

1. The legitimacy of a political system which can best be achieved through regular elections and political accountability.
2. Freedom of association and participation by various socioeconomic, religious, cultural and professional groups in the governance.
3. An established legal framework based on the rule of law and independence of the judiciary to protect human rights, secure social justice.
4. Bureaucratic accountability, including transparency in administration.
5. Freedom of information and expression
6. A sound administrative system, leading to efficiency and effectiveness.
7. Cooperation between the government and civil society organizations

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has identified a set of criteria of good governance.¹⁶These are as follows:

1. Legitimacy of government;
2. Accountability of political and official elements of government;

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3. Competence of government to make policy and deliver services; and
4. Respect for human rights and rule of law.

To sum up, the parameters of good governance can be categorized primarily into two types which are as follows: **a)** institutional parameters which include independent election commission, effectiveness of parliament, efficient bureaucracy, independent judiciary, strong and autonomous local government, freedom of press and media, strong and vigorous civil society, independent and effective anti-corruption agencies. **b)** Noninstitutional parameters which cover legitimacy of the political system, mass participation in the polity, dynamic and efficient leadership, responsiveness of government, accountability and transparency of government, efficient administrative system, respect for the rule of law, decentralization, equal distribution of the state's wealth and resource, respect for human rights, women empowerment, sound education system and combating corruption.

3. State of Good Governance in Bangladesh: An Overview

The Bangladesh constitution provides for all the elements essential for good governance, though the country is yet to fully develop right policies, environment, institutions, capacity and practice of good governance. Despite returning to parliamentary democracy following a mass movement for democracy in 1990, and subsequent free and fair elections under neutral caretaker governments, the establishment of democratic norms and practices has not been smooth in the country. Democratic governance, which alone can safeguard the constitutional rights and interests of the common citizens and ensure better performance of the state functionaries, is still missing.

Accountability of the parliament to the people and that of the executive to the parliament could not yet be institutionalized. Evident lack of institutional capacity and other maladies continue to impede social and economic development, and peaceful democratic process. Weak performance of state institutions resulting in failure, to reform state structures, make progressive policy decisions, create an enabling environment and provide leadership of different levels of government and society meant that people's desire for democratic governance is far from being fulfilled. Lack of adequate accountability and transparency resulting in widespread corrupt practices and deteriorating law and order situation have become endemic features of political, social and administrative culture, dampening the development spirit. The maladies thwart justice and fairness, restrict outreach and quality of public service delivery and inhibit vibrancy of market forces. Scope of compromise and consensus on the major national issues is constrained, thereby obstructing the democratic process and further escalating confrontational politics manifested in

parliamentary boycott, frequent hartal and widespread violence. According to the World Bank estimate, the revenue loss of the government due to corruption and inefficiency exceeds US\$500 million, US\$1 billion is lost due to poor management, and power sector loss amounts to over US\$100 million per year-staggering amounts of losses for a nation gripped by poverty. In addition to, lack of human security and social disorder persist due to improper law enforcement, as revealed in a recent UNDP report systematic violations of human rights goes unabated in a growing culture of impunity. Independent watchdog institutions such a human rights commission, Anti-corruption commission and ombudsman could not yet be institutionalized. There are missing links in the chain of accountability between the public, the legislature, the judiciary and the executive. Despite many well documented reports of waste, fraud, and abuse of public funds, little action has been taken, encouraging further corrupt practices.

Therefore, despite remarkable progress in some areas, there is still a long way to go before the desired momentum in economic growth, poverty reduction, and improvement in quality of life and overall social development is created to realize national aspirations and global commitment like millennium development goals. The problem of leadership in governance looms large in every sector. A substantial gap exists in the nation’s ability to generate sound understanding of the situation, to identify problems and constraints and implement better policy-making, managerial and leadership practices and to measure progress towards good governance. Bangladesh has the basic infrastructure for good governance, but they are not well utilized. That’s why, ‘Effective democratic governance continued to be the elusive golden deer that that nation doggedly sought but could not find.’¹⁷

The current state of governance in Bangladesh has been demonstrated in the following table which clearly indicates that Bangladesh’s performance on good governance criteria between 1996 and 2006 has been declining.

Table-3: Ranking of Bangladesh among 213 countries by governance indicators.

