

Equitybd, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

Position on ‘Strengthening Local Government for Decentralized Development’

*Towards the Elected Government*

**“Materialise Commitment, Reinstate Local Government Commission for Strengthen Local Governance and Decentralized Development”**

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**1. Why we appeal for Local Government Commission ?**

The last caretaker government issued around 124 official order & ordinances for establishing governance and rule of law in all level state affairs. Since many years the ordinances had been demanding by the NGOs/CSOs but the political government didn't implement the ordinances as these somehow contradicts power relations either between bureaucrat and political leader or between policy planner and policy implementer but these have implication for establishing rule of law and good governance. Among the ordinances, establishment of Local Government Commission (LGC) is one what the NGO/CSOs had been demanding for many years for strengthening local governance. Thus, to make local government self-reliant and effective; the then care taker government formulated an ordinance; accordingly local government commission has been formed.

This is one of the constitutional responsibilities of present elected government to enact theses ordinances (those are supportive to the rule of law and democratic principle) as constitutional law through parliamentary approval; otherwise these will be cancelled indeed.

Meanwhile the government formed an ordinance review committee to review the previous ordinances issued by the caretaker government. But we are informed through different media and newspaper that this review committee will not place the LGC ordinance at the parliament to reinstate this ordinance as constitutional law. In this context we, the civil society group, are urging to the elected government to reinstate and strengthen Local Government Commission for the sake of decentralised people centric development.

**2. We want to see the reflection of mass opinion, “not any example of self contradiction”**

Strengthen local government institutions was a popular demand since many years. The previous political governments e.g BNP government in 1992 and Awami League government in 1997 took attempts to strengthen local government. In this relation Awami League government in 1997 formed a review commission to suggest ways of strengthening local government. The committee members were Advocate Rahamat Ali where Mr. Suranjit Sen Gupta and few other MPs' (Member of the Parliament). This review committee recommended establishment of a Local Government Commission; which would be non-partisan and non-political in nature.

In the similar way, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) government also formed a review commission in 1992 to suggest government the ways of strengthening local government. This review commission also suggested establishment of an independent local government commission.

Both the reports clearly mentioned the LGC would monitor local government activities and would suggest government to take necessary policy measures to strengthen local level governance (the copy of their report is attached with this). Now, denial of Local Government Commission established by the recent past care taker government is simply a self contradictory policy reflection.

We think that the recommendation of LGC establishment was indeed a real reflection of people's opinion; the review commission of the

political governments (especially BNP and Awami League) proposed similar thing and care taker government just expedite the process.

So we are requesting to the existing review committee to place the ordinance on the establishment of independent Local Government Commission for parliamentary approval.

### **3 Give back power to the people “we don’t want to see centralised politics anymore that’s associated with corruption”**

The principle of democracy says that, though the people’s representatives are elected by the people but there is a basic constitutional responsibility of representatives to restore or return the power to the people through people’s participation and enhancing the decentralised local government system. But in fact this principle is not perfectly materialised in our country. That’s why an autocratic political regime has been overwhelming in assistance with some corrupt bureaucrats; as a result we are facing an endless corruption.

Due to corruption, the budget allocation never made according the population and poverty incidence; rather it happened in context of ministerial power. That’s why our country is becoming donor dependent gradually. On the other hand, absence of effective local government participation and planning, rate of poverty reduction still in slow pace. Local government structure didn’t grow up strongly due to undue bureaucratic intervention. So we think that a strong and decentralised local government is needed because;

- a. To reduce centralised corruption
- b. To keep local administration away from the domination/influence of central bureaucracy
- c. To ensure local people’s participation in decision making and resource mobilisation
- d. The establish decentralised political system in district and *upazila* (sub district) level.

- e. To ensure appropriate budget allocation considering the reality of population and poverty scenario
- f. To mobilising local resources to face the poverty and development needs

We also urge to the government to keep continue the self administrative *upazila parisad* (sub district council) system through resuming the *upazila parisad*, all government staff should be deployed under this *upazila parisa..* Above all, to keep the local government system free from undue bureaucratic intervention it is indispensable to establish an independent commission i.g. local government commission.

### **Thanks to all**

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