

Bureaucracy: South Asian Problem of Economic Development

In Asian continent, South Asian countries including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been facing a relatively more constraint to development due to the bureaucratic red-tapism and corruption. This article briefly discusses about how the bureaucracy has been holding back the rein of Arabian horse of development in South Asia. It also lends a few advice from the political economic theory of Flexism. In Flexism, bureaucrats are not suggested to remain inflexible and rigid. A productive culture of flexibility and diversity might well be associated to resolve the bureaucratic problem with fairness and responsiveness.

Indian bureaucracy is "Worst in Asia" (e.g. see the reference to BBC News India, 12 January 2012, last update at 06:32 GMT). Indian bureaucracy is much worse than Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and China. India is a country of a lot of natural resource. Population of India is very large but not too large in terms of its density compared to many countries and the neighboring one of Bangladesh in particular. The density of population in Bangladesh is 950 per square kilometer in comparison to only 300 in India. The geographical size of India is as big as 12 times of Bangladesh. However, in terms of population, India is 7 times as big as Bangladesh. All these make Bangladesh a country of population density of 3 times larger than the population density in India. It is also noteworthy that Bangladesh can be recognized as the largest country in the World in terms of its population density.

Economic development of India has been suffering a lot since its independence from British-India in 1947 because of many factors including a lack of infrastructure and corruption in all sector and the bureaucratic corruption in particular. Indian bureaucrats are really held accountable for their corruption and corruption oriented wrong decision. Indian bureaucrats are extra ordinarily powerful compared to the bureaucracy in any other or many countries World-wide and the Asia. Foreign visitors and investors hold a very negative idea about Indian administration because of its bureaucracy and their negative attitude. In Asian continent, Singapore has been recorded as a country of the best bureaucracy according to the source of BBC News, India as of beginning of 2012. Considering the Singapore as a country of the best bureaucracy, the neighboring others can be ranked as Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia.

Indian bureaucracy is characterized by a federal distribution of power between the Central- and State Government. The population of India is 1,200 million or 120 crore. Geographically, India is divided into 28 States under 4 cosmopolitan cities of New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. In Indian bureaucracy, some officials work under the supervision of the Central service and some under the State cadre. As are in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the cadre service in India is classified as general administration, foreign service, police, revenue service, customs and excise etc. The major weakness of the Indian civil service is that it puts a heavy emphasis on general administration and almost no emphasis on specialist service. This picture is very similar to the one available in Pakistan and Bangladesh. During the regime of British-India, the politicization was much less. After the independence in 1947, the Indian civil service people got

involved in corruption which was increasing tremendously, because of the following three reasons:

1. Politicization and political pressure,
2. The erosion in values and morality of the civil service individuals, and
3. The weakness of the law and order and the judiciary system.

The ranking of the civil servants is considered very low by the politician, academican, civilian and the police officer. Bureaucracy is not to takeover the democracy. Bureaucracy is responsible to make sure that government is for the people, of the people and by the people. Bureaucracy must be responsive to the need of the people. Bureaucrats must be effectively implementing the government plan, policy and programme which are directly or indirectly associated with increasing the welfare of the people. South Asian bureaucracy stay far away from their responsibility to fulfill the dream of people. In short, South Asian dream does not come true because of the existence of post independence negative bureaucracy. In other words, bureaucratic culture in South Asia has been unfortunately converted to be anti-people since its independence from British regime. Bureaucratic culture in South Asia are the following: Economic and human development is important. But South Asian countries have been remaining very busy to maintain the rules and regulation and record-keeping of rules and regulation regardless of what can happen to the fate of mankind. In short, bureaucrats are very careful to respect the law and order instead of respecting the people and their life and living. As if, people are for the law and the law is not for the people. This sense of inhumanity has been carried by the bureaucracy.

Referring to a recent literature a comparison between "FILE" and "LIFE" is very important. "FILE" and "LIFE" have the same letters of F, I, L, E etc. Once you are a bureaucrat, the file becomes more important to you than a life. As a bureaucrat, you become a part of the Government agency or the Government. You will think, "doing the things rightly would be more important to you than doing the right things." Once again, the bureaucrats are busy with filing, not with life and living. Bureaucrats have been doing things rightly and they are not doing the right things. It may be noted repeatedly that they are the agent of the Government and they are not doing things for the life or not doing the right things. It means that they are indirectly working for the anti-theory of Abraham Lincoln. Or the South Asian bureaucrats as well as their associated Government are not for the people, of the people and by the people. Once again, they are anti-people.

Bureaucracy has produced a system of filing process that takes time to approve the working proposal. This delaying process is called a red tapism. All people are equal in the eye of the Government or bureaucracy. Equal treatment of the people brings in a new issue of precedence. Hunting for precedence and tracing papers to treat people equally constitute another element of delay and red tapism which is equivalent to commit a corruption. As a result, bureaucratic action becomes anti-people. However, we cannot eliminate the rules and regulation which are the instrument of official procedure of doing things as these are necessary to achieve the objectivity and accountability. Therefore, we must be able to manage the bureaucracy effectively. Effectiveness of the bureaucracy may be estimated in terms of efficiency and arbitrariness. An efficient allocation of social resource can be reflected as a result of efficient bureaucracy. The maximization of economic output or minimization of the cost

of input resource or a favorable combination of maximum output with minimum resource can be expected in an environment of efficient bureaucracy. An opposite to it is the result of post independence inefficiency and corruption in bureaucracy in south Asian countries including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Arbitrariness is a random action that is taken out of a random decision without legal authority to ensure the goodness of people. In the eye of rules and regulation, everybody is equal. The law does not favor anybody illegally. Unprovisional favor does not carry any sense of justice. Decision making or judgment may be made depending on fairness and responsiveness. The bureaucrat uses the criteria of fairness if it is needed to do so along the line of rules and regulation. A bureaucrat can deviate from the rules and regulation to do good for an individual if it benefits the client by not harming the other is called the responsiveness. Action taken by bureaucrat in two different way based on the fairness and arbitrariness is acceptable to the human society. Unfortunately, the use of arbitrariness by the bureaucrat in reality is not acceptable in many situation. That is why we say bureaucrats are busy with filing and are not caring about the human life and living. They would like to accomplish the things very rightly even though they are not doing the right things. An example may be cited from the related literature to understand the bureaucratic decision based on fairness and responsiveness which are the following. If Becky and Bob both are driving sixty miles per hour in a thirty-mile-per-hour zone and the police gives a ticket to Bob, we believe they also should give a ticket to Becky. Second we believe that justice obliges the government to take into account the special needs and circumstances of individuals: If Becky is speeding because she is on her way to the hospital to give birth to a child and Bob is speeding for the fun of it, we may feel that the

police should ticket Bob but not Becky. Justice in the first sense means fairness, in the second it means responsiveness. Obviously, fairness and responsiveness often are in conflict.

Bureaucrats normally use the rules and regulation and the grey part of the clauses to benefit themselves. In most cases they try to adopt the policy of fairness according to the law of land. They use their attitude of "fairness" as an instrument to benefit themselves. They can deviate from fairness and use their commonsense, arbitrariness or responsiveness if they happen to receive some commitment for some unprovisional gain from their clients. According to the political economic theory of Flexism, bureaucrats should be trained to be cultured enough to use their commonsense, arbitrariness and responsiveness on the basis of the principle that "we do things quickly, completely and beautifully."

Prof. Dr. M. Azizur Rahman
Vice-Chancellor
Uttara University