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GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH: IMPLICATIONS OF POLICIES, CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS

Abstract

Bangladesh is moving ahead with aspirations to realize the dream of *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal). It scrapped the label of ‘bottomless basket’ and became a success story. It has an average growth rate of 8 per cent and is expecting to officially terminate its Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2024. Bangladesh is celebrating its graduation. In this backdrop, governing the transition period and further sustainability is crucial. Proper measures to keep socio-economic development wheels in the right track are inevitable. The issue of good governance comes in whenever the smooth transition is in concern. Policies and actions are the crucial part of governance while proper implementation of the policies and ultimate result from those largely depends on good governance. Policies specifically focusing on securing sustained economic growth, a healthy environment or an inclusive social development are important in their own right for sustainable development. This paper argues that integrative sustainability governance, promoting evidence-based policy, facilitates coherent policies which steer strategic implications for further economic growth to reach the development ambition. This paper also discusses different policies and actions taken by the government, challenges of sustainable development and possible way forward.

Keywords: Governance, Sustainable Development, Poverty, Debt Management, Mega Projects

1. Introduction

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been struggling to realize the dream of *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal). It has experienced a lot of hurdles in the state-building process just after independence. Natural calamities, assassination of Father of the Nation along with most of the family members, military intervention in the later political landscape and political turmoil have largely affected the

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development aspiration of the country. The leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given a fresh blow in the sail and determined a vision to be a developed country by 2041. A vision which has action can bring constructive change in the society. The government has strong political commitment and goodwill to this vision and obviously has undertaken some policy actions and strategies. Bangladesh has been doing excellent in growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income in the last few years. It has celebrated its graduation from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in 2018. Current trajectory of development indicates that a way toward a middle-income country is not very far. Now, it is crucial to put things in the right track for the smooth transition, to focus on ensuring sustainability to escape from the middle-income trap. Besides the hardcore economic factors such as indices, perimeters and benchmarks, performance of the government is equally significant. To achieve sustainability, good governance stands in as a prerequisite. Arguably, graduation is not the end rather, a medium, a beginning of ceaseless work inevitable for strengthening the trend of achievement.

Governance and sustainable development are closely connected. Governance for sustainability is a holistic idea which emphasizes a common responsibility of values, visions and actions. The issue of good governance comes in whenever the smooth transition is in concern. The transitional approach towards governance for sustainability can be an effective beginning. This approach focuses on transition management through ‘learning by doing’. Governing the transition period is crucial and proper measures to keep socio-economic and political advancement in the right track is inevitable for escaping from the threat of the middle-income trap. It is a general understanding that policy making is a part of governance while proper implementation of the policies and ultimate result from the actions largely depends on good governance. Governance for sustainable development necessarily incorporates climate governance, financial and investment governance, organizational development and human development as well. Now, it is necessary to understand: what are the different areas of policy instruments and actions undertaken by the government of Bangladesh to ensure sustainable development? What are the implications of those policies and actions? What are the governing challenges and how those can be addressed? Is there any way to explore a new framework of governance? This paper argues that the strategy of integrative sustainability governance assists in integrating long-term envisioning, multi-actor interactions and short-term actions and coherent policies which creates the strategic implications for sustainable development.

The paper is based on secondary sources of information, i.e., academic journals, books, newspaper articles and reports. It is divided into six sections. Following the introduction, the second section discusses good governance; the

third section deals with the relationship between good governance and sustainable development; the fourth section discusses different areas of policies and actions taken by the government; the fifth section discusses multiple challenges towards governance and development, and; the final section sheds light on way forward and concludes the paper.

2. Good Governance

Governance is at the key center of development discourse and a crucial element of modern development approach. This concept of ‘governance’ is as old as human civilization. It is related to the process of making decisions and implementing those decisions. The concept of “Good Governance” is widely used in development literature but still it is debated in the academic arena and scholars hardly reached any consensus regarding its definition.² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its 1997 policy paper, defined governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels”.³ Governance has three broad areas: economic, political and administrative. Economic governance prioritizes on decision-making processes that affect country’s economic activities and its relationships with other economies where political governance emphasizes on the decision making to formulate policies and administrative governance on policy implementation.⁴

The paradigm shift of governance to good governance basically portrays a normative dimension addressing the quality of governance.⁵ In another sense, for the purpose of this paper, good governance can be defined as “the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development”.⁶ The United Nations (UN) has defined eight features of good governance, i.e., consensus-oriented, participatory, transparent, accountable, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and rule of law. Here, accountability and transparency mean both political and financial accountability and transparency. Access to information and people’s participation is crucial to ensure good governance. Moreover, equitable and efficient distribution is critical for good governance and development. Good governance also focuses on combatting corruption, securing basic human rights and the rule of law.

² Carlos Santiso, “Good Governance and Aid Effectiveness: The World Bank and Conditionality”, *The Georgetown Public Policy Review*, Vol. 7, No.1, 2001, pp. 1-22.

³ Khandakar Quadrat-I Elahi, “UNDP on Good Governance”, *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 36, No. 12, 2009, p. 1169.

⁴ Ibid.

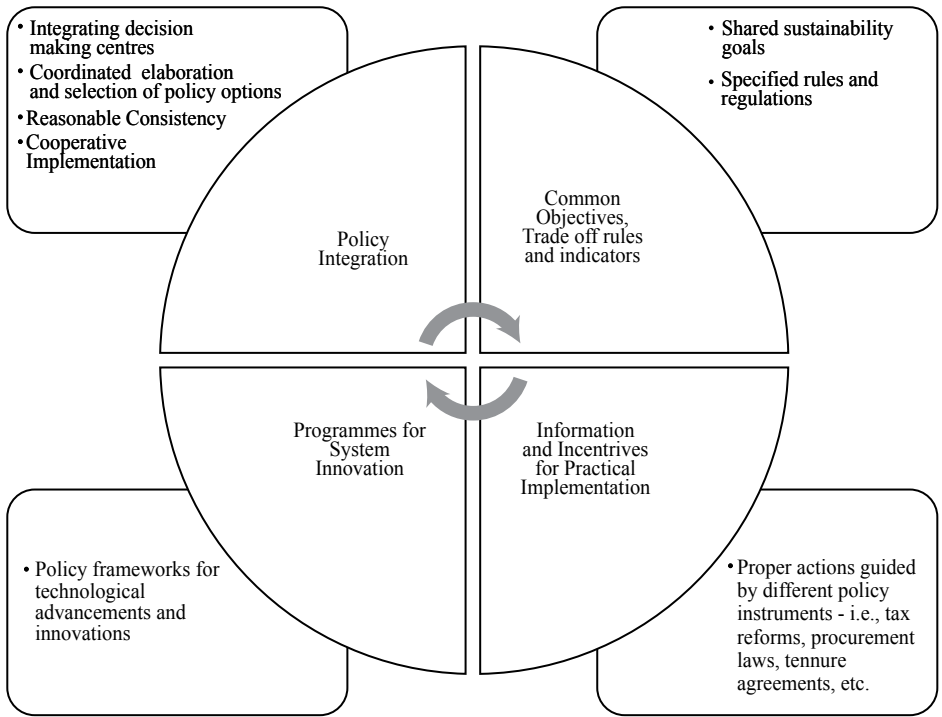
⁵ Santios, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶ Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman (ed.), *Governance and Development: Bangladesh and Regional Experiences*, Dhaka: Shrabon Prokashani, 2006, p. 15.

