

## **Socio-economic and political development of South Asian countries: in Bangladesh perspective**

Md. Manzurul Karim

*Department of Political Science University of Chittagong, Bangladesh.*

**ABSTRACT:** *South Asia is one of the most important regions of the world for international economy and international politics which almost contains one fourth of world's populations. At present, by South Asia we mean those countries which are the members of SAARC and it is consisting of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, and Afghanistan. Once most of the countries of this region were under the British colony and ruled for about 200 years and more before their independence. Notwithstanding once this whole region is known as India and ruled by various Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim rulers, now it is divided into different parts and emerged as different new nation states. Therefore countries of this region have a lot in common in terms of their political, economic and social conditions. Thus, to conduct a study on any one country we have to go through with the whole region to get an explicit depiction. Here on this particular writing we would spotlight on Bangladesh and her socio-economic and political development since her inception compare to other countries of this region. Many political and social scholars mentioned that this country has a great potential to emerge as a great country but same time it has multi-facets handicaps. This paper would try to bring out the socio-economic and political development of Bangladesh and its various handicaps compare to other countries of this region. This study is absolutely based on the secondary sources such as books, articles, and various information get through internet.*

**Keywords:** *Agriculture, Child Mortality rate, Development, Education, Human Index, Political stability*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Bangladesh comes to existence as a sovereign nation state in 1971 to the world upon coming across nine months of bloodbath brutal combat. May she is a new born state in the world but she has a long legacy of experience of being part of different states and state affairs. At ancient period, sometimes she was under Buddhist kingdoms, sometimes as Hindu kingdoms and so forth. In Medieval period, she was recognized to be a branch of the Muslims territory. In her recent past it was a wing of Pakistan (1947-1971) and was identified as East Pakistan. Prior to this, the constituency of the present Bangladesh was under the British India (1765-1947).

Geographically Bangladesh basin was originally a part of ancient Assam Gulf before the formation of the Himalayas began to be uplifted about 75 million years ago. It is formed by the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, their tributaries, the Karnaphuli and the Sangu. It is located roughly between 21°30' and 27°29' North Latitude and 88°01' and 92°52' East longitude.<sup>1</sup> The country is bounded by India in the west, north, northeast and east, by Myanmar in the southeast and by the Bay of Bengal in the south. The area of the country is 56,977 square miles or 147,570 square kilometers. The limits of territorial waters of Bangladesh are 12 nautical miles; the area of the high seas extending to 200 nautical miles measured from the base lines constitutes the economic zone of the country. Climatically, the country belongs to the humid tropics and it is vulnerable to a number of natural hazards like cyclones, floods and riverbank erosion, which almost regularly displaces a large number of people. Physiographically, Bangladesh is one of the biggest delta plain of the world. Besides this she is covered with one of the largest river systems in the world. Just in the southeastern area some part is hilly. In spite of the evident physical homogeneity and small territorial size of the country, Bangladesh does show regional variations in physical infrastructural and socio-economic development. Since its Independence, the development planners of Bangladesh have given consideration to the importance of regional balance for integrated national development. And yet, regional imbalances do exist. These imbalances are among macro-regions, micro regions and urban and rural regions (Islam 1997).

The population of Bangladesh at 15 March 2011 is 142.3 million (According to the Census 2011 results; this is a preliminary figure which has been disputed by the UN and now by Bangladeshis themselves<sup>2</sup>),

much less than recent (2007–2010) estimates of Bangladesh's population range from 158 to 170 million and it is the 8th most populous nation in the world. In 1951, the population was 44 million.<sup>3</sup> It is also the most densely populated large country in the world, and it ranks 11th in population density, when very small countries and city-states are included.<sup>4</sup> A striking contrast is offered by Russia which has a slightly smaller population spread over a land area that is 120 times larger than Bangladesh. Bangladesh's population growth was among the highest in the world in the 1960s and 1970s, when the country swelled from 65 to 110 million. With the promotion of birth control in the 1980s, the growth rate had slowed. The population is relatively young, with 60% being 25 or younger and 3% being 63 or older. Life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 70 years for both males and females in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

Since Bangladesh achieved independence from Pakistan in 1971, socio-economic and political development has faced various challenges. Although she resumes her political journey with democracy, military or quasi-military forces toppled the democracy and have ruled the country for 15 years out of the 41 years since independence. Hence, most of the time she struggled continuing the development process in a full swing in all sectors of the country. The past few years we have witnessed a determined endeavor to sustain the socio-economic and political development in Bangladesh by improving health, economic growth, agricultural productivity, promoting independence of judiciary, human rights, women empowerment, institutional performance, promoting greater transparency and almost free and fair elections and so forth. However, her all these triumphs become worthless because of internal power struggles between the two dominant political parties i.e. Awami League and BNP. Not only has this but also threatened to the country's entire development process. So, while Bangladesh's achievements should be acknowledged to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2015, she stands at the crossroads between hope and depression. Thus, here we should try to put light on the challenges of Bangladesh toward her entire development and evaluate her present conditions comparing to other South Asian countries.

Here to understand the development condition of Bangladesh we would consider her as a system and her socio-economic and political sectors as sub-systems. We know that a system consists of some sub-systems which have an interaction with one another. So, to make out a system we have to lucid the view of the all sub-systems which are belong that particular system. Likewise, to bring out the development condition of Bangladesh we have to evaluate her all sub-systems. Here in this study we would assess all sub-systems of Bangladesh to realize the development scenario of Bangladesh. There are some indicators in each sub-system. By assessing those indicators we would be able to portrait the real development state of each sub-system and consequently the development situation of Bangladesh. In this paper we would evaluate each sub-system and the system on the basis of those indicators.