Governance indicators	Ranking of Bangladesh in percentile rank in 2000	Ranking of Bangladesh in percentile rank in 2010
Voice and accountability	Lowest 41.5	Lowest 31.4
Political stability	Lowest 26.9	Lowest 6.6
Government effectiveness	Lowest 38.3	Lowest 21.1

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Regulatory quality	Lowest 39.4	Lowest 14.9
Rule of law	Lowest 26.4	Lowest 19.8
Corruption control	Lowest 40.2	Lowest 7.9

Source: Daniel Kaufman, and associates, Governance Matters: Aggregate and individual indicators for 2000-2010, World Bank, Washington D.C, September,2011.

Hossain Zillur Rahman identifies four major problems on the path of good governance in Bangladesh.¹⁸These are:

- a) A tendency towards encyclopedic wish list in agenda formulation
- b) An insufficient appreciation of the institutional and political realities through which reform initiatives have to be carried forward
- c) Over focusing on what does not work while ignoring which does work; and
- d) A lack of clarity as to where the governance agenda best interface with poverty reduction goals

A recently published report entitled ‘The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2006’ by the BRAC University Center for governance studies points out four important problems of governance in Bangladesh.¹⁹ These are as follows;

- a) The partisan politics has pervaded into all aspects of public affairs
- b) Due to partisan public institutions and the absence of appropriate framework, the formal accountability mechanisms are weak.
- c) The demand for reform is mainly coming from development partners.
- d) The knowledge of governance in Bangladesh is patchy and sometimes lacking independence

4. Problems of Good Governance in Bangladesh:

Governance constitutes a major challenge for Bangladesh now-a-days. It’s under performance is evident in many areas of national life. In fact, it is crystal clear from evidence as well as pronouncement of our policy makers and international donors that Bangladesh’s improvement in the governance realm is not keeping pace with the progress achieved in some areas of economic and social policies. Such a gap in the country’s governance efforts implies that political regime management has become a central constraint to further consolidation of democracy as well as improvement of the quality of governance in Bangladesh

Now, let us make an attempt to overview the problems of good governance in Bangladesh with the focus on some major political institutions of the country.

4 (a) Election Commission

Regular election, both at the national and local level is one of the prerequisites of democracy as well as good governance. 'Governance by the representatives of the people cannot be effective unless these representatives are truly elected, reflecting wish of the people'.²⁰ If the election itself is not fair, the authority of the representatives will always be questioned which will weaken the government. As David Beetham observes 'traditionally, elections are considered to be one of the instruments of democratic governance as they empower the voters for making a choice of leadership'.²¹ Election facilitates the mass participation in politics and thereby in the state policy-making process. The election also makes the government accountable and responsive to the needs and expectations of the people. Because the party in power has to think that after the end of its tenure, they would find themselves out of power and would have to go to the electorates for votes in the election. That's why, they pay attention to the material welfare of its citizens while in power. But for having the practice of good governance this election must be held in free and fair atmosphere. In the democratic country, the Election Commission is assigned the task of holding the election freely and fairly. To that end, the Election Commission has to be independent enough so that it could discharge its duties properly. The executive and legislature should not interfere with the functions of the Election Commission.

But it is hardly seen in Bangladesh politics. The Election Commission in the country is in real sense not independent and free from the clutch of executive and legislature. The executive and legislative bodies, both directly and indirectly influence the Election Commission during the election period to manipulate the election result in favor of the immediate past political government. That's why, almost every election in Bangladesh which had been held since after its independence can be characterized as the non management of electoral politics, which involved the use of intimidation, threat, vote rigging and official malpractice.²² After independence in the 1973 parliamentary election, despite massive popularity in Awami League, its leaders and workers hardly allowed any opposition leaders to win the election. There were allegation of vote rigging, threats and malpractices in constituencies, where Awami League candidates would have won anyway.²³ Following the fall of the Mujib regime during the long term of military rule of Zia and Ershad, Bangladesh experienced the state managed election both at the local and national level. Eventually, after a decade long anti-democracy, Ershad had to quit and transfer power to the caretaker