3. **Linking Governance and Sustainable Development**

Good governance is more than a legal idea and development strategy, rather it is a set of social norms comprising the rule of law, honesty and accountability.⁷ On the other hand, sustainability is ‘a higher order social goal or fundamental property of human or natural systems’.⁸ Governance for sustainability is a holistic idea which emphasizes a common responsibility of values, visions and actions. Though this concept is not defined properly yet, it is followed by some features and components (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Governance for Sustainable Development⁹



Good governance becomes a crucial part of smooth transition. The transitional approach towards governance for sustainability can be an effective

⁷ N. Licht, C. Goldschmidt and Shalom H. Schwartz, “Culture Rules: The Foundations of the Rule of Law and Other Norms of Governance,” *Working Papers Series 2003-605*, Michigan: William Davidson Institute, University of Michigan, 2003, p. 146.

⁸ B. J. Richardson and S. Wood, *Environmental Law for Sustainability*, Oxford, UK: Hart Publishing, 2006, p. 13.

⁹ Md. Mostafizur Rahman, *Good Governance: Theory and Practice*, Dhaka: Srabon Prokashani, 2014, pp. 133-134.

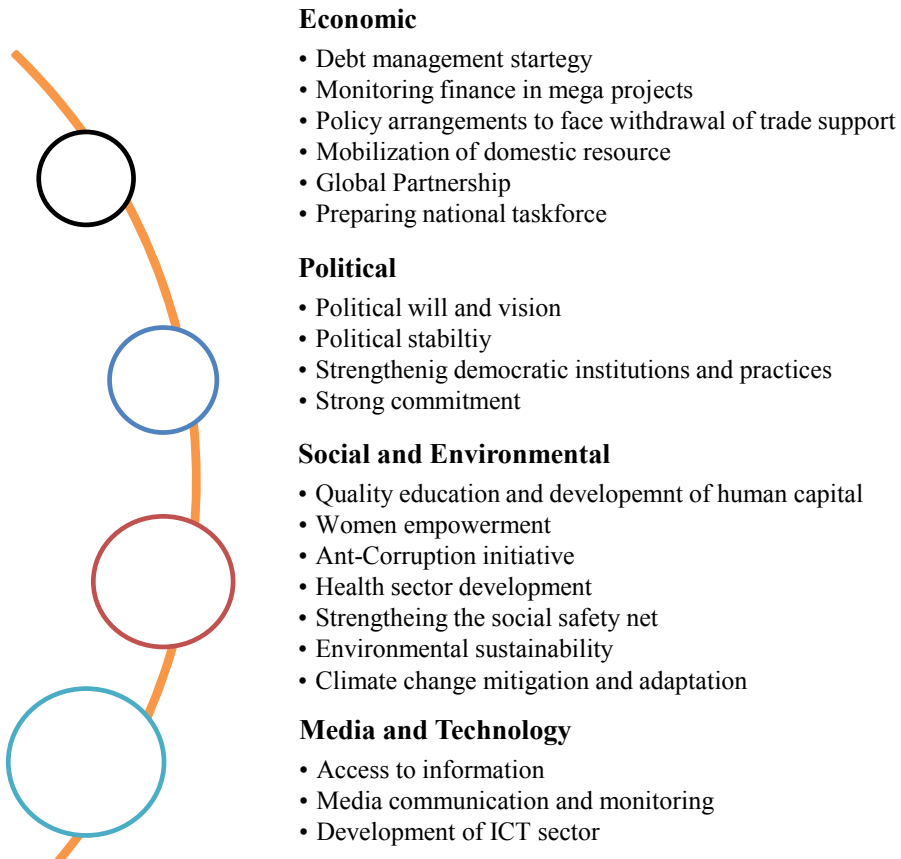
beginning. This approach focuses on transition management through ‘learning by doing’ and gradual advancement.¹⁰ Transition management is a governance strategy which tries to integrate long-term envisioning, multi-actor interaction and short-term actions based on innovations.¹¹ It is a process-oriented model which aims at achieving particular outcomes. The key focuses of transition management are: vision of sustainable development and setting of transition goals, establishment, organizing and development of a transition arena beside the normal policy arenas, using transition experiments and programmes for system innovation, monitoring and evaluating the transition process, creating and maintaining public support, portfolio management, and the use of learning goals for policy and reliance on circles of learning and adaptation.¹² Now, governing the transition period is crucial and proper measures to keep socio-economic and political advancement in the right track is critical. Figure 2 shows sector-wise different measures for the transition period.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 135.

¹¹ D. Loorbach, “Transition Management: Governance for Sustainability”, Conference paper titled *Governance and Sustainability: New challenges for the state, business and civil society*, Berlin, 30 September-01 October 2002, cited in Md. Mostafizur Rahman, op. cit., p. 134.

¹² R. Sanders, *A Systems Approach to Governance for Sustainability*, Brisbane: Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines, 2003, p.14.

Figure 2: Governing the Transition Period



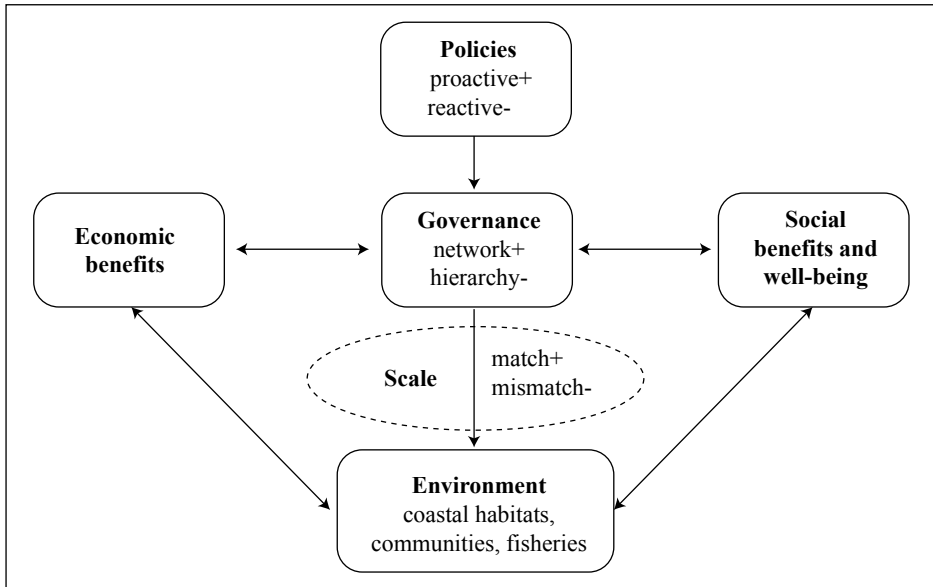
Governance and sustainable development are closely interlinked. Governance is vital for moving towards sustainability as well as crucial for remaining sustainable.¹³ Sustainable development highly depends on effective and equitable governance. Effective governance includes problem-solving capacity of the governments or states to pursue sustainable development. It is highly connected to institutional capacity, technology, expertise and financial resources and the ability to engage in long-term planning to deal with interconnected problems.¹⁴ On the other hand, equitable governance emphasizes on distributional outcomes and equitable treatment for the marginal groups. It seeks greater equity in global decision-making, especially in economic governance, but also to the distribution of wealth, resources,