## **II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO**

Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society which is measured with indicators, such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality rate, malnutrition, population rate, health, agricultural productivity, poverty level, levels of employment and so on. In past few decades Bangladesh has done a very good job regarding socio-economic development. There have been notable reductions in population rate and infant mortality rate in Bangladesh. Although facing massive cyclones and floods, it able to increase agricultural productivity and food production. Moreover, she able to enhance the literacy rate as a result more girls and boys enrolled in primary schools. She has also made some immense progress in health level such as almost all children are bring under immunization and diseases like polio are driven out from the land. The poor people of Bangladesh have surely benefited from these gains.<sup>6</sup> In spite of all these achievements still the most of people of Bangladesh leading their life under marginal poverty line. Not only this but also many children are passing on from hunger and many people leading their life under open sky without any shelter. Here in the following we would examine the parameters of socio-economic development of Bangladesh and try to explore the real socio-economic development picture of Bangladesh compare to other South Asian countries.

There can be several parameters under which the regional social scene can be studied, namely, development index, demography, education level, child mortality rate, life expectancy, economic growth, women empowerment, rule of law, violence, consumption patterns, entertainment industry, and so on. But none of them can individually tell us something meaningful. To make the information relevant, several of the factors, if not all, are to be qualitatively analyzed. But to do so, an empirical database is necessary.

## 2.1 Development Index

Development index is a criterion to understand the development level of any country. Nowadays this is popularly used by various IGOs (International Government Organizations) and NGOs (Non-government Organizations) to determine the standard level of any country. It is determined on the basis of three things i.e. Life expectancy index, Education index and Income index. As per the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI), there are list of 179 countries, here in the following table we have mentioned only the South Asian countries.

**Fig 1: HDI of Southern Asia**

Country	Human Development Index
Sri Lanka	97
Maldives	109
India	134
Bhutan	141
Pakistan	145
Bangladesh	146
Myanmar	149
Nepal	157
Afghanistan	172

**Fig. 1.Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2011* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 127-129.**

From above table we can easily understand that the condition of Bangladesh is better than Myanmar, Nepal and Afghanistan but worse than Sri Lanka, Maldives, India, Bhutan and even Pakistan. We know that HDI is determined on the three indices named Life expectancy index, Education index and Income index. So, let put an individual view on three indices in Bangladesh.

### 2.1.1 Life Expectancy Rate

Life expectancy is the expected (in the statistical sense) number of years of life remaining at a given age.<sup>7</sup> As instance, a country with a life expectancy of 50 may have very few people dying at age 50, most will die before 40 years of age or after 65. Before the modern advancement of the medicine sector life expectancy rate was very low throughout the world. At present, with improvement of medical science human race has become successful to raise the life expectancy rate. Basically the developed states achieved a good life expectancy rate. However, the developing states are still struggling to gain a standard life expectancy rate. Here in the following let's put a look on the development of life expectancy rate in Bangladesh since 2000 to 2012 on the basis of birth.

**Fig: 2 Life Expectancy rate in Bangladesh for last decade**

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bangladesh	60.16	60.54	60.92	61.33	61.71	62.08	62.46	62.84	63.21	60.25	69.44	69.75	70.06

**Fig. 2. Source: CIA World Factbook - as of January 1, 2011**

From above figure we could easily understand that the life expectancy rate is moving upward in Bangladesh. Moreover, the male life expectancy rate is 68.21 years and female life expectancy rate is 71.98 years. This means that Bangladesh is able to reduce the infant mortality rate, control various epidemics or plagues and finally improve the overall quality of life in Bangladesh.

### 2.1.2 Education Rate

Bangladesh has already fulfilled the Millennium Development Goal (MGD) regarding school enrollment at both primary and secondary levels. Primary enrollment for both genders is almost universal and secondary enrollment has been doubled since independence. Her estimated literacy rate is at 61.3% for males and 52.2% for females in 2010.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, Bangladesh is the only country of South Asia other than Sri Lanka to have achieved parity in male and female enrollments not just at primary level but also at secondary level. This is a remarkable achievement of a country which is one of the poorest countries of the world. This achievement

became possible because Bangladesh government has taken various steps such as Primary education free and compulsory under the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990, drafted a new education policy, supplying free books to all students throughout the country up to higher secondary level. To encourage the females the education up to higher secondary level made free and issued stipends for them. In addition, it also subsidizes some parts of the funding for many private schools. In the higher education sector, the government also funds more than 15 state universities through the University Grants Commission. Moreover she steadily increased the budgetary allocation on education since 1980s. We can observe that in the following table.

**Fig 3: Government Expenditure on Education**

Government Expenditure on Education

(As shares of the Budget and as percentage of GDP; Five years averages)

Expenditure Subject	1980/81-1984/85	1985/86 – 1989/90	1990/91 – 1994/95	1995/96 -1999/2000
Percentage of total budget expenditure on Education	08.16 %	11.24 %	13.62 %	15.51 %

**Fig: 3. Source: Based on official Revised Budget Figures.**

Besides this some IGOs and NOGs like BRAC, ASA, PROSHIKA, World Vision, UNICEF (Bangladesh) and etc are also working in education sector to improve the literacy rate of Bangladesh and they have been successful in some extend. Thus, without any doubt we can say that Bangladesh has made some great improvement in literacy rate where our literacy rate was just 16.8% after the liberation of war of 1971 (as per the web site of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education). Since the independence of Bangladesh, she is trying to increase the expenditure on education sector which helps a lot to develop the education sector of Bangladesh. But still it has only 60% literate people where Sri Lanka and Maldives gained nearly 90% or more. Therefore, we can say that Bangladesh has more work to do in education sector to achieve the MDGs' 83 -86 % literacy rate by 2015.

### 2.1.3 Income Index

Without the growth of per capita of income no state can think about progress and development. In the last few years Bangladesh has made a considerable growth in her per capita of income. Let's put a view on the per capita income of people of Bangladesh in the last few years in the following table.

**Fig: 4 Per capita Income of People of Bangladesh in last few years**

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Per Capita Income in US \$	1002.73	1078.82	1164.6	1265.96	1370.96	1472.46	1556.94	1651.8	1788.3

**Fig: 4. Source: www.tradingeconomics.com / WORLD BANK**

From the above figure we can say that the income level of Bangladesh is on the rise which also attributed her in poverty reduction. This development in the income sector helps Bangladesh to develop her place in the world HDI. Nevertheless, still the income level of Bangladesh is not up to the mark to achieve the Millennium Development Goal by 2015.