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government of Justice Sahabuddin Ahmed, who held a free, fair and participatory election in 1991 through which B.N.P came to power under the leadership of Khaleda Zia. But the crisis started after the by election in Magura when the ruling B.N.P was alleged to have rigged the voting. Similarly Awami League (AL), under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina won the second parliamentary election in 1996 under the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman but allegedly did the same types of rigging in the by-elections of Lakshmipur, Noakhali and Mirersarai.²⁴ It was alleged that AL activists captured the polling centers and stuffed the ballot boxes with take ballot papers and thus got their candidate. All these practices had been possible for Election Commission was forced to act in favor of the party in power at that time. These severely contributed to the ruination of participatory governance in Bangladesh.²⁵ But the matter of hope that during the last caretaker government regime headed by Fakruddin Ahmed some remarkable changes like separation of the Election Commission's Secretariat from the Prime Minister's office, were brought in the Election Commission to make it more effective and independent. These resulted in holding 9th parliamentary election on 29th December 2008 in mostly free, fair and transparent way.

4 (b) National Parliament

The Legislature is one of the key institutions in democratic politics and play important role in promoting good governance.²⁶ In fact, governance goals of greater accountability, transparency and participation are directly related to the primary functions of parliament. In parliamentary democracy, the sovereignty of the people rests in and is upheld through the legislature. It acts as the custodian of people's sovereignty which makes legislature the most important organ of the state. The very first function of the legislature in its role as a constituent assembly enshrines the fundamental principles of governance and embodies the institutions entrusted with them. Both in constitution-making and enactment of various laws, the legislature can ensure good governance if the wishes of the people, their hopes and aspirations are truly reflected in the constitution and enacted laws thereafter. Lord Bryce in his seminal work, 'Modern Democracies' recognized that legislatures constituted an indispensable machinery of the government in democracies, but felt that because of party caucuses and pressure groups the dignity and moral influence of representative legislatures have been declining.²⁷ But for the practice of good governance, parliament has to be effective and relevant as a forum of political debate and decision-making ensuring participation of all political parties both in government and oppositions. For instance, in the British political system, the parliament is independent and effective legislative body which can perform its assigned function freely and

fairly. 'In form parliament can challenge any part of the administrative work of the government and also can dismiss either the cabinet as a whole or the minister directly responsible.²⁸

But ironically, "Bangladesh's parliament has become almost irrelevant as a forum for political discourse and decision making"²⁹ "All the major characteristics of strong legislature are virtually absent in Bangladesh".³⁰ All the concerned actors, including the speaker of the parliament have been politicized and used against the major opposition parties in the country. Main opposition parties have never been consulted by the incumbent government prior to appointing official to major constitutional posts. The parliament and parliamentary committees have been dominated and monopolized by the ruling government. No space has been left for the opposition political parties to participate and contribute to the government system. The opposition is thus left out in the street to face and challenge the government. The unwillingness of the ruling party's lawmakers to attend the sessions, politician's indifference to abide by the parliamentary norms and rules, a frequent boycott by the main opposition and reluctance of the government to discuss important issues in the house we have not let the 8th JS play an effective role. Comparing with the senses in the previous two parliaments (5th and 7th JS), the 8thparliament has taken a step backward instead of moving forward in making the parliamentary system of government forward. In addition to these, discriminatory attitude towards opposition parties, severe quorum crisis over the years, reining of the ruling party lawmakers in some aspects, and absence of significant move to make the parliamentary committee system strengthened have worsened the situation. In fact, due to the prevailing non-conducive environment the parliament has not been able to ensure accountability of the government, which is a clear contradiction of the parliamentary system of governance. Parliament has performed poorly the key task of legislation, oversight of the executive and conflict resolution and thus has contributed insignificantly in promoting good governance in Bangladesh. With the absence of the main opposition in the house and committee sessions, important pieces of legislation have been passed without much critical insight and constraints. Most of the legislative bills have come out as acts in the parliament as approved by the cabinet- the most powerful committee in a parliamentary system. Deliberations and question-answer sessions in the house have not been lively and effective. The government enacted a good number of laws in the parliament, which have a substantial impact on the governance of the country as observed earlier.