¹³ Joachim Monkelbaan, *Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals: Exploring an Integrative Framework of Theories, Tools, and Competencies*, Singapore: Springer Nature, 2019, p. 16.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

and opportunities within societies.¹⁵ Governance, policy and sustainability are parallel linkages as sustainability, being more than a vision, can be a fundamental principle for more efficient and effective policies and governance.¹⁶ Linkage among the three suggests that proactive policies, network governance structures, and appropriate scaling of governance favour sustainability.¹⁷

Figure 3: Relations Among Governance, Policy and Sustainability¹⁸



As the governance and sustainable development are interlinked, a comprehensive framework can be followed. Integrative Sustainability Governance largely promotes evidence-based policy making and policy coherence which leaves some long-term implications for the future development and international cooperation. It is a specific form of sustainability governance and can be defined as ‘a collective enterprise which aims to address sustainability problems adequately through fostering fundamental change.’¹⁹ Actually, it is a combination of transition management, metagovernance, experimentalist and network governance mainly focusing on changes in understandings, networks, structures, technologies, policies,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ National Research Council, *Sustainability for the Nation: Resource Connections and Governance Linkages*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013, p. 142.

¹⁷ Stephen Jordan and William H. Benson, “Governance and the Gulf of Mexico Coast: How Are Current Policies Contributing to Sustainability?”, *Sustainability*, Vol. 5, 2013, p. 4702.

¹⁸ National Research Council, op. cit., p. 142.

¹⁹ Joachim Monkelbaan, op. cit., p. 193.

problem domains or entire societal domains.²⁰ This framework contains elements from the action research, transition management, experimentalist governance, integrated risk management and systems thinking cycles besides the special focus on politics, polity and policy dimension.²¹ It works as a hub of network and policy outlet for SDGs. It promotes effective and equitable governance.

Policy coherence is the pre-requisite of development and effective governance. Policy coherence means integrating the economic, social, environmental governance dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy making. It removes inconsistencies between the policies. For example, giving subsidies to a specific industry, such as farming or fishing, may help create jobs, but it may also negatively affect environmental conservation. Equally, a government may decide to invest in renewable energy to increase climate action, but in doing so could negatively affect employment without proper consideration of how and when it invests.²² Key mechanisms of enhancing policy coherence are political commitment and leadership, policy integration, intergenerational timeframe, analyzes and assessments of potential policy effects, policy and institutional coordination, local and regional involvement, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and reporting.²³ Firstly, political and policy statements can help translate commitment into action; secondly, policy co-ordination can resolve conflicts or inconsistencies between policies, i.e., policies regarding bio-fuels energy and climate and renewable energy policies may have conflict of interest which needs careful coherence and coordination; and thirdly, systems for monitoring, analysis and reporting on the impacts of policies to provide evidence to inform decision-making.²⁴ Ultimately, integrative sustainability governance as well as coherent policies under this framework creates a strategic horizon towards development. Here, strategic implication means augmenting the performance which provides long-term positive effect or outcome towards achieving the vision and desired goals. On the other hand, public policies decided in advance bear strategic importance in a position that generates most effects. For example, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 seeks more comprehensive development policies and planning which would generate greater benefits for the next hundred years if properly implemented.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

²¹ Ibid, p. 203.

²² Scotland's International Development Alliance, "Improving Policy Coherence in Scotland: Delivering a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all", Report published in May 2020, available at <https://www.intdevalliance.scot/how-we-help/policy-and-advocacy/policy-coherence-sustainable-development>, accessed on 06 May 2020.

²³ See Ernesto Soria Morales, "Why is policy coherence essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda?", UN System Staff College, 10 September 2018, available at <https://www.unssc.org/news-and-insights/blog/why-policy-coherence-essential-achieving-2030-agenda/>, accessed on 25 April 2020.

²⁴ OECD, *Better Policies for Sustainable Development 2016: A New Framework for Policy Coherence*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016, p. 15

Graduation is a process through which a country ends its LDC status and shifts towards a middle-income country. Latest indicators show that graduation for Bangladesh from the LDCs to the developing nation is not very far as it has fulfilled the UN's current criteria (see Table 1). It will undergo a few years of observation and can officially graduate to a developing country by 2024 at the earliest after the next review in 2021.

Table 1: Projected Progress towards LDC Graduation²⁵

Indicators	Gross National Income Per Capita (US\$)			Human Assets Index			Economic Vulnerability Index		
	2018	2021	2024	2018	2021	2024	2018	2021	2024
Graduation threshold	1,230	1,245-1,270	1,345-1,375	66 or above			32 or above		
Bangladesh's score	1,274	1,730-1,780	2,260-2,500	73.2	79.2	86.3	25.2	24.8	24.7

Bangladesh's graduation from LDCs is indeed a milestone in its long-term economic and social development commitment. However, this graduation brings some challenges and opportunities which need careful attention from the government and policy makers.²⁶ Bangladesh is in a crucial juncture and the key concern is to avoid the 'middle-income trap' as a number of countries are stuck in that status and are unable to come out. Now, it is time to be prepared for the probable impacts of graduation. It is a dire need to take timely action, to promote good governance for the transition and formulate effective strategies to combat the challenges coming ahead. To keep the development wheels in the motion, Bangladesh government has undertaken a number of sector-wise policies and actions through which a number of targets have been set to keep the development trajectory in motion. The following section discusses those policies and actions in detail.

4. Policies and Actions for Sustainable Development

Bangladesh became an independent nation through a struggle for national emancipation in 1971. Just after the independence, a war-torn country had gone

²⁵ Mustafizur Rahman and Estiaque Bari, "Strategy towards Bangladesh's Sustainable LDC Graduation", *CPD, Policy Brief*, No. 4, 2018, p. 1.

²⁶ Bangladesh can continue to access global climate finance even though losing access to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Besides, being a middle-income country, it can uphold the spirit of South-South collaboration to help other countries in graduation. But graduation will take away some opportunities like losing duty-free access to the markets of developed countries, competing with other developing countries in the market without subsidies for indefinite periods of time, no longer being eligible for grants and low interest loans under ODA from the developed countries.

through huge challenges in both state-building and nation-building processes. Poor GDP growth, political instability and devastating calamities like floods and famine had obstructed its development aspiration, the dream of ‘Golden Bengal’. Now, it has torched the so-called label of ‘bottomless basket’ and became a success story. It has an average growth rate of 8 per cent and is expecting to shed its LDC status by 2024.²⁷

Current government under the Awami League (AL) has got a long tenure and has taken some visionary measures for the growth and development. According to the ‘Vision 2041’, Bangladesh aspires to be a developed country by 2041. It has already done a tremendous improvement. Decline in population growth and rising per capita income, reduction of poverty and unemployment show the competitiveness of the country. Bangladesh ranked 105th among the 140 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index (see the Table 2). Garment trade exports and emerging service sectors including microfinance and computing, and digital transformation, etc. have added new dimensions to the ongoing economic growth of Bangladesh.²⁸ Current trajectory indicates a way toward a middle-income country is not very far but it is crucial to put things in the right track for the smooth transition. Smooth transition needs good governance and proper strategy to manage and proper policy actions to pull the wagon towards the goals and vision. This section discusses different areas of policy decisions and actions for governing various sectors and their implication for the sustainable move of the country.

