

Role of Parliament and Governance in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Governance is a much talked and pronounced word for the last 40 years in development discourse globally. The efficiency and effectiveness of governance or democratic governance is dependent on various public and private actors and factors. The government has three basic organs like executive, legislature and Judiciary. This paper aims to critically evaluate the role of parliament (one organ of government) in ensuring democratic governance as well as good governance in Bangladesh. The paper is a case-oriented qualitative study and based on secondary sources of materials. The basic three functions of a parliament are a) law-making; b) representation; and c) oversight. Thus, parliament plays a crucial role in the development, people participation, rule of law, ensuring accountability and transparency, making laws and policies that promote good governance. Though Bangladesh has started its journey as a parliamentary form of government and past 48 years of its independence amid some (16) years of military intervention, however, the parliament of Bangladesh is not still effective to ensure the core elements of democratic or good governance by its three basic functions. Besides, the parliament of Bangladesh has been facing several problems and challenges to ensure its viability and effectiveness. The paper would be helpful for revamping policy initiatives by the policymakers. Future researchers also will benefit from this paper.

Keyword: Parliamentary committees, law making, rule of law, accountability, representation, governance, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to evaluate the role of parliament in ensuring democratic governance in Bangladesh. The parliament is considered the most crucial organ of a state. The basic three functions of a parliament (UNECA 2004:1) are: a) make new laws, change existing laws and cancellation laws which are obsolete; b) express the views and wishes of the citizens by their elected representatives and c) oversee the activities of the executive so that the government is accountable to the people. These three basic functions of parliament can ensure the core elements of good governance like people's participation, rule of law, right to expressions, accountability, and transparency. However, a parliament must be a solid, viable and effective in ensuring good governance of a country. The paper highlights various aspects of parliament and its' role in governance from the theoretical viewpoint like conceptual analysis of parliament, models of parliament, influencing factors and effective means of parliament, and how far these have been practicing in Bangladesh.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The basic concepts of this paper are operationalized below.

Parliament

The term parliament is generally identified with the British system of government and derived from the Anglo-Norman concept. It is originated from the verb parler means 'talk' (Safiullah, 2006). From its origin, the meaning of parliament is a platform or house of talk or discussion for any issue related to the citizens to make decisions or policies based on consensus among citizen or their representatives. The legislative assemblies of the Roman Republic can be mentioned as an instance, who had the final say concerning the election of magistrates, the enactment of new laws, the carrying out of capital punishment, the declaration of war and peace, and the creation (or dissolution) of alliances (Frank Frost, 1901). Apart from this, the Roman "Senate controlled finance, administration, and the details of foreign policy" (Robert, 1995).

Bangladesh has a parliamentary form of government. The Parliament of Bangladesh is named as the Jatiya Sangsad (JS), the House of the Nation. The constitution (Articles 65-92) gives the parliament immense power to control the executive branch. The government is subject to a parliamentary majority. The President is the formal head of the state and is chosen by the parliament (Jahan and Amundsen 2012).

Models of Parliament

The ways the parliamentary power is exercised to hold the executive to account depends on the types and nature of parliament. There are four major types/model of parliaments have been mentioned by Johnson (2005): **rubber-stamp legislature, arena legislature, transformative legislature, and emerging legislature.**

The simplest form of parliament is called **rubber-stamp legislatures**. Those bodies normally endorse decisions made somewhere else within the political system, usually by parties and/ or the executive branch (Johnson, 2005). The rubber stamp parliaments need little internal shape or professional staff and normally do not need long parliamentary sessions. For instance, the Duma of the former Soviet Union and the Mexican congress might be taken into consideration as rubber stamp legislatures. The second type of legislature is the arena legislature which is more powerful and effective than the rubber-stamp legislature. The **arena legislature** is a platform of actual dialogue, speech, and debate. Executive and political parties generally take policy initiatives. In arena legislatures, variations in society are articulated and government actions and plans are evaluated from specific perspectives, however, they generally tend not to provoke or dramatically reshape policy proposals (Johnson, 2005). The British House of Commons can be mentioned as an example of arena legislature.