### 2.2 Population Rate

Southern Asia is the most populous region in the world. "With the core seven countries, the area covers about 4.48 million km<sup>2</sup> (1.7 million mi<sup>2</sup>), which is 10% of the Asian continent or 2.4% of the world's land surface area. <sup>[9][10][11]</sup> They account for about 34% of Asia's population (or over 16.5% of the world's population) and are home to a vast array of peoples". The total population of the region in 2011 was 1441 million (excluding southern China, the data for which have not been separately computed). If the population of China were added, it could be about 2.7 billion; almost half of the world's population.

**Fig: 5: Population of Southern Asia**

Country	Total Population (in millions)			Population under 15 (%)	
	1975 (1995)	2001 (2000)	2015 (2025)	2001 (1991)	2015 (2025)
Afghanistan*	23.5 (1995)	26.7 (2000)	41.6 (2025)	42.0 (1991)	37.0 (2025)
Bangladesh	75.2	140.9	181.4	38.8	31.9
Bhutan	1.2	2.1	3.0	42.3	37.8
India	620.7	1,033.4	1,246.4	33.7	27.7
Maldives	0.1	0.3	0.4	43.4	39.6
Myanmar	30.2	48.2	55.8	32.7	26.8
Nepal	13.4	24.1	32.0	40.5	35.6
Pakistan	70.3	146.3	204.5	41.8	38.1
Sri Lanka	13.5	18.8	20.6	25.5	21.3

**Fig: 5. Source: Human Development Report 2003 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 250-53.**

**Fig: 6: Urban Population of Southern Asia**

Country	Population 65 & above (%)		Urban Population (as % of total)	
	2001 (1991)	2015 (2025)	2001 (1995)	2015
Afghanistan*	2.8 (1991)	4.0 (2025)	20 (1995)	
Bangladesh	3.2	3.8	25.5	34.4
Bhutan	4.3	4.5	7.4	11.6
India	5.0	6.3	27.9	32.2
Maldives	3.3	3.1	28	35.2
Myanmar	4.6	5.9	28.2	36.7
Nepal	3.7	4.2	12.2	17.9
Pakistan	3.7	4.0	33.4	39.5
Sri Lanka	6.8	9.3	23.1	29.9

**Fig: 6. Source for Afghanistan: Asian Development Bank, Health Sector Reform in Asia and the Pacific: Options for Developing Countries (Manila, 1999), Appendix 147**

The given table showed that the growth rates of the countries are not uniform. For example, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the two populous countries of the region, would grow at a faster rate than India. The population growth rate of Bangladesh has been reduced but still comparing to other South Asian countries it is high. We know that population is one of the big assets for any country. But when a country fail to meet the demand of the population then it becomes a curse. For Bangladesh this population has become a big burden unless she can't make this huge population productive.

**Figure 7: Population Growth Rate**

Country	Annual Population Growth Rate	
	1975-2001	2001-2015
Afghanistan*	2.8 (1991-2000)	
Bangladesh	2.4	1.8
Bhutan	2.3	2.6
China	1.6	0.6
India	2.0	1.3
Maldives	3.0	2.9
Myanmar	1.8	1.0
Nepal	2.4	2.0
Pakistan	2.8	2.4
Sri Lanka	1.3	0.7

**Fig- 7. Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2003  
(New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 250-53.**

Source for Afghanistan: Asian Development Bank, Health Sector Reform in Asia and the Pacific: Options for Developing Countries (Manila, 1999), Appendix 147.

So without any doubt we can say that Bangladesh has to go long way to control her population rate or to make it productive. Otherwise she will not able to bring her out from the list of developing countries.

### 2.3 Health Sector

The improvement of the health sector is one of the prime of goal of MDGs. Like all other UN nations Bangladesh is also devoted to improve her health sector to gain the MDGs by 2015. Hence, she is trying her best to attain the goal. There are mainly four levels of health facilities in Bangladesh which are primary health care (Upazilla Health Complex, Union Sub Center & Community Clinics), secondary healthcare (District Hospitals), tertiary health care (Medical College Hospitals), and super specialized care (specialized institutions). Under Health and Population Sector Program (HPSP), about 13,500 new community clinics, each for 6000 population, were supposed to be constructed. Currently 6708 CCs are functioning with DGHS Health Assistant (HA) and DGFP Family Welfare Assistant (FWA) and another 7156 CCs are handed over to NGOs (HEU 2007). With above resources she is trying her level best to improve its health sector.

The government of Bangladesh has made a notable improvement in childhood vaccination coverage, which is vital to reduce infant and child morbidity and mortality. Under the government's Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI), children below one year of age should receive immunization for six vaccine-preventable diseases such as tuberculosis; diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT); poliomyelitis; and measles. This EPI program takes in Bangladesh one step ahead toward attainment of MDGs. The government of Bangladesh also put utmost emphasis on the improvement maternal health. According to MDG 5, the maternal mortality ratio should be reduced by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015. In Bangladesh Maternal mortality ratio has reduced from 574 per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 320 per 100,000 live births in 2001 (UNFPA, 2001). In 2006 the estimated maternal mortality ratio was 290 per 100,000 live births (UNFPA, 2006). Moreover, the government is enabled to improve the proportion of institutional deliveries. It has improved basically in the urban areas. According to a data of the Health Department of the government, the proportion of birth delivered at health facility increased from 4% in 1989-93 to 15% in 2002-2006. As a result, many studies showed that Bangladesh holding the first position among the other South Asian countries in health sector. Thus, if Bangladesh can maintain her work on the same track then very soon our health sector would become an ideal example for other developing countries.

### 2.4 Child Mortality rate

Bangladesh showed an extraordinary performance in controlling the child mortality rate and increasing the life expectancy of people in the last two decades. She just about halved the child mortality rate and increased the life expectancy by more than 15 years. The decline in infant and child mortality rates, from 140 and 95 respectively in 1972, to about 60 and 30 in 2000, was among the fastest in the developing world. The under five mortality decreased significantly from 133 to 94 per 1000 live births between 1989 and 1999 (Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2007). The most common diseases among children under five were common cold/URI (19%), influenza (14%), diarrhea (13%), acute cough/bronchitis (10%), and fever (9%). A total of five percent of the children also suffered from immunizable diseases like measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis,

poliomyelitis and tetanus (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). If existing development persist, Bangladesh and Maldives will be the only South Asian countries to achieve their MDGs of reducing infant and child mortality.