Table 2: Bangladesh in Index at a Glance²⁹

Index	Rank in 2019	Rank in 2018
Global Competitiveness Index (GCI)	105 th out of 141 countries	103 th
Human Development Index (HDI)	135 th out of 189 countries	136 th
Global Hunger Index (GHI)	88 th out of 117 countries	86 th
Global Ease of Doing Business Index	168 th out of 190 countries	176 th
Global Connectivity Index	73 th out of 79 countries	76 th
Global Innovation Index	116 th out of 129 countries	126 th
Corruption Perception Index	146 th out of 180 countries	149 th
SDG Index	116 th out of 162 countries	111 th
Climate Risk Index	9 th out of 10 countries	
Global e-Commerce Index	103 th out of 152 countries	88 th
Global Food Security Index	83 th out of 113 countries	83 th

²⁷ Katharine Rooney, “Here’s what you need to know about Bangladesh’s rocketing economy”, *World Economic Forum*, 19 November 2019, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/11/bangladesh-gdp-economy-asia/>, accessed on 20 March 2020.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Compiled by the authors from Word Development Indicators, Washington, DC: World Bank.

4.1 Economic Governance

Bangladesh has been able to continue the trend of development and growth. In the last 5 years, its GDP remains more than 7 per cent. In FY2018-19, the GDP growth rate was 8.13 per cent.³⁰ Its total export was US\$30,903 million during July-March of FY2018-19 and import was US\$40,895 million in FY2018-19 (July-February).³¹ Export earnings from ready-made garments and knitwear, agricultural products, handicraft products, leather and jute products, etc. are increasing. Foreign reserve reached US\$32.12 billion at the end of 30 April 2019.³² FDI inflow in the country in 2018-19 fiscal year stood at US\$2,540 million.³³

The key focus of monetary policy of the government is to promote economic growth in line with the SDG agenda. Agriculture has been given the top most priority to become self-sufficient in food. The government is working relentlessly for this sector considering the 7th five-year plan, National Agriculture Policy and SDG.³⁴ To increase domestic and foreign investments, the government is focusing on the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. It also formulated investment friendly policies, acts and laws. For example, Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has taken an initiative to create employment of around 10 million people by establishing 100 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) throughout the country by 2030.³⁵ There are 88 SEZs in Bangladesh among which 59 are government-owned and 29 are privately owned.³⁶ To simplify the business and provide fast and hassle free services to the investors, the government passed ‘One Stop Act, 2018’ in the Parliament, which would open a new horizon in the investment environment. This act would help investors to have necessary services from the same office. The full international standard online One Stop Service was launched in January 2019.³⁷ Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) is working to facilitate the investment and establish industries and provide administrative coordination service. It is expected that those policies and actions would help a congenial environment and improve the ranking in the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ index.

Industrialization is an important factor for sustainable economic development. The government introduced ‘National Industrial Policy 2016’ to

³⁰ Finance Division, *Bangladesh Economic Review 2019*, Dhaka: Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, June 2019, p. 13.

³¹ Ibid, p. 7.

³² Finance Division, op. cit., p. 8.

³³ “Bangladesh’s FDI rises over 5pc from July to October”, *The Financial Express*, 25 December 2019.

³⁴ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

³⁶ BEZA, available at <https://www.beza.gov.bd/economic-zones-site/>, accessed on 12 May 2020.

³⁷ Finance Division, op. cit., p.21.

accelerate industrialization. One of the key focuses of this policy is to promote cottage industries, small and medium industries, and to encourage women entrepreneurs. Moreover, continuous endeavor of the government for the last decade in poverty reduction has been rewarded. The 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) targeted to reduce poverty rate at 18.6 per cent by 2020.³⁸ To attain the target of poverty alleviation, the key focus of the government is on the social safety net and introduced National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). Moreover, the government is emphasizing on attaining poverty and hunger related targets to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is projected to reduce poverty rate at 9.7 per cent and malnutrition rate less than 10 per cent by 2030.³⁹ Now, the concern is that in comparison to the pace of economic growth, the rate of poverty reduction declined.⁴⁰ Income inequality and urban poverty have added a new dimension to the concern.

Tourism is another potential area of fostering economic advancement. Tourism sector contributed 4.4 per cent in the GDP in 2018 and it is projected that it would reach 4.6 per cent in 2028.⁴¹ So, this sector has a significant role in economic growth. Government has undertaken a number of policies and actions for the further development of this sector, i.e., National Tourism Policy-2010, Bangladesh Tourist Reservation Area and Special Tourism Zone Act-2010, formation of tourist police for the safety of tourists and establishment of tourism board to harvest the untapped potential of this sector. Connectivity is the precondition to foster regional trade and investment. Bangladesh has already joined the Belt and Road Initiative sponsored by China, BBIN and BIMSTEC initiative for establishing regional cooperation and people to people connectivity.

4.2 Human Resource Development

Human resource development is one of the core agenda of sustainable development. The first priority of human resource development is education. In the era of globalization, technical education is the top most priority. Technical education offers great opportunities for employment at both domestic and overseas markets. The importance of technical education in Bangladesh can hardly be overemphasized where only 14 per cent of students receive technical or vocational education.⁴² This is very marginal compared to many developed and even some developing nations.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 219.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Bangladesh Needs Traditional and New Solutions to End Poverty: World Bank”, Press Release, World Bank,

⁰⁷ October 2019, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/10/07/bangladesh-needs-traditional-and-new-solutions-to-end-poverty-world-bank>, accessed on 22 May 2020.

⁴¹ Basharat Hossain and Syed Naimul Wadood, “Potential Unexplored? Tourism and Economic Growth of Bangladesh”, *Journal of Tourismology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2020, p. 9.

⁴² Kamal Uddin Ahmed, “Why technical education is imperative”, *The Financial Express*, 31 January 2020.

The government adopted ‘National Education Policy-2010’ to create skilled and competent human resources by enhancing the quality of education and increasing accessibility to education in all tiers.