The least common form of the legislature is **transformative legislatures**. Transformative legislatures not only represent different community interests but also their silhouette budgets and policies. They have got particularly complicated internal systems (inclusive of strong committee systems), extremely good records wishes, and depend closely on notably educated expert staff. Generally, US congress is used for example of the transformative legislature (Johnson, 2005).

Emerging legislatures are within the manner of change from one type to another. Emerging legislatures are underneath big pressure, as parliament's managers and personnel struggle to

meet the growing demands. Emerging legislatures need expert staff, data systems, workplace space, and other capacities to enable them to expand their budget, policy-making and oversight roles. MPs demand greater of parliamentary workforce individuals, who should reply more quickly, working faster, and do more than they have passed. Mexico's congress and Kenya's and Uganda's parliaments will be classified as rising legislatures (Johnson, 2005).

What is the Nature of the Bangladesh Parliament?

The legislature of Bangladesh (called Jatio Sangshad) does not bring completely all the features of any one model mentioned above. As a developing country, the legislature is to some extent weaker than the executive. The nature of the Bangladesh parliament is unicameral and working like a mixture of the arena and emerging legislature. Most of the policy or law-making initiatives are taken by the cabinet/ executive and political parties and approved by the parliament through adequate debate and discussion, and voice consents of the majority. The parliament is running by the majority of two grand political alliances AL or BNP for the last 20 years, as a result, most of the policies and laws are passed by the parliament instead of disagreement of the opposition of the parliament. The committee system of parliament is also effective now as most of the committee heads are MPs including the opposition.

Democracy and Democratic Governance

The most popular dialogue on democracy in the world is "government of the people, by the people, for the people" articulated by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln (cited in the Harvard Gazette, June 5, 2018). The dialogue exposes that democratic government offers the type of governance, where people are the main authority of power and accountable to the people to ensure public interest. According to Vanhannen (1997: 31), democracy is a "system of politics in which different political parties have equal chance to participate and compete for power and in which institutional power holders elect by the people and be responsible to the people. In Gettel's (2010: 199), democracy is a system of government in which most of the people have the right to exercise the sovereign power of a state. Thus, democracy is a process of "collective decision making that combines elements from both direct and representative democracy: citizens have the power to decide on policy proposals and politicians assume the role

of policy implementation” (Aragone` and Sa´nchez-Page´s, 2009:01). On the other hand, democratic governance makes a bridge between elected politicians and public officials, where, first one is responsible for making policies and later one implements. Similarly, public officials are answerable to the elected politicians and elected politicians are accountable to the electorate. Besides, democratic governance offers spaces for the expression of the voice of the people so that the capacity of people and relevant institutions increase to guarantee the implementation of their decisions. Democratic governance is thus associated with grassroots peoples and other stakeholder’s participation to express their will and meet the needs and expectations of the common people (Cini, 2011). Good democratic governance is characterized by transparency and accountability in both the public and private sectors to make and implement better and fairer government policies. Viable democratic governance aims to ensure people’s participation in more political venues to make sure more meaningful decisions (Citroni, 2010). Thus, “democracy represents that form of government which formed by the majority and the majority safeguards the interests of the common people including minorities” (Mollah, 2016a:427). In this study, democratic governance means that form of government where power is exercised by the people through their representatives in holding a periodic free, fair and participatory election, and accountable to the people by the effective parliament to ensure equitable distribution of the state resources, the rule of law, political pluralism, institutional accountability and responsiveness, active civil society and human rights.

Governance and Good Governance

Governance is now one of the most popular and much-pronounced words in contemporary discourse overall the world. Generally, governance refers to the process by which a state or institution carries out its functions by using its existing resources. According to the World Bank, governance is how power is exercised in the management of countries’ economic and social resources for development (World Bank, 1992). The governance approach emphasizes on the efficient, effective, transparent and accountable manner for managing the affairs of a state through using its existing resources with the cooperation of private sector, donor partners, NGOs, business organizations, and other civil society organizations to ensure good governance (Mollah, 2014).