## 2.5 Economic Growth

Upon regaining the parliamentary form of government in 1990 Bangladesh enabled to maintain a fast economic growth. The faster economic growth has helped Bangladesh to reduce the poverty rate by about 1 percentage point per year since 1990. Poverty fell down from 60 % in 1990 to 50 % in 2000. At present, passing 42 years since independence, Bangladesh has achieved a positive development record in facing of extremely weak initial conditions, virulent and often times violent politics, fragile institutions, and poor governance, frequent large scale destruction by extreme weather conditions and negative global image generated by these. The advent of democracy in the early 1990s was accompanied by quickening in the pace of economic reforms with greater macroeconomic stability, a trend toward openness and economic deregulation. Growth in GDP per head has increase from 1 % during the 1970s to over 3 % since the early 1990s. Per capita growth has moved to an even higher trajectory of 4 % and growth has also been remarkably stable. Bangladesh is among the handful of the countries have sustained positive per capita growth in each year since the early 1990s.<sup>12</sup> Let over view the GDP of Bangladesh since 1999 to 2010 in each year in the following table.

**Figure 8: GDP of Bangladesh GDP - real growth rate (%)**

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bangladesh	5.2	5.3	5.6	4.4	5.3	4.9	6.4	6.6	6.3	4.9	5.7	6

**Fig. 8. Source: CIA World Fact book - Unless otherwise noted, information in this page is accurate as of January 1, 2011.**

From the above table we can easily realize that Bangladesh has improved her GDP rate may there are some ups and downs but finally we can say that she is running toward progress. This table only shows the individual performance of Bangladesh regarding GDP. To draw the real portrait of GDP of Bangladesh we need to compare her GDP with the GDP of other South Asian countries. Let compare the GDP between Bangladesh and other countries of South Asia.

**Figure 9: GDP of South Asian Countries**

Country Name	GDP - real growth rate (%)	Year of Estimate
India	10	2010
Sri Lanka	9	2010
Afghanistan	8	2010
Bhutan	7	2010
Bangladesh	6	2010
Burma/Myanmar	5	2010
Pakistan	5	2010
Nepal	5	2010

**Fig. 9. Source: CIA World Fact book - Unless otherwise noted, information in this page is accurate as of January 1, 2011.**

So, from above table we can come to a view that Bangladesh's condition is better than Myanmar, Pakistan and Nepal but weaker than India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Bhutan. There are a lot to improve in many sectors to up hold the GDP. To do so Bangladesh has to put more endeavor to increase exporting and reduce importing by becoming self-sufficient.

## 2.6 Agricultural Productivity & Food Security

Agriculture is the prime force of the economy of Bangladesh. This economy is also known as agrarian economy. Agriculture is the single largest producing sector of the economy since it comprises about 18.6 % of country's GDP and employs around 45% of the total labor force.<sup>13</sup> The rice and jute are the chief crops of Bangladesh. She also grows wheat, tea, and many vegetables. Currently, Bangladesh achieved a steady increase in food grain production and ensured her food security in spite of various unfavorable conditions. Where in 1970s, 80s and 90s most of the time she smacked by famine. Nevertheless, in recent past she has made some

huge success in food security. Basically in the rice production she gained complete self-sufficiency. Not only this but also she will be able to export rice in the year 2013-14 according to the Ministry of Agriculture of Bangladesh. In spite of these achievements, there are some alarming threats for the agriculture of Bangladesh. These are excess uses of land for one crop (rice), uses of insecticides and chemical fertilizers and so forth which are deteriorating the fertility of the land. As a result, in the future Bangladesh will lose even its present productivity. If we compare Bangladesh regarding agriculture sector with other South Asian Countries then we will find Bangladesh in a medium position. Therefore, she could do a lot to improve her position as we know that without the development of her agriculture she couldn't think of a complete economic development.

From above discussion we can easily say that Bangladesh has already made some excellent progresses in socio-economic sector and moving toward development. But still she belonged to the list of developing states. To triumph over from this stain she has to increase her literacy rate, productivity, manpower, and reduce child & woman mortality rate, poverty, and so on.

### **III. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO**

G.A. Almond regards political development as "the acquisition of new capability, in the sense of a specialized role, structure and differentiated orientation which together give a political system the range of problems."

Hagan states political development as the "growth of institutions and practices that allow a political system to deal with its own fundamental problems more effectively in the short run, while working towards more responsiveness of the regime popular demand in the long run".

Rostow and Pye hold that political development aims at national unity and broadening of the base of political participation. Consequently, we can say that political development means a positive change which helps to form political institutions, to build state, and to boost up political participation of the mass. Thus, for better understanding of the political development of Bangladesh we have to assess political history of post independent period of Bangladesh and her various indicators of the political sector.

In spite of comprising a long history of struggle, the political improvement in post independent age did not exclusively support the nation's democratic growth. In fact, it has tremendously experienced authoritarianism and partial democracy in the last four decades. It is the irony fate that since independence to 1990 she enjoyed the democracy only for two years from 1973's general election to 1975's genesis of BAKSHAL, the one party governance system. The first decade of political history of Bangladesh could be termed as dark night of democracy. A new dawn of democracy rise with the overthrow of General Ershad in December 1990. As a result, Bangladesh again transforms from authoritarian form of government to free and fairly elected government.

From 1991 to 2006 Bangladesh enjoyed democracy under three elected parliamentary form of government. Where two government were led by BNP and one government led by Awami League. In this period all general elections were held under a new form of organization named Caretaker Government which adds an innovation to the world politics. Of course, we should say those three elections which took place under the Caretaker Government were more free and fair than previous general elections of Bangladesh. In those three tenures of democratically elected governments are the periods of democracy, may be the democracy was not adequate in all means; but there is a possibility of achieving better democratic system in terms of social justice and political development.