Bangladesh is enjoying a demographic dividend now. At present, more than 65 per cent of our population is of working age, between 15 and 64 years⁴³ and this percentage will reach 70 in 2030.⁴⁴ Demographic dividend is not guaranteed or automatic: rather, it requires huge investment in governance, education, infrastructure, health; and nutrition focusing, the youth development. Demographic dividend can be a momentum for Bangladesh as it is going to be a middle-income country by 2024 and a developed country by 2041. So, youths can be a crucial agent for smooth graduation and sustainable economic growth. The major challenge of reaping the dividend is creating jobs for the unemployed youths and equipping them with education. The government is implementing different types of development programmes to accumulate demographic dividend. National Education Policy has given special focus on technical and vocational education as well as ICT education. Within 2020, the government targeted to increase the enrolment rate of technical education up to 20 per cent.⁴⁵ Again, necessary steps have been taken to implement National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) at all levels. An ‘Integrated Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Development Action Plan’ has been developed aligning it with SDGs and the 7th Five Year Plan. Currently, in total 8,852 TVET institutions are in operational mode. Out of these, 119 institutions are operating through the government. The rest of 8,733 institutions are running privately.⁴⁶ Education Master Plan has been prepared involving all strata of education for building a skilled and modern education system by including ICT in the education sector. The government also endorsed National Youth Policy 2017. The objective of this policy is to increase the engagement of the youths in good governance, ICT development, environmental education and protection, green technology and volunteerism, etc. Moreover, to utilize the youth’s potentials, the government also initiated National Skill Development Policy 2011 to improve the quality and relevance of skills development for various groups including women and physically challenged.⁴⁷

⁴³ Abu Afsarul Haider, “‘Demographic dividend’ could turn into a ‘demographic disaster’”, *The Daily Star*, 02 March 2019.

⁴⁴ Md. Atikur Rahman, “Skillful and efficient human resources needed for development”, *The Independent*, 06 October 2018.

⁴⁵ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Centre for Research and Information (CRI), *Bangladesh: Youth Development*, October 2017, p. 5.

The fertility rate as well as death rate has decreased, average life expectancy has increased and neonatal and maternal death rate has decreased notably.⁴⁸ The Community Clinic and Expanded Program of Immunization have opened a new horizon in the health sector. But recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown the gaps in the health sector which needs special attention from the policy makers to achieve the health-related goals of the SDGs.

Women empowerment is another crucial indicator of sustainable development. To empower women, it is necessary to encourage self-employment of women and entrepreneurship, stop violence against women and trafficking, facilitate safety of women in the workplace and ensure women's participation in mainstream economic activities. Government introduced different policies and acts to ensure women's rights for example, 'National Women Development Policy 2011', 'National Child Policy-2011', 'Domestic Violence (prevention and security) Act 2010', 'Comprehensive policy on Initial Care and Development of Child 2013', 'Dowry Prevention Act 2018', 'Child Marriage Prevention Rules 2018', 'Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act 2014' and Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Rules 2018', etc.

4.3 Environmental Governance and Climate Change

Environmental governance is the key concern in maintaining a balanced relationship between economic growth and sustainable development. It is a concept in political ecology or environmental policy related to defining the elements needed to achieve sustainability and resilience.⁴⁹ Besides, ecological objectives of development must take a central position in building a socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and democratically vibrant society.⁵⁰ Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries induced by climate change. It is projected that, because of climate change, annual rainfall will increase about 4 per cent in 2030, 2.3 per cent in 2050 and 6.7 per cent in 2070, annual average temperature will increase by 2.4 degree Celsius and annual average rainfall will be changed by 9.7 per cent within 2100.⁵¹ Moreover, 'The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)' predicts that by 2050, Bangladesh will lose 17 per cent of its land and 30 per cent of its food production because of the negative impact of climate change.⁵²

⁴⁸ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 205.

⁴⁹ Mohammad Tarikul Islam, "Ensuring enforcement of environmental governance", *The Financial Express*, 29 April 2018.

⁵⁰ Atiq Rahman, "Environmental governance and growth", *The Daily Star*, 12 March 2015.

⁵¹ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 262.

⁵² Ibid.

The prime directives of environmental governance issued from the article 18(a) of the constitution of Bangladesh is that protection and improvement of the environment and preservation of the natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for the present and future citizens shall remain the State's obligation in all circumstances. Government has undertaken multiple policies and action plans under this directive. The 7th Five-Year Plan (2015–2020) emphasizes promotion of green growth and sustainable development. The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021), seeks to promote environment protection, climate change preparedness across government policies to benefit the poor.⁵³ Besides, the government has formed Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), 2009 to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) through enhanced efficiency in the usage of natural resources and conventional energy, low carbon energy dimensions of development intervention design.⁵⁴ This plan covers 44 activities within 6 thematic areas. To implement these activities Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) has been formed and the government has promulgated 'Climate Change Trust Fund Act, 2010' to run this fund.

Bangladesh is going to develop 'National Adaptation Plan (NAP)' under UNFCC in order to fix integrated adaptation strategies and activities to meet long-term impact on climate change. Bangladesh has prepared 'Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)' plan which aims to reduce 10 per cent carbon emission with international cooperation and decline 5 per cent carbon release with own ability by 2030.⁵⁵ Moreover, the government introduced 'Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA)' and 'Climate Change Unit' to adapt climate change impact. Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 is the most significant step towards fighting climate change. It has 6 specific goals⁵⁶ and to attain these goals BDP 2100 has initiated 'Flood Risk Management Strategies' and 'Freshwater Strategies' at national level. Again, Industrial Policy (2016) highly emphasizes on environment friendly industrialization and less pressure on natural resources. This policy made Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) mandatory for industries that produce toxic wastewater

⁵³ Bushra Ferdous Khan, *Governance for Green Growth in Bangladesh: Policies, Institutions, and Political Economy*, report prepared by Adam Smith International, October 2017, p. 14, available at https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/Governance%20for%20Green%20Growth%20in%20Bangladesh_Policies%2C%20Institutions%2C%20and%20Political%20Economy_0.pdf, accessed on 12 February 2020.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 263.

⁵⁶ The six goals are: 1. Ensure safety from floods and climate change related disasters; 2. Enhance water security and efficiency of water usages; 3. Ensure sustainable and integrated river systems and estuaries management; 4. Conserve and preserve wetlands and ecosystems and promote their appropriate use; 5. Develop effective institutions and equitable governance for in-country and trans-boundary water resources management and 6. Achieve optimal and integrated use of land and water resources.

and kept provisions of punitive measures against the offenders.⁵⁷ This policy also promotes the 3R principle (Reduce-Reuse-Recycle) for all industries and discourages establishment of industries in agricultural land.

To conserve biodiversity, Bangladesh has already prepared 'National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2016-2020' based on 'UN Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2016-2020'. Moreover, 'Bangladesh Biodiversity Act, 2017' has been enacted and 'Ecologically Critical Management Rules, 2016' has been prepared. The key focuses NBSAP are: conservation of Ecologically Critical Areas (ECA): 13 areas including Saint Martin Island and Halda River; 'Blue Economy Action Plan' to preserve and manage marine and coastal biodiversity; monitoring marine pollution by measuring Dissolved Oxygen and solid in water.

Bangladesh is a signatory country of Montreal Protocol (signed in 1990) and formed 'National Technical Committee on Ozone Depleting Substances (NTCODS)' in 1995. Later, to implement this protocol, Ozone Cell was formed in 1996. Beside those policies and actions, Bangladesh is currently working to attain SDG Goal 13 and Goal 14. For this purpose, it has formulated 'Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies of Bangladesh (2016-2020)'. Moreover, green banking, forest conservation and social forestry are the remarkable initiatives to environmental sustainability.