Similarly, good governance is also popular and debating term like governance. Good governance offers an efficient, open, accountable government and audited public service through modern bureaucracy to help design and implement appropriate public policies and independent judicial systems to ensure rule of law (Leftwich, 1993). It also defined by UNDP similar to World Bank as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships, and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 1997). Some core elements of good governance such as- accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, equity, responsiveness, and independence of the judiciary are articulated by some global organizations (WB 1992; IMF 1997; ADB, 1999; UNDP, 1997). Therefore, the basic ingredients of democratic governance and good governance are common for instances- participation, account-ability, transparency, and rule of law.

Now a pertinent question may raise what role parliament can play in ensuring participation, accountability, transparency, rule of law, and other features of good democratic governance? It has been discussed below by analyzing the basic functions of parliament.

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

The types and nature of parliaments are varied in size, tenure, elected members, political parties and constituents overall the world. However, scholars are agreed that there are three basic functions of parliament such as representation, lawmaking, and oversight. Parliaments represent the diversity of individuals and groups in society; as the supreme lawmaking institution in a nation they make the laws by which society is governed, and they are designed to oversee executive spending and performance. Though, governance of a country depends on numerous factors, actors and institutions, but how, and how successfully, parliament carries out these functions is crucial. In this section, we briefly examine these three functions of parliaments in ensuring the core elements of governance like participation, rule of law, accountability and transparency.

Participation by Representation

The Bangladesh parliament composed of 300 elected representatives and 50 women representatives as reserves or quotas. The Parliamentarians

are responsible for representing the diversified will and demand of common people in society, and for bringing these into the policy-making process. A democratically elected parliament is the only true voice of the people and accountable to the people by serving as the basic plank of a democratic system. Besides, the quality of elections is crucial as parliaments can hardly fulfill their roles, specifically the role of representation, if elections are flawed (UNECA, 2004). However, the experience of parliamentary elections in Bangladesh is not democratic in the real sense because, since independence, there are 11 national elections held in Bangladesh, 7 under incumbent government and 4 under nonparty caretaker government (NCG). Four elections held under NCG were comparatively free, fair and competitive recognized by various national and international election observers (individuals and organizations) which resulted in the electoral loss of the last incumbent government and there was a change of power from the government to the opposition party. In contrast, the evidence proved that the elections held under incumbent governments were not free and fair, and far from satisfactory (Mollah, 2016; Khan 2013). There had always been allegations of government interference and no incumbent government lost the elections (Jahan, 2015; Khan, 2013).

Most frequently, incumbent regimes seek to manipulate the electoral commissions to influence the outcome of elections (Jahan, 2012; Jessica et.al, 2017). Against this evidence, it is obvious that securing the autonomy (both political and financial) necessary for the electoral commissions to discharge their responsibilities credibly remains a big challenge in most African and South Asian countries, hence, the credibility of the elected representatives (UNECA, 2004). In Bangladesh, the last two elections held on 5 January 2014 and 30 December 2018 in this way.

Apart from these, some of the elections held under the incumbent government could not serve its full five-year term. For instance, the tenure of the first parliament was 30 months, second parliament 35 months, third parliament 17 months and the fourth parliament 31 months (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012).

Besides, most of the sessions of parliament are conducting without a full house as the representation of opposition have walkout and boycotted. In a study, Firoj (2013) mentioned that 904 out of 2075 days (from 1st to 9th parliament) have been walkout and boycotted by the opposition. The 10th parliament was opposition

less as one major alliance led by BNP was boycotted the election and Jatio Party (Ershad) act as opposition also was part of the government (AL, Hasina lead alliance). Therefore, the policies and acts are passing by the absolute consent of ruling parties which represents the will of below 40% of people.

Another feature of representatives of Bangladesh parliament is recent past most of the MPs elected from the business group, not from politicians. In the 9th Parliamentary election, 53.5% MPs were elected from a business where 6.1% MPs were from politics as a profession and the rest of the MPs were from other professions (Ahmed, 2012; Firoj, 2013). So, MPs and ministers are dependent on bureaucrats and failed to ensure accountability of bureaucrats and policy implementation effectively and day to day routine works. Leakage of questions in most of the public examinations is a better example of failing accountability of bureaucrats and other staff of education ministry and public service commission (PSC) in Bangladesh.

Jahan mentioned- “two decades of electoral democracy have exposed certain structural weaknesses in the system of representative government in Bangladesh. The parliament does not adequately represent the nation's social diversity. Women, minorities and the resource-poor remain persistently under-represented” (from Raunoq Jahan’s interview taken by the Daily Star op- editorial, June 3, 2012).

