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NEW YORK

DELAY IN THE DISPOSAL OF CASES.
A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE
BANGLADESH SECRETARIAT

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Inefficiency, delay and wastage are part of the folklore of development administration. This situation is contrasted with an idealised notion of efficiency and economy in public administration and the maladies are generally conceived in terms of deficiencies in the organisation of the Government. In Bangladesh also, a number of administrative reform/reorganisation committees were set up in the past with the overall aim of improving efficiency in administration and their terms of reference were restricted to structural issues mostly.¹

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Conceiving administrative maladies as lack of efficiency is a gross overgeneralisation and renders diagnosis of specific causes for specific types of maladies virtually impossible. Long time back Christopher Hood had briefly dealt with the many

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1. Terms of reference of the three important Committees for administrative improvements constituted at different times after the liberation of Bangladesh may be seen in Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee. Part II. The Administration. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1973; The Pay and Services Commission Report. Dhaka : Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1977 and Report of the Committee for Administrative Reorganisation/Reform. Dhaka : Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1984.

dimensions of administrative inefficiencies.² He classified administrative dysfunctions in terms of their basic nature and origin. Some administrative problems emerge on the scene as dilemmas; there are others which are externally generated; while a further category of dysfunctions can be explained in terms of internally generated factors. Unless the nature of administrative dysfunctions are clearly identified and understood, the suggested remedies will merely tinker with the symptoms rather than the causes or administrative answers will be sought to non-administrative problems.

Linking administrative malfunctioning with lack of efficiency creates the further necessity of an explanation of the term efficiency in the context of public administration. What is the definition of the term administrative efficiency? Is it the same as economic efficiency? If not, what are its attributes and measures? What types of administrative operations are amenable to a test of efficiency and what types are not? Without these clarifications and delineations, studies on administrative efficiency will lack the focus and the sharpness needed for the operationalisation of the suggested remedies.

If conceptualisation of administrative maladies as lack of efficiency is an over-generalisation, seeking their remedies in structural terms only is equally restrictive and partial. Delay as a bureaucratic phenomenon has innumerable sources of its

2. Christopher Hood, "Administrative Diseases : Some Types of Disfunctionality in Administration," Public Administration (Winter 1974): 439-454.

occurrence, though it is primarily manifested in organisational outcomes.

Administration does not operate in a vacuum : it operates through a cluster of organisations with upward and downward linkages. Governmental system is a functionally differentiated sub-system of a larger social system. Similarly, various units of governmental system also perform differentiated functional roles but are related to each other for the achievement of overall purposes of the state. The larger system thus constitutes the environment for a particular organisation in which it operates. The mode of operation of a particular sub-system is influenced by its task environment. The question of efficiency of a system is, therefore, not limited within the confines of its own domain but necessarily extends far beyond.³

The structure and processes of an organisational system can be further clarified through the three subsystems in the structure of every organisation elaborated by Parsons.⁴ Every organisation consists of a technical, a managerial and an institutional sub-system. The first sub-system provides the basic framework through which organisational activities are carried out. These activities contribute directly to the achievement of organisational goal. In the case of a Governmental unit, the function of the technical sub-system will be, for example, processing and interpreting information for decision-making. The managerial sub-system is

3. Talcott Parsons, "A Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organisations" in Talcott Parsons, Structure and Process in Modern Societies. Glencoe, II: The Free Press, 1964.

4. Ibid, p 65.

responsible for administering the maintenance functions of the organisation and mediating between the technical sub-system and its task environment for procuring the necessary inputs and delivering the processed outputs. The institutional subsystem has the difficult task of engendering enduring values for the survival of the system by seeking support from and adjustment with the larger environment.

Structure is the anatomy of a system; it is infused with life through the process. An organisation is not an agglomeration of rules and procedures : in the last analysis, it is run by people. It needs a kind of people who have the capacity, the willingness and the environment to pursue the needed activities for the achievement of the organisational goals. None of the three factors is given in an organisation nor can it be taken for granted. The same conditionalities apply to all sub-systems and at all levels. Structure is the basic starting-point but it cannot provide the final answer to all organisational ills.

There is a reductionist tendency to explain organisational ills in structural terms. However, such an attempt should follow a well-articulated conceptual framework that will clearly identify the relevant factors for explaining a particular phenomenon. Once the broad framework is given, the scope and limitations of focusing on a set of variables become clear. Structural modifications can indeed lead to vast administrative improvements

but these must be cast within a framework for underscoring their relevance towards the purported outcome of the suggested modifications.