Most importantly, disaster management is at the heart of environmental governance in Bangladesh as it is a disaster-prone country and experiences natural disasters time and again, for example, devastating cyclones in 1970 and 1991, SIDR in 2007, AILA in 2009 and fatal floods in 1988, 1998, 2004 and 2007. Now, increasing the capacity of disaster response and disaster management is the main concern of the government. The National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM 2016-2020) has been formulated to address the disaster risks. Bangladesh is the member of 'Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC)', 'Regional Integrated Multi Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)' and 'International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)'. The government also prepared the Contingency Plan for the early recovery and developed the inundation map for flood and the risk map for storm surge to facilitate the construction of infrastructures in the disaster-prone areas. Community based warning programmes also gained much effectiveness. The government also introduced two cells: Damage and Needs Assessment (DNA) and Multi-Hazard Risk and Vulnerable Assessment Cell under the awareness building programmes to measure the impacts of climate change and disasters on the lives and livelihoods.

⁵⁷ Bushra Ferdous Khan, op. cit., p.14.

4.4 Technological Advancement and Digital Governance

The development of science and technology in the last century brought a revolutionary change in every aspect of human activities. The digital age has opened a new window of opportunities for developing economies. Bangladesh is focusing on strategic innovation to attain its vision and SDG targets. Investment in the ICT sector not only develops human capital but also creates its own innovation system in the global competitive environment. Now, Bangladesh is branding the dream of ‘Digital Bangladesh’ and showed a praiseworthy performance in ICT development. Government has established Digital Centres to provide services to the rural people, e-Learning, and providing easy and cheaper access to internet services. In January 2020, there were 66.44 per cent internet users which increased 9.5 per cent than the previous year.⁵⁸ Moreover, there were 163.0 million mobile connections in Bangladesh in January 2020 (4.5 per cent increased than in 2019). In February 2018, the government launched 4G mobile technology and Bangabandhu Satellite-1, the first transport and communication satellite, was launched in May 2018. The development of IT industry largely helped in digital transformation and growth. It is estimated that Bangladesh exports US\$1 billion of technology products every year and it is expected to increase to US\$5 billion by 2021.⁵⁹ There are 0.6 million IT freelancers working in the country.

Now, what are the policies and actions to govern these huge potential sectors? The ICT division of the government has undertaken multiple policies and initiatives. Bangladesh Hi-tech Park Authority was established under ‘Bangladesh Hi-tech Park Authority Law-2010’. It aims to promote IT/ITES based hi-tech industry, creation of tech-based employment for youths, and building a conducive environment for investment. Now, 28 hi-tech park/software technology parks throughout the country have been established.⁶⁰ Construction of ‘Bangabandhu Hi-tech City’ at Kaliakoir, Gazipur is ongoing. Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA) has been established to introduce digital signature of e-commerce, e-transaction and e-governance.

The government introduced National Science & Technology Policy-2011 to ensure application(s) of science, technology and innovation (ST&I) for achieving sustainable development by poverty alleviation, employment generation, and environmental sustainability.⁶¹ A draft on ‘The National ICT Policy 2018’ has been proposed which is the amended version of the National ICT Policy 2015. This policy

⁵⁸ Digital 2020: Bangladesh, 17 February 2020, available at <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-bangladesh>, accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁵⁹ Katharine Rooney, op. cit.

⁶⁰ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 192.

⁶¹ National Science & Technology Policy-2011, Ministry of Science and Technology, p. 6.

covers 48 action plans and eight strategic issues.⁶² Introduction of 5G is the key focus of the proposed policy. One of the major policy interventions in ICT governance is Digital Security Act 2018, though it has been criticized from different sections of the society. The act was passed on 01 October 2018 in the parliament. The main objective of the act is to combat digital crimes and ensure security of lives and assets.

4.5 Energy Security and Governance

The power sector of Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing sectors in South Asia. Both production and consumption capacity has been increasing for the last five years. To secure the energy supply and meet increasing demand, the government has given much focus on diversification of energy sources, more specifically on the efficient and best use of energy. Government has taken several policies and initiatives to meet increasing demand for power and energy. National Energy Policy (NEP) was formulated in 1996 and updated in 2005. The key focus of this policy is to promote environment friendly energy development programmes, encourage public-private partnership in energy sector development and bring the whole country under electricity facility by 2020.⁶³

According to Power System Master Plan (PSMP) 2016, the government projected to increase electricity generation capacity to 24,000 MW by 2021; 40,000 MW by 2030; and 60,000 MW by 2041. According to the Power Division, in 2019, total generation capacity was 22,787MW (including captive and renewable).⁶⁴ This policy aimed at providing electricity for all by 2021. Currently, 93 per cent of people in the country are enjoying electricity facilities. Besides the traditional sources of electricity production, the government is focusing on renewable energy. Renewable Energy Policy of Bangladesh 2009 first expressed the vision of having 10 per cent (at least 2000MW) of total power generation from renewable sources by 2020.⁶⁵

For effective utilization and conservation of renewable energy both in public and private sector, Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) was established under Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority Act, 2012. PSMP 2016 declared the target of increasing renewable power

⁶² These are: a) digital government, b) digital security, c) social equity, d) universal access to education, e) research and innovation, f) skill development, g) employment generation and h) strengthening of domestic capacity to cope with the changes of emerging technologies.

⁶³ Charles K. Ebinger, *Energy and Security in South Asia: Cooperation or Conflict?*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011, p. 96.

⁶⁴ Power Division, available at <https://powerdivision.gov.bd/site/page/6cd25d49-3150-482a-8bd0-701d18136af7/At-A-Glance>, accessed on 21 April 2020.

⁶⁵ Benuka Ferdousi and Rubel Molla, "Renewable Energy in Bangladesh: Achievements, Potentials and Challenges", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2018, p. 36.

generation to 2,470MW by 2021 and 3,864MW by 2041.⁶⁶ Currently, Renewable Energy Installed Capacity is 626.69 MW.⁶⁷ To reduce carbon emission, the 7th Five Year Plan and ‘Energy Efficiency and Conservation Master Plan up to 2030’ targeted to save 15 per cent primary energy per GDP by 2021 and 20 per cent by 2030.⁶⁸ Moreover, ‘Energy Efficiency and Conservation Rules 2016’ has been formulated as well as the government initiated multiple programmes like promoting energy efficiency in industries and residential sector, inserting energy efficiency and conservation provisions into the Bangladesh National Building Code, in the textbooks of the schools and madrasas as well as Energy Saving School Awareness Program has been introduced.

Bangladesh is also constructing Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) with a capacity of 24,000MW which is expected to be operational in 2021. Government has taken initiative in cross border trade of electricity through bilateral cooperation with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. It is closely working with neighbouring countries as well as UNESCAP, SAARC, BIMSTEC, SASEC and D-8 for enhancing the power sector. However, the power sector is facing multiple challenges like shortages of natural gas, inefficiency of power plants, limited potential of renewable energy, poor financial health of power generating companies, and lack of technology and expertise, etc.

4.6 Political and Institutional Development

Political commitment and leadership are the prime mover of continuity of development and governance mechanism. Bangladesh has been experiencing a stable leadership and political regime for the last decade. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the government is heading towards its political commitment—mission of being a middle-income country by 2024 and a prosperous country by 2041. The basic principles of the state policy ushered in the constitution of Bangladesh are the key aspiration for a prosperous future and directives for a progressive and inclusive development agenda.