Interruption of democratic practice is not anticipated and wanted by anyone and the people of Bangladesh are also not the exclusion. But it is a pitiless fortune of people of Bangladesh that, in 2007, the political picture encountered the disturbance of smooth running of democracy. As a matter of fact, a military backed interim government came into state power on January 11, 2007 which is popularly known as 1/11. This government came in power to conduct the general election and hand over the power to people like other military government. But in stead of organizing general election it started engaged itself in various state affairs. This shadow military interim government runs the state for two years. That period of time was nightmare for democracy.

In this scenario, public, statesmen, scholars, intellectuals, academics, civil societies, NGOs, development partners are keen to see a quick return of democracy in Bangladesh. Other word, Bangladesh is a country which has a long legacy of struggle for democracy. Subsequently the military backed government forced to hand over the power to the rank and file, real owner of state power. They organize the general election at end of the 2008 and the alliance headed by Awami League won 263 seats out of 300 parliament seats. On Jan 6, 2009, Sheikh Hasina, the Chairperson of Awami League was sworn in as prime minister and brought an end to two years of military backed interim government.

Since then Bangladesh again started the journey of democracy and political development. This government is working for the growth of democratic practices. With this regard, it's trying to meet the demands of people one by one. Some demands are completed and some are still pending. This way with passes of many ups and downs state is running and gaining political development. We know that development is continuous process and it never can be gained completely. But we have to work hard to reach a standard development. Here in the following let us evaluate some of indicators for political development to measure the condition of political development of Bangladesh compare to other South Asian countries.

### **3.1 State Building**

State building is one of cardinal indicators of political development for any country. State building, according to Almond and Powell implies the creation of new structures and increased degree of differentiation in the existing structure of the state. In simple word we can say, the state must have modern government and administrative apparatus and agencies. To comply with this we can observe that upon getting independent the independence leaders of Bangladesh formed the Central Bank, Constituent Assembly, Public Service Commission, and so on. Following that the constituent assembly was ordered to form the constitution for the country. As we know that constitution is the mirror of a country and how a ship can't run without radar same way a state can't run without a constitution. Realizing the importance of it our leaders soon took step to form an ideal constitution for our country. Thus, where India took three years and Pakistan took nine years to form a constitution; there Bangladesh took only one year to form a constitution. Our constitution makers present us a written and an ideal constitution on 04 November 1972 which was enacted on 16 December 1972. For this reason, we are still proudly running our state with the constitution of 1972 where Pakistan has to reform their constitution for few times. These achievements are landmark toward political development of Bangladesh.

### **3.2 Nation Building**

Nation building emphasizes on giving up narrow loyalties like loyalties to the tribal chief, family, caste, ethnic group, religion, and region and throws his loyalty toward the nation. In another word it means that one should be obliged his loyalty to the state in preference over narrow loyalties. It is one of the most significant parameter of political development. There are many instances to show that in some developing countries lack of nation building hampers the entire political development process and even some time split the state. As example we can say about Pakistan which broke up in 1971 because of lack of national integration and a new state came to light as Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka, the ethnic problem has not been solved, so violence has erupted in that country from time to time and 124, 828 refugees had come from that country to India by December 31 1985. (Hindustan Times", New Delhi, dated March 6 1985) In India also the problem of national building or national integration had not been solved, because the Sikh terrorists were killing people for the establishment of Khalistan. (This was the position before the success of Shri Beant Singh) Bangladesh also faced some difficulties regarding national integration due to her various religions and tribes. Although here almost 85% people are belonged to Islam, she has people from Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and so forth. Besides this there are also exist almost 34 kinds of tribes. Thus, it was a great challenge for Bangladesh to unite all of them toward the feeling of nationalism. In this regard our constitution makers played a great role by introducing a secular constitution which welcomed by all groups and religious people of Bangladesh. But in 1988 the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has been amended for eighth time to induct "Islam" as its "State religion".<sup>14</sup> The amendment reads as follows: "The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic".<sup>15</sup> As a result Hindus and Christians had reacted negatively to the decision. Finally the government able to make it out that may it termed the state as "Islamic State" but it means that the other religions are not neglected or prohibited to practice their religious activities. Consequently in 2011, the fifteenth amendment ensures the equal status and right to perform religious activities of other religions. In addition, our constitution also provides some special scopes and opportunities for the tribes and back-warded group of people such as quota system in all public service exam, public universities etc. These steps help the political development of Bangladesh. Despite these steps there is some dissatisfaction in the people of Hill Track areas of Bangladesh. The people of this region started revolt under an organized group named "Shanti Bahini". Finally on 02 December 1997 under the rule of Awami League a peace pact was made between the people of Hill Tracks area and the Bangladesh government which is called as "Hill Tracks Peace Treaty". This way Bangladesh firms their political development which is still a noteworthy move of Bangladesh and could be applicable for all other countries of world. Nevertheless India known as the most democratic state of the South Asia, she is struggling with her ethnic problems, popularly recognized as Seven Sisters rebel. Therefore, we can say that regarding national integration Bangladesh done a very good job than other South Asian countries.

### 3.3 Form of Government

Every new state has to adopt a form of government which a prerequisite for political development of country. Currently most admired government form is parliamentary form of government. Hence, upon becoming independent Bangladesh also choose parliamentary form of government like all other post colonial states. But it stumbled within a few years and replaced with one party presidential system. Although the 1972 constitution of Bangladesh provided for a western-style parliamentary system of government, Sheikh Mujib (father of the nation, in a dramatic move, switched over to an authoritarian presidential system with single party rule) in January 1975.<sup>16</sup> In 1991, Bangladesh again returned to the parliamentary system after sixteen years of presidential rule.<sup>17</sup> But again in 2007 military backed government took over the power and an interim government run the state for two years. Lastly in 2009 through general election again we back to parliamentary form of government. If we observe the political history of Pakistan then we can see that how many times military intervened in their politics. Even still Pakistan struggling for attaining a smooth parliamentary form of democracy. Same way we can say about Sri Lanka where many times parliamentary form of government was replaced by emergency. In South Asia, all states choose the parliamentary form of democracy but except India all failed to continue that system. Even India imposed emergency in 1975 during the rule of Indira Gandhi. Thus, we can say in maintaining the parliamentary form of government all states of South Asia are weak and poor.