4 (c) Independence of Judiciary

The judiciary with the system of laws and institutions involved in making legal

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decisions is an indispensable part of governance and good governance necessarily demands an independent functioning of the judiciary. A sound and independent judiciary is the sine quo non of a healthy society.³¹ Lord Bryce aptly says 'There is no better test of excellence of a government than the efficiency of its judicial system, for nothing more nothing more nearly touches the welfare and security of the average citizen than his sense that he can rely on the certain and prompt administration of justice.'³²Independence of judiciary truly means such judicial system under which the judges are in a position to render justice in accordance with their oath of office and only in accordance with their own sense of justice without submitting to any kind of pressure or influence.³³ It largely depends on certain conditions like mode of appointment of judges, security of the tenure in the office and adequate remuneration and privileges. Satisfactory implementation of these of these conditions enables the judiciary to perform its due role in the society. An independent judiciary can establish the rule of law in the society. By upholding the rule of law, judiciary ensures the just and stable society and protects the rights of individuals to live, work and enjoy without fear or favor. The judiciary also makes the government accountable and responsive to the needs of general people which are the essential elements of good governance. Independent judicial system of a country upholds the equal rights of man and woman as an essential precondition of democracy and good governance.³⁴The judiciary can play a significant role in cleansing the administration from corrupt politicians and officials by bringing them under the process of trial before the judicial forum. If the judicial independence exists in a society, then absolutism in government cannot be established there. But where it is absent, absolutism and bad governance are likely to have free rein.

In Bangladesh judiciary has still been remained subservient to the whim of executive and legislative members. The party in power uses the judiciary as an effective tool of suppressing and harassing oppositions. Although, the judiciary has been independent on November 01, 2007, through enforcement of Masder Hossain Case (1999), but the independence of the judiciary has yet to be ensured in real sense. The government in the past six years has taken no tangible initiative in this regard, although the ruling party in its election manifesto pledged that the 'genuine independence and impartiality of the judiciary will be ensured. It is assumed that the lower judiciary would not be independent of the executive until the Secretariat was established. In the absence of the secretariat, the transfer, promotion and posting of judges are now carried out by the government although in consultation with the Supreme Court. Several constitutional provisions like Article 95, 115 and 116 has still been remained as a severe constraint on the path of independence of the judiciary of the country. The Supreme Court registrar, AKM Shamsul Islam, told New Age, 'The independence of the judiciary remains on paper and the lower judiciary will not

come under the full control of the Supreme Court until article 115 and 116 of the constitution are amended.' Article 115 reads: 'Appointments of persons to offices in the judicial service or as magistrates exercising judicial functions shall be made by the president in accordance with rules made by him in that behalf.' The original article said, 'Appointments of persons to offices in the judicial service or as magistrates exercising judicial functions shall be made by the president — (a) in the case of district judges, on the recommendation of the Supreme Court; and (b) in the case of any other person, in accordance with rules made by the president in that behalf after consulting the appropriate public service commission and the Supreme Court.' Although the fifteenth amendment replaced Article 116 with a new one, the text of the article was changed. The existing Article 116 says: 'The control (including the power of posting, promotion and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the president and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court.' The original Article said: 'The control (including the power of posting, promotion and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the Supreme Court.' No initiative has yet been taken to frame a set of rules for the appointment of Supreme Court judges, causing frequent controversies over their appointments that have continued for long.

4 (d) Institutionalization of Political Parties

A major hindrance for the consolidation of democratic governance in Bangladesh comes from the distorted growth and low-level development of political parties. While there exists a large number of parties, very few could really develop clear and cohesive socioeconomic programs, stable membership, organizational discipline and democratic practice. Most political parties emerged from above as a vehicle for gaining, sharing or maintaining power.³⁵ Most of them also resorted to easy route of political mobilization – politicization and activating students, urban workers, public sector employees, unionized teachers and city slum-dwellers. One major consequence is that parties are to mobilize persons for strikes, demonstrations, other politically volatile and disrupting activities. Factionalism directly affected the party system in Bangladesh in major aspects of setting and achieving politically determined goals. In fact, today's Bangladesh Nationalist Party was also founded by Late President Ziaur Rahman with anew nationalist ideology as a conglomeration of diverse individuals and groups drawn from the Muslim League, the Awami League, JSD and host of small leftist parties. In an effort to prolong and civilianize his regime, General Ershad also created the Jatiya Party by fictionalizing the Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party and other left parties and recruited their leaders mainly through the offer of ministerial posts and other patronage. From early 1991, when the democrats would give attention to their growth and consolidation

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through relevant programs of socioeconomic uplift. So far, the prospects of qualitative change in the programs, orientation and behavior of political parties are not very encouraging.

