

Good Governance

Or Good Governance & Bangladesh

Or Good Governance & Democracy

“Good governance is the art of putting wise thought into prudent action in a way that advances the well-being of those governed.” – Diane Kalen-Sukra

Introduction: A Nation at a Crossroads

Bangladesh stands at a pivotal juncture, its democratic aspirations rekindled by the seismic July 2024 uprising that ousted the autocratic regime of Sheikh Hasina. This youth-led revolution, culminating on August 5, 2024, has not only dismantled a repressive political order but also ignited fervent discourse on good governance—a cornerstone for sustainable democracy. Good governance, characterized by transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making, is indispensable for Bangladesh to transcend its turbulent past and forge a democratic future. This essay elucidates the nexus between good governance and democracy in Bangladesh, exploring the opportunities and challenges that define its path forward.

Erosion of Democratic Institutions:

The past decade has witnessed a troubling decline in the strength and credibility of Bangladesh’s democratic institutions. The judiciary and public administration have suffered from increasing politicization and endemic corruption, with benefits disproportionately accruing to those affiliated with the ruling party. Two controversial national elections, in 2014 and 2018, further cemented the ruling party’s grip on power, reducing parliament to a symbolic body and eroding the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms. The absence of a viable opposition has rendered checks and balances ineffective, while partisan appointments have compromised the independence of judges and law enforcement officials.

Democracy Index: A Stark Warning

The international community has taken note of Bangladesh's democratic backsliding. In the 2024 Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Bangladesh experienced the most dramatic decline globally, dropping 25 places to rank 100th out of 167 countries. The report attributes this nosedive to a "rigged election, the ousting of the prime minister, and political unrest," and highlights the country's reclassification as a hybrid regime, edging closer to authoritarianism. The index evaluates electoral processes, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation, and political culture—all areas where Bangladesh has seen significant deterioration.

Grassroots Movements and the Demand for Reform

Despite these challenges, there are signs of hope. Grassroots movements, particularly those led by youth, have emerged as powerful forces for change, reflecting widespread disillusionment with mainstream political parties and demanding genuine democratic reform. The Monsoon Revolution and subsequent ousting of the long-serving prime minister in 2024 underscored the public's desire for accountable governance and decentralization. The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, has pledged to restore democratic institutions and prioritize constitutional and electoral reforms, although it faces mounting pressure to deliver tangible results and maintain stability amid competing political interests.

Navigating the Murky Waters of Governance Deficits

Despite commendable strides in economic growth and social indicators, Bangladesh grapples with significant governance deficits. Corruption remains a pervasive issue, consistently highlighted in various national and international reports. For instance, global indices often place Bangladesh towards the lower end regarding corruption perception, reflecting a deep-seated challenge that undermines public trust and misallocates vital resources intended for

development and public services. Weak accountability mechanisms across various state organs, including aspects of the bureaucracy and law enforcement, exacerbate this problem. Patronage networks can sometimes influence appointments and resource distribution, diluting meritocracy and efficiency. These systemic weaknesses impede the effective implementation of policies, regardless of how well-intentioned they may be.

The Bedrock of Good Governance

Good governance entails the efficient, equitable, and transparent administration of public affairs, fostering trust between the state and its citizens. We may remind the quote of — Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General on this perspective –

"Good governance is not a luxury; it is a necessity for the prosperity and peace of nations."

In Bangladesh, the concept has gained prominence amid decades of political volatility. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD underscores elements like democratic promotion and pluralistic societies as hallmarks of good governance, principles Bangladesh adopted post-independence in 1971 with its parliamentary democracy. However, successive regimes have often diverted resources, undermining these ideals. The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus since August 2024, has pledged sweeping reforms to institutionalize accountability, with plans for elections between December 2025 and June 2026, signaling a commitment to restoring democratic integrity.

The July Uprising: A Democratic Catalyst

The July 2024 uprising, initially sparked by protests against job quotas, metamorphosed into a nationwide demand for systemic reform, driven by students and youth with a median age of 25. This movement, which claimed nearly 1,000 lives, exposed the rot of autocratic governance under Hasina's 15-year rule, marked by repression and electoral manipulation. The New York Times notes the uprising's legacy as a clarion call for a "robust democracy," with young activists now serving in the interim government, steering reforms like revised

electoral laws and anti-corruption measures. This youth-led momentum has reawakened democratic aspirations, positioning good governance as the linchpin for a new political order.

Institutional Reforms: Pillars of Progress

The interim government's reform agenda is a litmus test for good governance. Human Rights Watch advocates for structural changes, including police training and judicial independence, to prevent a relapse into authoritarianism. Notably, the government has revised 441 textbooks for 2025, incorporating narratives of the uprising to foster civic awareness, with over 40 crore textbooks distributed to reshape public discourse. Anti-corruption efforts are also underway, with probes into alleged embezzlement of £3.9 billion by political elites, as reported by Express.co.uk. These initiatives, if sustained, could fortify democratic institutions, ensuring they serve the populace rather than a coterie of elites.

The Path Forward: Institutional Overhaul and Decentralization

The path to good governance and democracy in Bangladesh requires more than superficial changes. Experts and reform commissions have called for a comprehensive overhaul of centralized power structures, the establishment of guarantor institutions, and the strengthening of local governments to ensure that democracy reaches every corner of the country. Decentralization, transparency, and the empowerment of civil society are crucial to rebuilding public trust and fostering a culture of accountability. The interim government's ambitious reform agenda, including proposals to restructure the legislature and create a National Constitutional Council, represents a critical opportunity to break with the past and chart a new course for the nation.

Conclusion: Charting a Democratic Future

Bangladesh stands at a pivotal crossroads in its democratic journey. The failures of the past-marked by institutional decay, economic mismanagement, and the suppression of dissent-have brought the country to a moment of reckoning. Yet, the current wave of reform and civic activism offers a rare chance to realize the constitutional promise of good governance. As Bangladesh moves forward, the challenge will be to translate ambitious reforms into lasting institutional change, ensuring that democracy is not just promised, but truly earned.

"Democracy is not just the right to vote, it is the right to live in dignity."

– Naomi Klein



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NB: As the Hints will be served by the PSC, we served different perspective in different paragraphs with different notions. Just Read at least once each Para.