Therefore, the first criterion of an effective parliament is not adequately functioning in Bangladesh. As a result, three elements of good governance- people's participation, equity, and equality, are lacking in Bangladeshi governance.

Lawmaking and Rule of law

The second function of legislatures is making necessary laws and policies by reflecting people’s willingness, needs and expectations to govern the state affairs. Effective legislature ensures representations of diversified societies to reach agreements on policy, taxing and budget spending based on consensus. However, the function of legislation of parliament requires both capacity and cooperation. In other words, effective legislation rests on two pillars: a) parliamentarians need to have the required expertise and support to make effective and fair laws, and b) there must be a sense of minimum cooperation within parliament and between the legislature and the executive, in particular as regards the sensitive issues of state (UNECA,

2004). Laws must be efficient and effective. Major policies and laws are written by government officials and introduced into the parliament by ministers and pass by the supports of ruling parties in Bangladesh but oppositions are walkout and boycotted or absent in the house due to disagreement between position and opposition. Almost fifty percent of the parliamentary working days have been boycotted by the opposition even when both major political parties have rotated in power and also in the opposition (Jahan and Amundsen 2012; Firoj, 2013:91). In a regular study conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) found-

“The ninth parliament during its tenure of five years from January 2009 to November 2013 witnessed record-high boycott of parliamentary sessions (342 out of 418 working days, almost 82%) by the main opposition. Plus, rampant quorum crisis wasted more than 222 hours; the estimated cost of which is more than Tk 104 crore” (TIB, 2014).

These examples of the boycott by the opposition (regardless of the political party) demonstrate that parliamentary work is not prioritized. This has earned the parliament a negative picture.

Therefore, the laws or policies are passed by the parliament, not by the reflection of common people's expectations and willingness which is a must for democratic governance. Besides, it is expected that MPs will concentrate more on law and policy-making issues than any other activities. But in Bangladesh and also in many other developing countries, MPs are eager to be involved in executive functions (Firoj, 2013). In the name of ‘community development’, they create pressures on local government and various sectors of administration. In most of the areas of local government, MPs are directly influencing the elected Chairmen of the Upazilas. On the other hand, MPs’ are over-enthusiasm for development and executive activities, as a result, adverse impacts reflect on their legislative functions (Firoj, 2013). For this reason, many think that there should be a separation of the legislative and executive functions. The MPs should be left only to the legislature, where executives should be given responsibility for developments (Firoj, 2010). Thus, the second function of parliament is also ineffective which also creates a chaotic situation in politics and governance in Bangladesh. So, the rule of law the important element of good governance is not ensuring because without democratic law and its application rule of law is

impossible. As a result, violation of human rights, deterioration of law and order situation, illegal trades like arms, drug, and human trafficking, rape, enforced disappearance and killing are increasing at an alarming rate.

Accountability and Transparency through Oversight

Oversight is one of the legislature’s “check and balance” functions, through which it seeks to ensure that programs are carried out legally, effectively, and for the purposes for which they were intended (UNECA, 2004; IPU & UNDP 2017). The parliament is the only State institution that can hold the government accountable by hearings, question period, and committees of inquiry (Jahan, 2015). Effective oversight makes parliament more functional to ensure the overall well-being of the common people. By strength-hening the system of oversight, parliament becomes stronger as an institution and thus enjoys greater legitimacy (IPU & UNDP 2017). In case of gross misconduct of the President, such as high treason, parliament can impeach the President (UNECA, 2004; Ahmed and Obaidullah, 2007; Jahan, 2015). More than 50 committees are now working in Bangladesh which is a good sign for ensuring accountability of the executive. However, the committees are more active in overseeing government activities rather than analyzing policy issues and accounting executive branch. In a conflicting political environment, committee activities are greatly influenced by the political parties. Lack of compromise between the parties to some extent makes the committees dysfunctional. Despite the existing limitations, committees provide a training ground for the legislators to improve their parliamentary norms and procedural knowledge (Subho, 2016). Moreover, the proportion of the members from the opposition in different Parliamentary Committees needs to be increased and these committees should publish their reports timely. Besides, most of the recommendations of Parliamentary Committees are not being implemented by ministries (Mikail and Chowdhury, 2017). MPs are hampered by practical problems and poor facilities. For instance, the PAC suffers from lack of adequate staff and research capacity, the committee usually does not invite professionals and specialists to provide advice, and there is no system of discussing reports and findings in the plenary (World Bank 2006: 54 cited in Jahan and Amundsen, 2012).