4 (e) Bureaucracy and Public Administration

Bureaucracy is considered as one of the most powerful instruments of governance. It is through the bureaucracy that public policies are given shape as well as get implemented'.³⁶ Good governance inevitably requires the efficient bureaucracy in the country. The government is carried out public administration through bureaucracy by which it governs no binary or subject-object relation is contemplated between governance and public administration. As is well known, in the beginning government's functions were confined only to the maintenance of law and order, revenue collection and a modicum of public services-all of which were treated as public goods. Later, at the end of the nineteenth century the government's role in promoting social welfare through income redistribution was first seen in the European countries. Subsequently, after the Second World War the functions were tremendously expanded based on several cardinal principles which included (a) provision of welfare to the poor and unemployed;(b)a strong public sector for the production and distribution of goods and service;(c)economic growth with stability(World Bank;1997).This expansion of role led to the size of government in the industrially developed countries to double between 1960and 1995. In the newly independent countries government delivers goods and services to its citizens through its administration. Over time, people's needs and demands rapidly increasing, especially in the developing countries. The administration has to be efficient and prompt enough to provide public services in time, which helps to improve the quality of governance of the countries.³⁷The existence of a democratic society depends on a public administrative system which is accountable, open and transparent.³⁸

Bangladesh inherited an effective and efficient bureaucracy from the British colonial rule which could cater the needs and aspirations of the people of the contemporary period. Later, during the Pakistani rule, the bureaucrats performed in the same manner what the Britishers did. But after having independence of Bangladesh, the bureaucratic system started to deteriorate for that could not cope with new hopes and aspirations of the country. 'Now-a-days, bureaucracies have been marked by inefficiency, lack of transparency and accountability, factionalism and rampant corruption which causes untold sufferings to the people.'³⁹The Bangladesh bureaucracy is well known as a hotbed of corruption. Corruption in the administration of Bangladesh worse than anywhere in the world. According to Transparency International, Bangladesh has already been 5th times identified as a number one corrupted nation of the World. Interestingly the politicians blame the bureaucrats for corruption and inefficiency in the public

administration. On the other hand, bureaucrats blame politicians for corruption and inefficiency. Who are then really responsible? I would say that our politicians are responsible for the problems with bureaucracy. Because bureaucracy is like a cage of pet and trained animals to obey the orders of their masters, but to keep these animals always loyal and obedient masters must not forget to apply, some controlling devices. Our master-like politicians have not applied and sometimes have applied improperly those controlling devices to keep bureaucrats within their bounds. There are some universally recognized methods of ensuring accountability of bureaucrats. But the Bangladesh administrative system lacks those methods from the very inception of course, it is the fact the war of independence that created Bangladesh was actively participated by Bengalis civil and military personnel and the result was that the new Bangladesh government inherited a politicized administration. It was also the fact that the leaders of the newborn country had little administrative experience.

Recently it has been observed by the Bangladesh Aid consultative group in the Parish that 'Bangladesh Public Administration has not been able to deliver on some of the most important targets the government has set for it. Decisive action is now required at the highest level of government to being to break the bottleneck. The problem which beset our public administration today are (i) corrupted by bureaucrats; (ii) inadequate accountability; (iii) inefficiency; (iv) centralization of decision-making power and bureaucrats master-like interference in it; (v) politicization of bureaucracy and administration etc.

4 (f) Local Government

Strong and autonomous local government system is one of the most vital institutions of democratic governance. 'Local government can be as the means by which the residents of a local community can together accomplish what neither the national government nor the individual residents can accomplish efficiently.⁴⁰' Local government is one of the keys to sound administration'.⁴¹ The modern state administration is almost unthinkable without devolution of power to the local governments. Due to increase of population as well as to a huge expansion of governmental activities certain matter of policy and administration concerning national and international interests as are reserved for central administration and the rest wide range of governmental functions are vested in local authorities. Local government facilitates the mass people at the grass-root level to participate in national planning, program and administration. Through the local government system, they can share their opinion and views on national affairs. 'Local authorities exist to provide public services. They don't operate to make profit.⁴²' The system of local government helps in different ways to bring transparency and efficiency within the state administration. First, it helps to solve local problems locally and relieves the central government much of its responsibility to deal with trifle and local matters. Second, it relieves MPs much

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of their burden of local responsibilities, which people usually expect from MPs. If local government is institutionalized, they will help develop leadership from the grassroots level, giving gradually a strong base in democracy.