### 3.4 Political Participation

Political participation is one of the bases to evaluate the political development of any political system. Political participation means the involvement of people in various modes of political action: factional conflict, voting, canvassing, contesting election, recruitment of members to faction and political alliance, attending meetings and fund collection from the group.<sup>18</sup> Thus, evaluating the different political actions we can determine the condition of political participation in any political system and finally the political development.

We know that upon becoming independent Bangladesh started the process of political participation with the general election of March 7 1973. Five political parties took part in political contest and these are Bangladesh Awami League, National Awami League (Muzaffar), Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, National Awami Party (Bhashani), Communist Party of Bangladesh. In that first National Parliamentary Election voter turnout was 54.9%. After that till present we have witnessed nine general elections. Here in following we are going to present the voter turnouts of the nine general elections held in Bangladesh from 1973 to 2009.

**Figure 10: Turnout rate in General Election**

General Election	Year	Turnout rate (%)
The First National Parliamentary Election	1973	54.9
The Second National Parliamentary Election	1979	51.3%
The Third National Parliamentary Election	1986	61.1
The Forth National Parliamentary Election	1988	52.5
The Fifth National Parliamentary Election	1991	55.4
The Sixth National Parliamentary Election	1996	21
The Seventh National Parliamentary Election	1996	75.6
The Eighth National Parliamentary Election	2001	74.96
The Ninth National Parliamentary Election	2009	80

**Fig.10. Source: Nohlen, D, Grotz, F & Hartmann, C (2001) Elections in Asia: A data handbook, Volume I, p. 535**

So, from above table we can easily say that participation of mass in the general election has increased. As a result, the turnout rate jumped up to 80% in 2009 where it was just 54.9% in 1973. From the above table we can also observe that in the Sixth National Parliamentary Election the voter turnout drop to 21% because most of the opposition parties boycotted that election, so public also refused that election. It means that the political consciences level of the masses has increased in Bangladesh. We can also say about increasing of political parties in the general elections. In the first general election we could see only five political parties but

in 2008 there were many small political parties in the political system of Bangladesh and among them 37 were registered with Bangladesh Election Commission.<sup>19</sup> We know that among the South Asian countries India is the most democratic country. However, people participation in Lok Shava election in India is about 70%. Hence, regarding political participation Bangladesh has made a great political development considering other South Asian countries.

### **3.5 Independence of Judiciary**

Nowadays in all democratic countries the independence of judiciary is considered as most essential tool. Because we know that only the independence of the judiciary can protect the fundamental rights of the people. So as to why in democratic countries judiciary is considered as the guardian of the freedom of the people and also of the constitution. That's why, where there is no democracy, the judiciary is not free, and the fundamental rights of the people are not protected. Thus, Bryce has rightly said, "There is no better test of excellence of a Government than the efficiency of its judiciary system, for nothing more nearly touches the welfare and security of the average citizen than his knowledge that he can rely on the certain and prompt administration of justice."<sup>20</sup> Garner also observes that "a society without legislative organs in conceivable and indeed, fully developed legislative organs did not make their appearance in the life of the state until modern times, but a civilized state without judicial organs is hardly conceivable".<sup>21</sup> Therefore without any doubt we can say that the independence of judiciary is one of the prerequisites for keeping up peace and justice of any country. Thus, realizing the importance of the independence of judiciary for political development, our constitution makers declare that "the state shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the other executive organs of the state".<sup>22</sup> On 22 November 2007, to implement the article 22 of the constitution Bangladesh government had separated the judiciary from the organs of executive. Upon becoming independent it has offered many free and open judgments such as casting aside the fifth amendment of the constitution of Bangladesh, Judgment on Killing of Sheikh Mujiubur Rahman along with his family, Judgment on Cornel Taher Killing, genesis of trial of War Criminals of 1971, and so forth. That's why, we can say that Bangladesh has made a development regarding this factor.

### **3.6 Freedom of Forth Estate**

In recent time, we can not think about successful democracy without the freedom of forth estate or press. Some scholars regarded that it is not less important than the three organs of the government. As the three organs of the government maintained the check and balance of the government same way forth estate also guides the government by criticizing its public policies. Not only this but also the rank and file of the country get a clear view about the working of the government. So, it works as a mirror of the country. Many scholars said that nowadays it plays the role of opposite parties of the parliament. Through the press people become politically responsive and conscious. It always relays the different achievement and default of the government which helps the people to take their decision during election. Thus, our constitution says, the right of every citizen of freedom of speech and expression; and freedom of the press, are guaranteed.<sup>23</sup> This way we have ensured the freedom of the press. But Bangladesh has experienced severe discourtesy to freedom of expression and especially to the print media. Such as the forth amendment had nationalized the four national newspapers and rest of the newspapers were banned. Later we have overcome that from that period. At present, no newspaper is banned by the government but the government continued to exercise control through distribution and sales quotas of newsprint and government advertisements to newspapers and periodicals. In addition, we have witnessed many incident of violence against journalists. Violent behavior against reporters has worsened this year. At least nine were injured in May when a group wielding machetes attacked the newsrooms of the bdnews24 website. Other attacks on the press were documented that month:

- Fazlur Rahman, Pabna district correspondent of the Bengali-language daily *Samakal*, received hospital treatment for arm and leg wounds on May 22 after men with machetes attacked him for reporting that a dance performance sponsored by a local university was obscene, according to local press freedom group Bangladesh Media Watch and local English-language newspaper *The Daily Star*. Two men were jailed for carrying out the attack, the *Star* reported.
- Local newspaper *The Daily Sun* and Media Watch reported that Abdullah Al Mamun, reporter with the Bengali-language daily *Kaler Kantho*, was beaten unconscious, also in Pabna, by Aminul Islam, the nephew of the Awami League's Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Hoque Tuku, for his reports accusing Tuku of corruption. Tuku told the local press his nephew had led the attack for personal reasons, according to bdnews24.
- Police in the capital, Dhaka, beat three daily Bengali-language *Prothom Alo* photojournalists and snatched their cameras while they were covering a demonstration by students of the Dhaka Women Polytechnic Institute on May 26, according to local news reports. Nine officers were suspended for involvement in the attack, *The Daily Star* reported.