In addition to committees, the opposition plays a critical role in holding the executive accountable

(Jahan, 2012). The opposition is the ‘watchdog of the watchdogs’, particularly in the Westminster style parliamentary system. In Bangladesh, the opposition’s role is much more important because of the presence of Article 70 which imposes strict party control (Firoj, 2013).

However, for a range of reasons, the opposition has not been capable to play its role adequately. First, confrontational political culture is continuing in Bangladesh since the Pakistan period. On the one hand, the ruling party (no matter the party) has invariably used the incumbency advantage and tried to determine hegemonic management over the political agenda and the employment of public resources (Jahan, 2015). On the opposite hand, the opposition (no matter the party) claims to be politically marginalized which parliamentary work makes meaningless and fruitless. They engage in extra-parliamentary politics like dominance in the streets rather than partaking actively in parliamentary work (Ahmed and Obaidullah, 2007). The trends of the boycott have notably weakened the opposition and damaged its public image. Second, the ‘first past the post’ system has created a parliament wherever the ruling party is over-represented and also the opposition party is proportionately under-represented (Firoj, 2013).

Third, the Westminster-style government declines the influence of the opposition because of the fragile separation of powers and the inclination of the MPs of the ruling party to make speechless and abstain to vote against their party and government. In Bangladesh, ‘floor-crossing’ and votes against the party line are explicitly forbidden (Jahan, 2015).

The individual members can also use several techniques for scrutiny and oversight. As may be recalled from Section 3, these include questions, adjournment motions, motions for half-an-hour discussion and call-attention motions (Ahmed and Obaidullah, 2007). The extent to which the various individual techniques are capable of securing the accountability of the executive and administration depends on several factors, of which, two deserve special mention: the willingness and the ability of MPs to make maximum use of them (Ahmed, 2002; Jahan, 2015). In Bangladesh, all the mechanism of parliamentary accountability is weak and not practicing effectively. Lack of accountability and transparency creates room for corruption; abuse and excessive use of political, executive and law enforcement agencies power fade the democratic values and spirit in Bangladesh.

Therefore, the functions of parliament failed to ensure the basic ingredients of good governance in Bangladesh. So, the role of parliament in governance in Bangladesh is considering a fragile democracy.

In a study, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), mentioned that the parliament is the central institution of democracy as it represents the will of the people and transmits all their expectations as democracy will be truly responsive to meet their needs and help to solve the most urgent issues and problem that confront them in their daily lives (Beetham, 2006: 1). As the people’s elected body, the legislature is expected to play numerous roles. It accommodates the will of various communities and groups and resolves the conflicting interests through democratic means of dialogue and negotiation. As the key lawmaking organ, parliaments have the role of making laws to the requirements of changing society and conditions; as the body endowed with the oversight of government; they are in charge of guaranteeing that the administration is completely accountable and responsible to the general people (Beetham 2006; Cited in Jahan and Amundsen 2012).

The deficits and defects in the performance of the parliament have been uncovered by various studies and explanations in Bangladesh (Ahmed 2002; Khan 2006; Hasanuzzaman and Alam, 2010). In most of the parliamentary democracies, initiatives for formulating laws and budgets are normally initiated by the executive branch of the government and then discussed, debated and scrutinized in the parliament (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012).

The shortcoming of the parliament in Bangladesh are numerous but the initiatives in formulating laws and budgets put forward by the executive branch of the government and absence of real discussion, debate, and scrutiny of the proposals by parliament are prominent (Jahan 2015). Some core variables oblige the viable working of the parliament. In Bangladesh, it is the political practices, most strikingly the act of boycotting the parliamentary meeting by the opposition which has made significant obstacles hindering the execution of the Parliament (Ahmed and Obaidullah, 2007). In a Westminster-style parliamentary framework, the main responsibility for ensuring the government’s accountability falls on the shoulders of the opposition in parliament, as the ruling party parliamentarians are expected to support the government.