The government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh being a democratic one, is committed to the people to establish local government at various levels. Article 59 of the Bangladesh constitution provides that the local government of every administrative unit 'shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with the law' and them will perform functions relating to: a. Administration and work of public officers; b. The maintenance of public order; c. The preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development. Article 60 also empowers the local government to exercise 'the power to impose taxes for local purposes', to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds. But no government so far has taken proper initiative to fulfill the aspirations expressed in the constitution with regard to institutionalization of local government. Elected local government should be autonomous and independent of the executive and the local administration should be under the control of the local government. But in Bangladesh every government has kept the colonial mentality in respect of nourishing this institution. 'What we have now are not local government, they are simply a minor executing arm of the national government'.⁴³

4 (g) Press and Media

An independent and responsive press and media is imperative for democratic governance. A free press is regarded as the fourth organ of the state which plays a "responsive role in ensuring accountability and establishing the norms of open government."⁴⁴ It performs the role of a public watchdog and raising heated debates on economic policy, monitors election, exposes human rights abuse, political corruption and empower woman. For any democratic nation, a media function with responsibility as mandatory institution. It represents the concern of average citizens and reports on incidents of corruption and injustice in the society. In a democracy, a free press is an effective channel of information on the use of funds and a forum for mobilizing public opinion and bringing it to focus on abuse of funds. Like audit, it can have a preventive deterrent effect as well as a transparency- promoting detection effective. Competition for circulation encourages sensationalism at the expense of objectivity. Of all the informal check on the abuse of Executive power, the press is undoubtedly is important. "An unfettered, virile and professional press is central to democratic governance".⁴⁵

Transparency and openness within a government transaction is one of the necessary preconditions of good governance. And a free and fair press and media fulfill these two necessary elements of government. 'A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both'. So there should be unhindered flow of information of government transactions.⁴⁶ Since independence, both

radio and TV have been using as mouthpiece of the government. This is why there appears to be a fairly large audience for non- Bangladeshi radio-sources, including All India Radio, BBC and VOA. Both BNP and AI had avowed commitment to the people that they would give autonomy to the state-controlled radio and TV. But nothing positive has yet been done. Government is still continued to influence and control over the press and electronic media. Publicly owned radio and television are still under state control but private television channels have started to disseminate information freely.⁴⁷This continued control of the government over television and radio has adversely affects citizens access to information.⁴⁸Newspapers and other publications now have a more freedom of expressions compared to the pre-1991 situation, but attempts are still made to influence the views of print media by pursuing a selective and discriminatory advertisement policy.

5. Prospects of Good Governance in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a country of unlimited prospects. Despite having some dismal features in case of good governance in Bangladesh but there are also lots of the prospects of good governance in the country. Bangladesh has made significant progress in the case of human resource development, social development, women empowerment, reducing poverty and improving the lives of its people.

5.1 Increasing Economic Growth:

In the 1990s alone, poverty in Bangladesh shrank by 9 percent, stemming in large part from the strong, sustained economic growth, with an average annual GDP increase of almost 5percent and a rise in real per capita GDP of 36 percent, or twice the average rate of other low- and middle-income countries. Now our average GDP is 5 to 6.5.

5.2 Increasing Literacy Rate:

Literacy rate necessary for good governance is increasing day by day and the country reached parity between boys and girls in primary school enrolment. Now our literacy rate is 66%.

5.3 Independent Media:

Another positive side in Bangladesh Governance is that there is a lot of independence in Print as well as Electronic Media. About 30 National Newspapers both English and Bangla, nearly 20 Private TV Channel, 8 Private Radio Channel are operating in this country without any pressure of the Government. Besides, BTV and Bangladesh Betar is still remaining the mouthpiece of the Government. Viewers of Bangladesh also watch various news channels like BBC, CNN, Al-Zazira etc. without any restrictions.

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5.4 Women Empowerment

In last one decade, our women have empowered them by various governments' initiatives such as free Cost of Education up to Intermediate level, monthly allowance for girl students, educate in elderly, etc. Role of women's are significant in Local Government bodies, work with various government departments including Medical, Defense, High Commission, Human Right, etc. And also work with the private sector.