Therefore we can not claim that Bangladesh has completely ensured the freedom press rather still it can be termed as formalism. Hence, for the growth of our political development we must have to develop the freedom press.

### **3.7 Law and Order**

Law and order is the key stone for the development of any country. Every people aspire for a normal life and stable law and order is prerequisite for that. But in Bangladesh law and order means gun battles, murders, acid throwing, robbery, oppression of women, campus violence and so on. Such violence is the picture of everyday in Bangladesh. People of Bangladesh have little hope to bake home safely whenever they go out side.

The report of a human organization mentioned that 238 murders and 119 rape cases occurred all over the country during the month of March 2002. According to the report of human rights organizations "Odhikar" and the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights, 1,219 people were murders, 6,890 were injured and 1,290 people were arrested all over the country between October 2001 and February 2002. Besides this a longstanding pattern of antagonism between the two major political parties creates more unrest situation in the country. When one remain in power then another takes the road. As a result people have to suffer for their various activities. Thus, without any doubt we can say that the present law and order situation is very much disheartening and a great obstacle to the all out development of the country. Just because of poor law and order foreign investors hardly want to invest in Bangladesh. Lack of stable law and order makes the people disinterested and indifferent about the political participation. Nowadays people of Bangladesh thought that politics means violence and cause of instable law and order. Thus, good and qualified people are not coming in politics and even leaving the politics. Therefore, we can say that without stable law and order we can not think about political development.

### **3.8 Women Empowerment**

Empowerment means enjoying power & authority and so by women empowerment we mean providing power and authority to the women.

In political point of view women empowerment means participation of women in every sphere of decision making either political or economic. In broad sense bring out the women from the household works to the open world where she has many roles to play or contribute for the well being of the human kind. The process of empowerment requires transformation of structures of sub ordinance, control over material and intellectual resources, gaining decisions, making authority and reduction of gender inequality. This requires that women must recognize their strategic needs, their social position and understand how coercive it is. The women's strategic needs are here defined as to increase the women's bargaining capacity, reduce violence against women and make them gain more influence over decision-making.

But in Bangladesh in fact in South Asia women are treated as nothing but goods or product which can give pleasure and maintain the house. Moreover, they are subject to oppression and violence. In Bangladesh half of the population is women but hardly can we observe their participation in jobs, politics, and other social activities. Here women are not send to school and even not provided the equal food and cloths compare to man. They are always treated as burden of the family. In her whole life she remain as subordinate; in childhood she remain subordinate to her father, after marriage to her husband and at older age to her children. This way she never gets chance to raise her voice or express her likes or dislikes. She spends her life according to the direction of others. She never can make her own decisions. This is how women always remain subordinate to the society in Bangladesh.

In this situation keeping half of the population out of the picture we can not think about the political development. Thus, to ensure political development we have to ensure the women participation. Although Bangladesh takes some steps to ensure women empowerment such as 50 reserved seats at parliament, 10 % quota in every government job, six months maternity leave with pay and etc. It is also said in the constitution that the local government institutions be composed of representatives of peasants, workers and women (Article 9 of the constitution) and steps will be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life (Article 10 of the constitution). However, we have to take more steps to ensure women empowerment and then we would able to maintain sustainable political development.

### **3.9 Decentralization**

Decentralization is a process of delegating decision- making power from central level to root level in a particular system. It is one of key element for political development. Without decentralization no country could grow democratic practices in that particular country. It helps to work local governance and consequently the central governance. Bangladesh also introduced the decentralization of power to local bodies to strengthen the democracy in the grass-root level. In the past decades, she has been handicapped by some autocratic and

centralized government. As a result, democratic culture could grow in the local level and finally local government couldn't develop as a participative system of government. Local level needs and demands cannot be expressed properly.<sup>24</sup> Thus, at present the government is seriously engaging in decentralization of power to local bodies with a view to establishing strong democracy in the root level and finally in the whole country.

### **3.10 Good Governance**

Nowadays good governance is mostly used indicator to understand the political development of any country. Good governance consists with efficient and neutral Executive, functioning Legislature, and independent Judiciary. In Bangladesh, good governance is in a fragile condition. Here we can observe corruption in the Executive, inactive Legislature and dependent Judiciary. We know that it is the duty of the executive to serve the people of the country but instead of that people have to bribe them to carry out any work. Same way, the member of legislature should speak for sake of the people on the contrary we can see that they are busy with their personal interest. We know that Judiciary is the guardian of any democratic country.

Although we can see that constitutionally the Judiciary is independent in Bangladesh, in practice it is nothing but the servant of the ruling party. So, without any doubt we can say that Bangladesh is still very far from good governance. To establish good governance she has to work very hard in its all sectors.

## **IV. PROPOSALS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

Although Bangladesh has gained some advancement concerning entire development, still it's not enough to meet the MDGs. Upon having discussion on the development of Bangladesh we could easily say that she has to take more initiatives to keep her out from the list of developing countries. Here in this paper evaluating the development portrait of Bangladesh we are going to offer some proposals which may help out Bangladesh to reach the apex of socio-economic and political development.

### **4.1 Improving Education Sector**

At present, Bangladesh has made some progress in education sector but still there are many school drop out, many localities without schools even primary schools, lack of qualified teachers and positive awareness toward receiving education. We can see that there are a lot of good schools with all kind facilities in urban areas though our major population lives in rural areas. But the government doesn't paying any heed toward rural areas. It is high time to focus on the rural areas. The government should point out the areas which are suffering for lack of schools and teachers. Moreover, the government should made more schools in the rural areas. Furthermore, the government should give a separate pay scale to the teachers which will encourage the bright students to join teaching profession. Not only this but also the government should give some extra incentives to teachers of rural areas. As a result, the schools of rural areas will also get qualified teachers and education. The government should promote advantages of education through various movies and advertisements to encourage the people to receive education. The government should make some strong laws against school drop out to reduce the same.