However, in Bangladesh since the mid-1990s, the resistance has embraced the strategies of boycotting parliamentary meetings instead of voicing their concern through exchange and open deliberation in the Parliament. In any case, a democratic race of the parliament since 1991 have produced high mainstream support and sharp challenge among the political parties, which implies that despite the deficits in the execution of the Parliament, both the electorate and the political parties locate the parliamentary races, and in this way, the parliament, to be politically significant (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012).

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF PARLIAMENT IN BANGLADESH

Several factors facilitate to confirm a parliament's level of independence and power, and whether or not it's classified as a rubber stamp, arena, transformative, or rising general assembly. The major problems are discussed below.

Political and Electoral Systems

The role of political parties and the election result greatly influence the effectiveness of parliament. Therefore, the election should be free, fair, credible and participatory so that every voter can apply his/her voting right to elect their chosen candidate. In a parliamentary democracy, the majority party or coalition selects the chief executive from among its members and even, cabinet members are also selected from the majority or position (Johnson, 2005). This combination between the law-makers and executive is a motive for the lawmakers to develop a durable committee system or deep policy experience, which can be accustomed to challenge the chief executive. A loss of support or vote of no confidence in the government results in both the government and parliament leaving office (Jahan, 2015). Besides, the high command of the party determines who will get a nomination for election by the exchange of money. So, most of the candidates nominated as a business group, not from a politician. Therefore, the parliamentarians are not expert enough in politics, policy and governance issues.

Also, the ruling political party always influence all the mechanism linked to the election including the election commission which we have mentioned previously. Thus, the absolute majority goes to the bag of the incumbent party or alliance since independence. Besides, in parliament oppositions are deprived of a lack of adequate time to express their opinions and discuss public issues. Besides, oppositions also walkout and

boycotts most of the sessions. So, political culture should be friendly towards each other (position and opposition) and the electoral system should be fair, transparent, credible and participatory.

Lack of Political will and Institutional Consciousness

In many legislatures, member loyalties to political parties or leaders far outweigh concerns for the legislature as an institution. An institutional consciousness may be weak or non-existent and members lack a vision or concern for the power and development of their legislature. Unless at least some key members are concerned about legislative power and the legislature as an institution, it is unlikely to improve.

Poor Perceptions by and Relations with Civil Society

Individuals and groups in civil society may not understand the workings of the legislature and are often unskilled in articulating their needs to the legislature. In many systems, legislators and constituents rarely interact, and institutional weaknesses make it difficult for legislators to respond to citizen needs even when they understand them. A legislature unresponsive to the needs of the electorate will tend to lack public support. Finally, legislatures often poorly represent women and other marginalized groups in society.

Constitutional Barrier

Article 70 of the Bangladesh constitution prohibits floor-crossing, has long been cited by MPs as a constraint on their freedom of expression. Though the article only forbids voting against the party, parliamentarians have been reluctant to even express views critical of any policy or program of their parties for fear of 'withdrawal of the party whip' leading to the loss of their parliamentary seat. The majority of key informants interviewed by this study recommended that the stringent conditions of Article 70 should be relaxed and the parliamentarians should be allowed to speak and vote against their parties except in a no-confidence motion.

Inadequate Access to Information

In every democratic political system, legislatures have some responsibility for government oversight, and for analyzing and amending, or at least commenting on legislation and budgets they pass. Much of the information required for this comes from the executive, and some come from sources outside the government or even outside the country. Many legislatures lack access to the

information required for them to adequately analyze government proposals.

Inadequately Prepared Legislators

One goes to law school to become a lawyer, and to medical school to become a doctor, but how does one learn to be an effective legislator? The job of a legislator is complex, yet few legislatures provide adequate training opportunities for either new or returning members. Legislators, therefore, are often unaware of their authority, how to best organize their time and conduct their business, or how to deal effectively with citizens and the press.