6. Concluding Remarks

Good governance is a must for the all-round development of Bangladesh. But the current state of governance of Bangladesh is dismal as almost all the aspects of good governance are severely absent in the country. The major institutions of governance like political parties, parliament, bureaucracy and judiciary existing in our country are not truly effective. There is a severe lack of transparency both in government and administration. The mechanisms of information gathering, storage and retrieval have fallen into disuse. In the absence of any system of bottom up reporting from the field and top-down supervision, systems of accountability within government remain virtually non-existent. As a result, there is no basis on which to hold anyone accountable if anything goes wrong within any part of government. The political leadership of our country to whom good governance mostly depends hold very much parochial mindset and they are reluctant to tolerate oppositions. Due to these facts, good governance still remained a fragile plant in Bangladesh that is severely thwarting socioeconomic development of the country. In the wake of this backdrop promoting good governance requires a fundamental change in mentality of people and leadership and also major reforms in the political institutions of the country.

6.1 Way Out: Some Suggestions

Bangladesh has been faced with a plethora of challenges on the path of good governance. On the basis of the findings of this research study, the following policy and institutional measures have been suggested to be undertaken on an urgent basis in an effort to overcome these massive challenges and thereby to establish good governance in Bangladesh

6.2 (a) Policy Measures

- i. The responsibility for policy making should entirely be in the hands of the political leadership of the ruling party who are elected for this purpose. The ministers should be assisted in this work by a small group of political appointees who will substitute the senior civil servants of the secretariat. This will make the policy makers more responsible and responsive.

- ii. The system of allowing Ministers to act as Chairmen of Standing Committees of their respective Ministers has to go. Instead, the Standing Committee on each Ministry ought to be comprised of several members drawn from political party in proportion to their respective strength.
- iii. The Public Accounts Committee and Public Undertaking Committee must always be chaired by senior members of the opposition. The proceeding of such committee meetings will be open to the public and media unless the committees itself decides to meet in camera on any particular matter.
- iv. Accountability and transparency should be established at all levels of both administration and elected officials by applying the institutional mechanism.
- v. The rule of law should be established within the society for the protection of fundamental human rights and ensuring social justice and equity. To that end, the judiciary should be separated from the executive and all courts of law, both civil and criminal, under the control and supervision of the Supreme Court.
- vi. The political will of the government must be demonstrated in a way so that the bureaucrats can not dare to defy Ministers order. The constitutional independence and autonomy for CAG must be ensured so that it can independently work in the way to make bureaucrats accountable in respect of financial matters and monitor their financial responsibilities.
- vii. The power to issue ordinance under Article 93 of the constitution is being regularly misused. Except in an emergency such as war or total breakdown of law and order which calls for the proclamation of emergency, any ordinance of the government intends to make under Article 93 of the constitution must go through the scrutiny of the relevant Standing Committee and obtain its approval before its promulgation.
- viii. Democratic practice within the parties must be gradually strengthened so that leadership from the grass root level can develop and leaders can gradually gather knowledge over administrative accountability and that they should not depend on bureaucrats.
- ix. The hereditary nature of leadership should be abolished and the party constitution should be amended to allow change in the leadership after each specific term. The party structure and committees should be filed only by election and this will encourage as well as develop leadership from grass-root level.
- x. For the transparency within the government fabrics radio and television should immediately be given autonomy. Operation of private TV channels should be allowed. All restrictive laws concerning press and should be allowed to be self regulated by them through a code of ethical practice.
- xi. The corruption has to be minimized at the tolerable within the society. To that end, the Anti-Corruption Commission and other law enforcing agencies should be strengthened with adequate personnel and finance and should be allowed to discharge their assigned duties freely and fairly.

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6.2(b) Institutional Measures

- i. The Election Commission should be independent enough so that it could hold the election, both at the local and national level freely and fairly without any fear and intimidation.
- ii. The national parliament has to be made effective with the participation of all political parties and relevant as a forum for political discourse and decision making. The oppositions should be given due opportunity to utter their voice in the decision making process at the parliament.
- iii. The bureaucracy, both civil and military must function under the control of the elected representatives of the people.
- iv. The judiciary should be made independent and efficient in the real sense, by removing all sorts of challenges that still remained on the path of its independence.
- v. Local government should be made autonomous with adequate financial power and maximum devolution of power to be made to the local government. Local government has to be made free from government interference.
- vi. A department of the Ombudsman should immediately be created which will work as all time watchdogs against misadministration, red-tapism and inefficiency in the bureaucracy.

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