### **4.2 Reducing Populating Growth Rate**

We know that China has a great economic growth but even she is controlling her population rate. China has taken hard policies like one child policy. The government of Bangladesh should take such policies to control the population of the country. It is high time to take one child policy for Bangladesh. Additionally, the government should make more active the Family Planning Department of the government. The government should provide training to the officers of Family Planning Department which will help them to make the people out about the disadvantages of over population.

### **4.3 Improving Health Sector**

We know that Bangladesh has made some great achievements in reducing child mortality rate and maternity mortality rate. In addition, she also enables to control six deadly diseases. But still her health sector is worse than other South Asian countries. Basically in the rural areas the condition of health sector is more disappointing. Thus, most of the people of Bangladesh prefer India for any complex treatment than Bangladesh. The government should provide incentives to the doctor to serve in the rural areas and if incentive doesn't work then force or punishment should apply. The government should also increase the budget in health sector. The government should provide various scholarships for doctors for higher education. Besides this the government should work in collaboration with IGOs and NGOs to serve the helpless rural people of Bangladesh.

### **4.4 Maintaining Economic Growth**

Currently Bangladesh is running with a promising economic growth rate. This becomes possible just because of the flourishing of RMG (Ready Made Garments) sector and foreign reserve. In the last few decades

she has made a very strong position in the world regarding RMGs. At present, Bangladesh is the second largest exporter of the world just after China for RMG. Same way every year she earns a huge sum of foreign exchanges against the labor of the people. To maintain this growth the government should pay more attention toward these sectors. Such as improving electricity & gas facility for industrialization, training facility for workers, connectivity, and so forth. The government should encourage the people toward training before going abroad. The government should directly send the people to abroad removing all middle men or agencies.

#### **4.5 Improvement of Agriculture**

The agriculture Ministry of Bangladesh has taken some bold steps for the improvement of the agriculture growth. However, the government should now focus on agro-based industry and agro based crops and finished goods exporting. Moreover, the government should encourage the use of biotechnology in agriculture. The government should improve the supply chain of agriculture sector which will assist the farmers to get the real price. As a result, farmers would be enabled to bank some capital for next season. Further more, the government needs to increase cold storage centre to preserve the perishable goods. The government should provide proper training to the farmer regarding scientific tools and technologies.

#### **4.6 Effective Parliament**

According to International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC, 1999), South Africa, the following efforts should be taken for effective parliamentary procedure:

- Ensure fair and effective use of power;
- Establish a televised “question hour”, where Prime Minister and other Ministers are subject to direct daily questioning;
- Discuss and debate corruption issues more frequently in the parliament;
- Ensure fair treatment of all MPs in time allocation and attendance in the parliament.

In addition, the government could abolish the Article 70 of the constitution of Bangladesh to ensure the free and fair debate of MPs on policy making.

#### **4.7 Reducing Corruption**

The corruption cannot be removed completely from the society. But the government should take steps to control it as much as it could. The government of Bangladesh introduced Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to reduce corruption from Bangladesh. The government should make it more independent and free to punish corruption in high places of the government. Moreover, by implementing the article 77 of the constitution of Bangladesh and the Ombudsman Act 1980 the government could introduce Ombudsman to control the corruption in all public sectors.

#### **4.8 Ensuring Independence of Judiciary**

By ensuring the independence of judiciary the state could ensure its development. If Judiciary can function successfully then the fundamental rights of the people can be secured and autocratic activities of the government can be checked properly. Thus, the government should always maintain the independence of the Judiciary.

#### **4.9 Women Empowerment**

To gain MDGs we have to ensure the women participation in all sectors of the society compare to men. First of all we have to increase the literacy rate of women. Then we have to engage the women in work force. This will increase their ability to take part in decision making. Finally the government has to encourage the women to participate in politics not only by giving vote but also as representative.

#### **4.10 Ensuring Freedom of Forth Estate**

To ensure a complete socio-economic and political development we have to maintain the freedom of the forth estate. Because this forth estate is the mirror of the country. Through this we could evaluate the real picture of the state. Thus, to keep the forth estate out of all political and bureaucratic pressure, a individual Media Regulatory Commission could be formed.

#### **4.11 Implementing of E-Governance**

E-governance means to the process and structures pertinent to the delivery of electronic services to the public, collaborating with business partners and conducting electronic transactions within an organizational entity. By implementing E-governance the government can ensure the practice of good governance, and increase efficiency of governance. It will also curtail the bureaucratic red-tape and fasten the public work process. Besides this it will help the government to go closer to the general people. Through this the government

can also make sure the decentralization of the governance. It is thus high time to introduce E-governance in all sector of the government to enhance the entire development of the country.

#### **4.12 Democratization of Political Parties**

Although Bangladesh is a democratic country, we hardly could observe the practice of democracy within the political parties. Here we could see the great monopoly of the Chairperson of the party. As a result, all party members merely remain loyal to the chairperson of the party instead of the people. Hence, we could see the representation of the people. Therefore, to ensure the development process throughout the country at first all parties need to become democratic in practice. Such as who will be the candidate for national election it should be decided on the basis of the consent of the people of that particular territory rather than the whim of Chairperson of the party.

### **V. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The discussion in this paper highlights the current socio-economic and political development scenario of Bangladesh. Upon discussion we can say that Bangladesh is struggling with extreme land scarcity, a very high population density, sever political instability, poor infrastructure and so forth. So, it is not easy, for a Least Developed Country (LDC) like Bangladesh to become developed over a night.

As a final point we should declare that upon having so many hurdles it shows great promise and prospect in the last few decades. Where around the west all developed countries suffered with recession there Bangladesh able to retain her economic growth since 2010 to present. Not only this but also Multi National Companies (MNCs) like Ford, Volkswagen, Pizza Hut, Land Rover, Youngone and so on targeting Bangladesh market to boost up their growth. Therefore, without any hesitation we can state that a very bright future is waiting for the people of Bangladesh. They just need to maintain their political stability and improve infrastructure of the country. In addition, they should focus on increasing education rate, proper utilization of their all resources, increasing economic growth and reducing poverty. Then that day will not so far when Bangladesh will emerge as a new power in the world.

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