THE WAY FORWARD AND PROSPECTS OF BANGLADESH PARLIAMENT

As noted earlier inside the discussion on models of parliamentary power we tend to note that their power ebbs and flows, that parliaments become stronger, and become weaker relative to completely different political actors. Lately, parliaments in several regions of the world unit of measurement increasing their powers and making themselves easier, which they struggle this through organizing to modernize, increasing their formal powers, practice their powers extra effectively, building internal capability, and reaching on the way facet their walls for facilitating.

Institutionalizing Credible Parliamentary Elections

Holding regular free, fair, participatory and credible elections is a first and foremost step for institutionalizing democracy. Unfortunately, this has always been a challenge for Bangladesh (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012). As discussed above, there had been persistent allegations of partisan use of state machinery and other fraudulent practices. Elections held under military rule were perceived as ‘engineered.’ The ruling party never lost an election when it was held under an incumbent government (Jahan, 2015).

To overcome the chance of influence by an incumbent political alliance on electoral processes, Bangladesh instituted a unique system of Non-party Caretaker Government to organize parliamentary elections (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012). Elections held under the NCG were recognized as free and fair by domestic as well as international observers. The last incumbent government always lost these elections and there was a rotation of power between parties (Jahan, 2015). Nevertheless, the losing sides always complained of some element of electoral fraud as the source of their defeat. Attempts

were made to make even the NCG partisan and it became a politically contested issue. Finally, the NCG system was abolished by the fifteenth amendment of the constitution in 2011 (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012).

There is now no system acceptable to all contestants to organize a credible parliamentary election. This ongoing political contestation is gathering intensity and needs to be resolved urgently. Both sides, therefore, need to come to an understanding and agreement about the modalities of holding free and fair elections. In addition to a consensus on the modalities of the system of government, under which elections will be held, the fair, independence and unchallengeable election commission must be established, and the impartiality of the state machinery during elections must be ensured.

Effective Use of Committee Power

It is not frequently necessary for legislatures to expand their powers; sometimes they simply need to be compelled to use their powers extra effectively and creatively. Public accounts committees whereas not censure or group action powers, as associate example, might still pressure the government to cut back corruption by industrial enterprise the findings and conclusions of their investigations. Parliaments worldwide use public hearings, also as budget hearings, to pressure the government through the press coverage hearings receive. Committees might have the authority to conduct investigations; they simply need to be compelled to use their powers.

Equipping Members and Employees

New MPs or MPs wish to be easier, relish several forms of work provided by parliaments. Orientation programs introduce new members to legislative facilities and their new responsibilities and facilitate returning MPs to study changes to parliament (Johnson, 2005). MPs in several nations build the foremost of portable computer work programs to change them to use email, surf web and write correspondence. Similarly, orientation and technical work programs facilitate new skilled employees to understand the workings of parliament, and, once needed, their areas of responsibility. Parliamentary employees in many nations – considerably among commonwealth parliaments – oftentimes support employees attachments to completely different parliaments (Johnson, 2005). Finally, parliamentary internships for university students or recent graduates have gotten a lot of and a lot of common. Internships bring talented tykes into

parliaments to assist with analysis and completely different needs; helps open parliaments, and assist parliaments to notice new skilled employees.

Effective parliaments divide work among committees, and there is a luxuriant activity to strengthen parliaments worldwide. Some committees hold committee retreats for setting agendas for parliamentary sessions, and several products use of public hearings to receive every skilled and national treat government budgets and proposals. Parliamentary facilitate organizations provide skilled directories, countermined by committees and listing specialists willing and able to testify and advise on relevant policy areas, with their contact data skilled studies and seminars on committee issues are provided (Jahan, 2012).

In addition to work MPs and employees, and strengthening committees, parliaments worldwide unit of measurement building new skilled capabilities. Several have established parliamentary analysis offices; whose employee's analyze committees and members. Others have built budget or money offices that interpret advanced government budgets for MPs and assist them in effecting their oversight responsibilities (Johnson, 2005). And as extra MPs get to introduce legislation, several parliaments have established bill- drafting services that take MP ideas and translate them into parliamentary language.

