

Feature

Development

Decentralization and Globalisation

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PROFOUND changes have already taken place in the global political scene. Consequently, the economic scenario has also been undergoing drastic changes. With the collapse of Soviet Union not only the concept of bi-polarism in politics has ceased to exist, the very concept of centralisation both in political and economic spheres is being questioned. Although the aspiration for democratisation of the state has been on the rise, the actual operation of democracy on the ground has not been that satisfactory. Yet hopes for better sharing of power and other fruits of democratisation are still high on the agenda in most countries. While in the economic field the speedy globalisation through structural adjustment and liberalisation of trade may have loosened the grip of the centralised state there have been a number of fallouts as well. The vulnerable groups, especially who have not been able to organise and articulate their grievances, are being gradually marginalised. The basics like efficiency, equity and ethics are being gradually eroded from the ongoing economic system. Bangladesh is no exception either in this respect. Both politics and economics in Bangladesh are under serious pressures from the marginalised groups. Both centralised administration and marketised economics have been failing to rise up to the aspirations of the people for effective democratisation of various institutions. This has already given rise to frustrations among majority of the people. This situation calls for greater degree of decentralisation both in politics and economics. Such a demand for increased decentralisation in Bangladesh is, of course, consistent with the renewed surge in enthusiasm for decentralised administration and participation world wide. Following factors may be identified for such a surge:

With the collapse of Soviet Socialist System which epitomised centralized political and economic management, the focus is now on local organizational structure. With mounting local environmental crisis, the emphasis on decentralized management of natural resources has been gradually increasing.

With global economic crisis, the preference for mass production has been declining and the success of relatively less centralised economies in Europe and East Asia based on flexible specialization model has been providing added support to decentralization.

The states in South Asia, mostly convoluted during the colonial and post-colonial phases have lost their flexibilities and informalities and become more bureaucratic than ever before. This has further eroded the base for decentralization.