Bangladesh has been experiencing less political turmoil since the last few years. Parliament is functional with a majority of members from AL, the party in power. So, parliament is enjoying a congenial environment to raise any legislation, move and get them passed, though there remains debate whether the members actually articulate people’s concerns properly or not. Parliament plays a significant role for the implementation of Agenda 2030. It facilitates good governance and can ensure inclusiveness and make the government accountable for its policies through

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 37.

⁶⁷ SREDA, available at <http://www.renewableenergy.gov.bd/>, accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁶⁸ Finance Division, op. cit., p. 157.

law-making and budgetary exercise. SDG 16 incorporates the spirit to strengthen democratic institutions, public administration reform and good governance, with particular emphasis on enhancing citizens' participation and promoting public ethics.

Strong and decentralized local government is another prerequisite for sustainable development. It offers an opportunity for genuine popular participation in public governance. The 7th FYP has set an objective to capacitate city corporations and municipalities both institutionally and financially. To enable more effective functioning of the local government, the Paurasabha Bill 2009 and City Corporations Bill 2009 have shown clear political commitment to assist in terms of policy support, legislative and executive actions.⁶⁹ Local governments have been well-equipped with the establishment of Union Information Service Centres.

Bureaucracy is a crucial element of governance and an agent of development. It is an institutionalized and disciplined way of policy determination, policy framing and implementation. In countries like Bangladesh, having a colonial past, bureaucrats hold more power over the decisions of the government. Political instability and military rule in the past have strengthened the position of the bureaucracy in the context of Bangladesh. The question of public accountability of bureaucracy is still debated. Neo-patrimonial culture and patron-client practices, red-tapism, corrupt practices debar the development aspirations and create a backlog. But in recent times, it is trying to come out from those irregularities and practicing meritocracy.

The judiciary is a significant organ of the democratic political system. It establishes the basis of social justice and equality to ensure good governance by using its laws and institutions.⁷⁰ On 02 November 2007, Judiciary was separated from the executive department. Still there remains debate whether the judiciary is separated in real sense or not. This debate became acute when the government turned back to the spirit of 1972 constitution and passed 16th amendment bill on 17 September 2014 to empower parliament to remove judges of the Supreme Court for their incompetence or misconduct based on a two-thirds majority.

Corruption is at the total reverse point of the idea of sustainable development. It debilitates the key institutions of the national integrity system (NIS) and hinders rule of law. It promotes injustice and creates mistrust on government largely affecting its legitimacy. To fight corruption, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was formed under Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004 which was passed on 23 February

⁶⁹ General Economic Division, *The 7th Five Year Plan (FY2016-FY2020): Accelerating Growth and Empowering Citizens*, December 2015, pp. 382-383.

⁷⁰ Md Anwar Hossain Molla, "Judiciary and Good Governance in Bangladesh", *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2008, p. 246.

2004 and came into force on 09 May 2004. The key mission of the commission is to fight, control and prevent corruption and promote good practices. The role of the ACC became more crucial when the government declared zero tolerance principle against corruption. But it is often criticized for failing to demonstrate its purpose and became a ‘toothless tiger’. The commission itself is accused of corruption sometimes.⁷¹ Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was passed in the parliament on 08 June 2016 to allow the police to investigate graft charges and judicial magistrates to hold trials. However, ‘The Sarkari Chakori Ain Bill 2018’ passed in October 2018 raised huge debate because under this act ACC must seek the permission of the authorities concerned before arresting any public servant prior to a court framing charges.

5. Challenges Towards Governing the Development Vision

Discussions in section four reveal that there is an abundance of policies regarding every sector to keep the wheel of development in motion. But it is important to understand how effective those policies could be, what are the limitations in the path of their implementation and what are the challenges towards sustainable development.

Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic will obviously have a bitter impact on the global economy. South Asia will face a stormy experience due to adverse impacts of this pandemic. The World Bank forecast that the growth will fall to a range between 1.8 and 2.8 per cent in 2020, down from 6.3 per cent projected six months ago.⁷² According to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020, Bangladesh will lose 0.2-0.4 per cent GDP growth rate due to the corona virus outbreak⁷³ and is expected to grow by 7.8 per cent in Fiscal Year 2020 and 8.0 per cent in 2021.⁷⁴ Though ADB is expecting a strong economy of Bangladesh, the World Bank has forecast GDP to be between 2 and 3 per cent.⁷⁵ Bangladesh will struggle due to decline in remittance inflow, halt in export-import, decline in RMG industry, and unemployment. Already RMG sector has received work order cancellations of nearly US\$3 billion and about 2 million workers in the industries will be affected by this.⁷⁶ Though Bangladesh showed tremendous resilience in previous crises i.e. 1997 Asian financial crisis and

⁷¹ “ACC director suspended for leaking info”, *The Daily Star*, 11 June 2019.

⁷² World Bank, *World Bank. 2020. South Asia Economic Focus, Spring 2020: The Cursed Blessing of Public Banks*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 12 April 2020.

⁷³ “Bangladesh to lose 0.2-0.4 per cent GDP growth rate due to virus outbreak: ADB”, *The Daily Star*, 03 April 2020.

⁷⁴ Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Asian Development Outlook 2020: What Drives Innovation in Asia?*, April 2020, p. xxi.

⁷⁵ Rejaul Karim Byron and Wasim Bin Habib, “Outlook is grim for Bangladesh”, *The Daily Star*, 13 April 2020.

⁷⁶ M Shahriar Azad Bhuiyan, “Covid-19 and its impact on Bangladesh economy”, *The Business Standard*, 15 April 2020.

2008 global financial crisis, COVID-19 pandemic is totally different in magnitude as it requires extraordinary responses. Government has announced a total financial package of BDT727.5 billion to face the possible impact of the coronavirus on the economy.⁷⁷ Besides, experts are suggesting to raise revenue through comprehensive tax reforms to manage more resources for expenditure on infrastructure, health and social development. However, Bangladesh is aspiring to be a middle-income country, it should be more careful about its donor-fed economy because in the post-coronavirus period, foreign aid may not be forthcoming like it did before.⁷⁸

Secondly, endemic corruption is another challenge towards achieving development goals. Bangladesh became 146th among the least corrupt countries out of 180 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2019. Rent seeking through discretionary access to public bank loans, non-payment of those loans, insider trading and other manipulations of the stock market, corruption in public procurement and spending, evasion of taxes and illegal land grabbing including public land, etc. have become a major barrier to good governance and development aspiration.⁷⁹ Sometimes reports of political patronage to these corrupt practices come out. Default loans became a cancer in the banking system. According to the Global Economic Prospects report, Bangladesh's default loan ratio was estimated at 11.4 per cent for 2019 and it topped the list of loan default index in South Asia.⁸⁰ According to Bangladesh Bank, as of December 2019, the total amount of outstanding loans was BDT10.18 trillion out of which an amount of BDT 943.31 billion was classified (nonperforming) loans.⁸¹ Irregularities in purchasing for housing projects for the RNPP (Pillow scandals)⁸² shows the trend of severe corruption in public purchase.

Thirdly, income inequality is another challenge. High inequality leads to social tensions and tends to contribute to social and political instability.⁸³ One of the reasons behind the creation of Bangladesh was income inequality, it remained manifested after the 49 years of independence. As per the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Gini coefficient, which is the economic measure of equality⁸⁴, stood at 0.482 in 2016, up from 0.458 in 2010.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ "PM announces Tk 727.5 billion package to fight coronavirus impact", *The Financial Express*, 05 April 2020.