Reforming Legislative and Budgetary Processes

Changes in legislative and budgetary processes can enhance the parliament's performance. Several changes in the legislative and budgetary process can be considered. For example, the widespread practice of legislation by ordinance should be restricted (Jahan, 2012). Transparency and public participation, as well as debate on policymaking, should be enhanced by commissioning 'white papers' or background reports on critical policy issues as a prelude to the introduction of legislation (Jahan, 2015). Proposed legislation and budgets should be automatically referred to committees for scrutiny before being placed in the parliament. A new Budget and Finance Committee may be established to deliberate on the budget (Firoj, 2013).

Engagement of the Opposition

The practice of boycott of the parliament by the opposition, which is unique to Bangladesh, has been a major cause for the weak performance of its accountability function (Jahan and Amundsen, 2012). In a Westminster style parliamentary system, it is the opposition's special responsibility to

scrutinize the work of the government as the ruling party members are expected to extend support to the executive. But the opposition has boycotted more than half of the parliamentary sittings since 1995, complaining lack of opportunities to voice their concerns inside the parliament (Jahan, 2015). The opposition has instead focused its attention on street agitation.

Bringing the opposition back into the parliament as well as keeping them engaged in parliamentary work remains the principal and most challenging task. Several procedures that have been put in place in different countries to safeguard and strengthen the opposition's role can also be adopted in Bangladesh (Firoj, 2013). One of the important measures is to grant the opposition a constitutionally recognized role and status backed by earmarked resources. Following the model of the Westminster style parliament, in Bangladesh, the Leader of the Opposition enjoys the status of a minister. However, contrary to the tradition of the more established democracies, Bangladesh's opposition has not developed the practice of forming a semi-official 'government in waiting' (Jahan, 2015) A move in this direction where the opposition will 'shadow' the responsibilities, polices, and actions of the corresponding cabinet ministers will help to strengthen the role and the status of the opposition.

The democratization of Committee System

Parliamentary committees have frequently been referred to as 'mini parliaments' in as much as they do perform on behalf of the House, albeit in a particular manner (Firoj, 2013). In modern times, the committee is an indispensable part of the parliamentary system. The functions and standards of a parliament are reflected in its committees. Morris-Jones said that a legislature may be known by the committees it keeps (Johnson, 2005). Standing committees (ministerial) Finance and Audit committees and other standing committees (Committees on Privileges, com on the petition, Committee on Government Assurances)

CONCLUSION

The crucial finding of this study is that a democratically elected parliament is the true voice of the people and responsible to the people which serves as the main platform of democratic governance. Besides, the quality of elections is crucial for a truly democratic parliament because parliaments can hardly fulfill their roles, specifically the role of representation, if elections are defective and controversial. People's involvement in decision-making that affects their lives is not a

mere extravagance but also people are the owners of government. Thus, people have an absolute interest in public affairs and in actively being involved in decision-making processes at all levels of government and in all dimensions. People ensure their engagement in decision-making processes by voting their representatives. Their engagement in the voluntary activities and services that enable them to create their organizations are equally important. Thus, the interest groups and opposition of parliament express their grievances to the truly elected democratic parliament. However, it is a matter of pathetic that a true and active parliament is absent in Bangladesh since its independence.

The main functions of parliaments are representation, lawmaking, and oversight, and they carry out these functions in unique ways. In Bangladesh, it has been found that most of the laws are making without the consent and supports of the opposition of the parliament as a ruling party or alliance is more than absolute majorities. Representations of parliaments also hampered several times due to a lack of fair and competitive elections. The practice of oversight functions are improving day by day but still lag behind the level of satisfaction.

The extent of supremacy and independence of a parliament depends on several factors, among them their political and electoral system, their formal powers, the desire of political leaders to exercise power and the willingness of other political actors to allow them to (political will and political space), and their technical capacity are crucial. The parliament of Bangladesh is not supreme and independent enough as most of the parliament has been abolished before completing their tenure and without the active participation of oppositions.

Apart from these, the ways the parliament attempt to make it more effective including organizing themselves to modernize their institutions through establishing multi-party management board, expanding their formal powers, using the powers effectively, through building their internal capacity, and through reaching out to society to take advantage of its expertise. The Bangladesh parliament is on the way of establishing it through modernizing by the latest technologies including ICT but not inclusive as not engaged by the multiparty management body. Apart from these, the committee system of Bangladesh parliament is now very inclusive and active for making cabinet and other MPs of parliament accountable and transparent.

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