

Bureaucracy is a global problem of socio-economic development

The productive or efficient officials or bureaucrats from lower to higher levels should be awarded if they do perform well or become conducive to the growth of the economy. Such a kind of incentive will increase the ability of the bureaucrats, in financial terms. A rational monthly compensation package for the bureaucrats and improvement of their socio-cultural ethics will help eliminate the practice of bribery, writes **M Azizur Rahman**

MOST people and countries across the global are poor; thus, out of the 7.0 billion people world-wide, about more than 4.0 billion are poor. In other words, the large sections of the people are economically disadvantaged. It is otherwise stated that human beings are the best creature in the world. But if we cannot alleviate global poverty, how we can be called the best creature. It means that human beings are themselves problematic. Or we are not free from problems. We are not free from the controversy over whether we really want to alleviate poverty at all from the world or not.

What is really the problem with us? In biological phylum, the living beings are of two kinds: plant and animal. In zoology, the animals are of two kinds: human and animal. The mankind scientifically belongs to the group of the animal. Naturally, it means that we are human and animal, too. If we do the good job, we are humans. If we intentionally do harm to others, we are animals. Or a single individual can hold both kinds of elements of a man and an animal. We are a selfish and self-interested creature by birth. We do benefit ourselves more than we can think of doing something good to others. In doing benefit to ourselves, we do not care about how our self-interested action, sometimes, might be harmful to the others.

Bureaucrats are the groups of people holding power in public or private sector offices, from top to bottom. They are powerful in any kind of society including developed and developing ones and in both of capitalist and non-capitalist economies. The people can utilize the power acquired in their position to do what they like to do, with some limitations.

Once again, bureaucrats are powerful human beings in the society. They serve as an agent or intermediary between the politicians and the common people. They prefer common people not directly contacting them for the service. Bureaucrats can gain some benefits that are not otherwise provisioned for, from this source of their direct contact with common people. Undue benefit given to the bureaucrats is a loss incurred by the common people.

The instruments used by the bureaucrats to obtain their undue benefits are the rules and regulations and the content of confused or grey part of the clauses of such regulations. Also, the bureaucrats use their official connection with the political people in power to acquire and confirm their social power. More specifically, bureaucrats tend to maximize their benefit by taking bribes and gifts from the clients or common people. They also help promote corruption through speed money or seed money.

Sometimes the illegitimate demand of the bureaucrats for some financial benefits from their clients can be measured or estimated as a significant part of the total cost of businesses. The bureaucrat plays a role as if he or she is a partner of the business concerned. This kind of corruption decreases the profit or incentive of the entrepreneur. Someone can right away decide not to engage

himself or herself in such businesses. Or, because of the bureaucratic problems, someone can be able to start or operate his or her business only after lapse of a lot of time between the proposal when it is made and its implementation. All such problems can result in obstructions to the process of economic development or keep the country in an underdeveloped state.

These are the development problems which we have been facing for a long time in most of the underdeveloped and the developing economies. We need to get rid of such problems of development by managing the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats in some productive and efficient fashion. We cannot eliminate the bureaucracy and run the country. We have to manage the bureaucracy smartly.

Flexism is a theory of political economy that advocates for introducing flexibility and diversity in human behaviour and in their economic and related activities. The rules and regulations would be flexible and diversified to the extent they are beneficial for the mankind. The rigidity or inflexibility of the rules and regulations prohibit or delay the operations of economic activities in proper ways, harming the greater interest of the society and human development.

Therefore, the economic theory of flexism suggests that the group of bureaucrats and their power should be kept and maintained to a minimum or as limited as possible. Their official duties, responsibilities and performances should be properly inspected, evaluated and reported to their supervisors, including the elected individuals, for curbing the practice of corruption. Performance evaluation of the bureaucrats will include the monetary estimation of the loss incurred by the society. We must have the provision to make the bureaucrats to compensate for such social losses incurred because of their corruption.

The social laws and order and the legal system must therefore provide a provision for suing the specific office of the government and the specific bureaucrat in particular, who is responsible for making such a loss to the society. This system of two-way process is in practice in a few western and developed countries. In the developing countries including Bangladesh, we cannot sue the particular bureaucrat for his or her misconduct. Therefore, our bureaucrats dare to do anything they wish for their personal gains. This is why, we are poorer than other societies where the evil force of the bureaucrats is significantly accountable and punishable.

The theory of flexism also suggests that bureaucrats must be prohibited from doing anything that decreases the incentive or profit of the entrepreneurs. The compromising principle should be followed, so that the activities undertaken by the entrepreneurs can benefit a wider segment of the population and do not affect adversely any individual. Such economic activities should be encouraged. These should be undertaken, regardless of what is written in the documents relating to administrative rules and regulations according to Optimality-theory of Pareto. In other words, the bureaucrats can be given some discretionary pow-

ers to avoid sometimes what are known as grey or confusing areas under the rules and regulations and to implement some development plan which will certainly be beneficial to the society.

The theory of flexism, therefore, suggests for some discretionary powers to be exercised by the bureaucrats for being conducive to the growth of the economy. Bureaucrats can take over the grey part of the rules and regulations to avoid its negative implications and to help serve the greater interest of the nation or human beings. Sometimes mere sincerity is not or may not be good enough for making effective contributions to the society. We let the economic vehicle to move ahead at any cost. We never do stop the economic vehicle due to bureaucratic reasons. Mere sincerity may not be good enough to perform. Or limited corruption as a business gift can, at times, be effective, too. This is not really a corruption as it will let the economic vehicle move. Once again, a limited deviation from the rules and regulations with positive implications is also not a real corruption. For an example, the economies of four Asian Tigers have recently become very productive and are now included in the list of middle-income countries. Some minimum level of corruption to sow the seed of the businesses and graft like speed money in order to speed up the movement of the business file from one table to another, are still in place in these countries of four Asian Tigers! The progressive people in such countries have accepted this culture of minor corruption, in terms of business gift for the greater interest of the business as well as the nation. Our efforts would be either to avoid it totally or to accept it culturally to a limited extent, if we cannot avoid it, for the greater interest of the entrepreneurs and the socio-economic development of a country.

In developing countries including Bangladesh, the bureaucrats may be encouraged to be flexible or diversified to decide on the grey part of the rules and regulations in the greater interest of the businesses and the economy. The people of the country may accept the culture of limited gifts as the business gifts to the extent it increases the total social benefit of the society. The productive or efficient officials or bureaucrats from lower to higher levels should be awarded if they do perform well or facilitate the growth of the economy. Such a kind of incentive will increase the financial ability of the bureaucrats.

A rational monthly compensation package for the bureaucrats and improvement of their socio-cultural ethics will help eliminate the practice of bribery. In addition to this, the strength of the law and order and the judiciary system is also very important. All these together will help develop a culture, free of bribery, like the case with a developed western economy. Once again, all these are advocated here for the greater productivity of the economy under the system of flexism, a theory of political economy.

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