⁷⁸ Shihab Sarkar, "Economic fallout from Covid-19", *The Financial Express*, 30 March 2020.

⁷⁹ Sadiq Ahmed, *Evidence Based Policy Making in Bangladesh: Selected Case Studies*, Dhaka: Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, 2017, p. 137.

⁸⁰ Mosharaf Hossain, "Default loans: Cancer of the banking system", *The Financial Express*, 16 March 2020.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Mizanur Rahman, "Report: Tk36 crore embezzled in Rooppur housing project scam", *Dhaka Tribune*, 15 July 2019.

⁸³ Sadiq Ahmed, op. cit., p. 115.

⁸⁴ The Gini coefficient is measured on a scale of 0 to 1; the closer it is to 1 the higher the inequality is in the society.

⁸⁵ Muhammad Abdul Mazid, "Bangladesh: The state of income inequality", *The Financial express*, 26 October 2019.

Fourthly, poor infrastructure is another challenge. Quality infrastructure is a sine qua non for economic development. It accelerates growth through supporting trade links, reducing production and transaction costs, expanding agricultural and industrial productivity and advancing private investment etc. But in terms of quality infrastructure development, Bangladesh is far behind, in South Asia. In the Infrastructure pillar of Global Competitiveness Index, it ranked 114th in 2019 while Sri Lanka ranked 61st, India 70th, Pakistan 105th and Nepal 112th.⁸⁶ Limited resources for building new infrastructures and lack of decentralization of infrastructure development projects are barring the quality infrastructure in Bangladesh.

Fifthly, proper policy implementation, assessment and coordination is one of the key issues of governance and sustainable development. Success of policy lies on how the policy is evaluated and what level it is implemented. Policy making process is highly top-down in nature in Bangladesh. Bureaucrats play the major role in decision making and policy formulation rather than experts and researchers. Often draft policies are finalized without proper debate in the parliament or without feedback from the mass people or stakeholders. In case of implementation of the policy, bureaucratic tradition is also maintained and lacks appropriate coordination and accountability. Lack of inter-organizational communication, i.e., different ministries and NGOs, conflict of interest and internal complexity hinders proper implementation. As multiple actors like government ministries, NGOs, individuals are involved in the implementation process, they have differences in outlook and sense of urgency, different opinions on leadership and organizational roles⁸⁷ become a challenge for the proper implementation of policies. Moreover, ‘learning by doing’ is less emphasized. Lack of adequate resources, designated evaluation authority and measuring instrument, is a barrier in evaluation when there exist institutional biases and less specified instruments. Coordinated evaluation is also less emphasized. For example, when environmental policy, agricultural policy and industrial policy are discussed, it needs to be evaluated simultaneously in a single evaluation paper that can assist in comparing the achievement and impacts of one policy to another. Most importantly, policy coherence is less visible in midst of policy abundance. Policy coherence in economic, environmental and social governance is crucial for domestic and global consistency especially in the area of migration, food security, regional trade, illicit money flow and ecological sustainability. The ‘top-down’ nature of policy making and implementation is a major concern while inter-policy inconsistency undermines the potentiality of policy outcome. For example, many aspects of National Environment Policy, Agricultural Policy, Water Policy, Industrial Policy

⁸⁶ Md. Tuhin Ahmed, “Challenges of boosting private investment in Bangladesh”, *The Financial Express*, 29 December 2019.

⁸⁷ Anisur Rahman Khan, “Policy Implementation: Some Aspects and Issues”, *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2016, p. 7.

and Land Use Policy overlap with each other and with forest policies, resulting in conflicts and inconsistencies that frequently hinder forest program implementation.⁸⁸

6. Conclusion

Bangladesh has come to a long way despite experiencing military crackdown, political ups and downs since its independence. Current political leadership, to make the dream of ‘*Sonar Bangla*’ a reality, has undertaken a valiant mission for development and set a vision to be a developed country by 2041. Bangladesh has already achieved the criteria to be a middle-income country and it will officially graduate from the LDCs in 2024. Now, it is crucial to ensure sustainability of the development for the smooth performance towards the Vision-2041. Actually, graduation does not necessarily lead to continuous development progress, rather graduating countries require to facilitate smooth transition through bypassing reversal of development progress. Governance for sustainability is a holistic idea which emphasizes a common responsibility of values, visions and actions. It necessarily incorporates climate governance, financial and investment governance, organizational development and human development as well. Proper strategy and policy actions can ensure the smooth transition and post-graduation development progress. Bangladesh government has formulated policies, undertaken various decisions and actions for the sustainable development move of the country. But there are a number of governing challenges in the pathway. Recent outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic would be a major threat to the economy. Moreover, endemic corruption, growing inequality, poor infrastructure, lack of proper policy implementation and evaluation and ultimately poor performance by democratic institutions become a headache for the governance and aspiration for development. As there is strong political will and commitment for development from the political leadership, to make those strategies and policies a success the government can focus on following issues. Firstly, the government should give more focus on the agricultural sector to overcome the economic shake created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, it should focus on proper transition management, i.e., preparing a debt management strategy, financial arrangement on mega projects, mobilizing the domestic resources, and enhancing global partnership to support development initiatives and strategic partnership between public and private to implement domestic policy. Besides, building and maintaining quality infrastructure and reducing bottlenecks for doing business need to be focused. Growing income inequality should be taken carefully through creating more jobs and reducing poverty. Secondly, ACC should be more

⁸⁸ Nur Muhammed, Masao Koike and Farhana Haque, “Forest Policy and Sustainable Forest Management in Bangladesh: An Analysis from National and International Perspectives”, *New Forests*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2008, pp. 9-10.

proactive in checking the corruption. Political will and public awareness are needed to realize the ‘zero-tolerance policy’ against the corrupt practices and irregularities. Thirdly, the government needs to focus on quality education, especially the technical and vocational education for skill development and quality human capital. Research should be encouraged more for critical and innovative thinking. Fourthly, the government should focus more on the health sector as coronavirus has opened different irregularities, poor performance and gaps of this sector. Budget needs to be increased in this sector. In the fiscal year of 2019-20, this sector had 4.9 per cent of total allocation. Finally, the most important thing is that the government should focus more on policy implementation and evaluation. Implementation process should be more inclusive through involvement of grassroots people. Decision making processes should be accelerated and come out from the colonial bureaucratic tradition. Moreover, policy options based on overall development perspective should be prioritized for implementation. Coordination among public and private organizations is necessary for effective implementation. The outcome of the policy implementation can be measured through proper evaluation. There should be no institutional and ideological biases in the evaluation process and the government should form a national committee on policy evaluation comprising researchers, practitioners, civil society and different stakeholders. Most importantly, to ensure sustainable development, policy coherence in some sectors especially food security, green growth and tackling Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) needs to be addressed through applying Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) framework proposed by OECD. Besides, sustainability problems need to be addressed adequately through collective enterprise by applying the lens of Integrative Sustainability Governance (ISG) which largely promotes evidence-based policy-making and network governance.