PAST REFORM EFFORTS
AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

The concern for increasing administrative efficiency has occupied the attention of all successive Governments in Bangladesh. Indeed, a few revolutionary steps have also been taken towards that end. The creation of a unified civil service with 30 sub-cadres and the introduction of the Upazila system are two such noteworthy examples. Unfortunately, under the shadow of these major initiatives looms large the many details of administration that remain neglected. These details are either taken for granted or are not made part of the reform analysis.

Previous works on administrative reform are found to suffer from a number of major limitations. The first limitation relates to their failure to develop an appropriate frame of analysis. Their terms of reference are restricted to structural issues generally. If the target is structural improvement, there has to be an overall analysis of all the factors bearing on efficiency. The frame will then provide guidance as to what improvements can be expected through structural modifications and what else will need to be done for achieving the best results. Without this analysis,

the recommendations are liable to be looked upon as either too general or too narrow depending on the perspective of the concerned people.

As a consequence of the indeterminate scope of previous works, the focus has always been on big issues at macro level. There has been over-concentration on such issues as the structure of the service, organisation of Government and organisation of field administration. There has been an implicit assumption that organisations are structurally determined, self-contained and organic and structural improvements at the macro level will have its impact at other levels of the organisation.

The second limitation is a general lack of attention towards clarifying the notion of efficiency so far as it relates to public administration. Some description of the correlates of the term efficiency, if not its precise definition, is essential to any study of efficiency in public administration. The term is used in a ritualistic and stereotyped fashion without taking the trouble to explicate its attributes and implications for public administration.⁵ There is a tendency to measure the performance of public administration by using the criteria of business efficiency. However, the notion that public administration is fundamentally different from business administration has also been

5. Attention is drawn to the following recommendation made in the Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee, op cit.: "Keeping in view the cultural orientation and traditional values, the basic principles of administrative efficiency and economy should be applied to the existing system." (p 253). Nowhere in the Report, however, the terms 'economy' and 'efficiency' are defined.

gaining more acceptance now than at any other time before. Acceptance of that notion will call for very different set of criteria for measuring efficiency of certain kind of public organisations. What criterion should apply to what kinds of public organisation is a matter of coherent and logical analysis and cannot be left to the wish or whim of concerned individuals. Elucidation of that notion is also crucial towards defining the scope of administrative reforms.

Yet another limitation of these studies is the excessive reliance on personal intuition and judgement of the Committee members and on opinions sought from the so-called concerned members of the public. Stories of maladministration do indeed make up a popular image of the failures of administration but these cannot tell us in precise terms as to what are the processes that give rise to such phenomenon as delay and wastage. The outcome of these Committee work is a set of conclusions which are at best inferences and in no way should be labelled as explanations. An investigation of the purported administrative maladies will require empirical data to verify the many stories of maladministration, augmented further by suitable case studies. Without these reinforcements, there are dangers that broad policy changes may be suggested without any serious consideration of internal administrative functioning. In such cases, reform takes the form of tokenism where minor alterations are made in such a way that little or nothing is achieved in the end.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE
OF THE STUDY

We are conscious that a large measure of the above mentioned limitations may be part of the contrivances emanating from what is called the "politics of administrative reform." It is, however, possible to achieve some success with genuine reform efforts if an eye is kept on their implementability. There is evidence that well-diagnosed administrative problems have been successfully resolved by incremental doses of improvements initiated by participants themselves.⁶ Chances of success of reforms for increasing administrative efficiency are great when they relate to structure of organisations and modifications can be made without seriously affecting the power relationships of the various participants.

Reform attempts on a grand scale involving the entire governmental system affect too many interests and engender insurmountable opposition. For these reasons, it is imperative that studies on increasing administrative efficiency develop a frame of analysis that will clearly specify the unit of analysis, the nature of the problem to be studied and the various structures and processes that relate them within the unit and outside. This frame

6. Instances of this type of administrative improvement may be seen in Malaysian Administrative Modernization Unit, One-stop Bill Payment Centres.Kualalumpur : Asian and Pacific Development Centre(APDC),1967; Civil Service Institute, Singapore, Work Improvement Teams.Kualalumpur : APDC,1987 and Office of the Civil Service Commission, Thailand, Sarakham Development Project. Kualalumpur: APDC,1987.

then provides an indication as to what kind of interventions can be initiated that are within the capacity of the system to venture and what are the others that need to be handled through the political process.

The present study owes its origin to a belief in the efficacy of incremental reform. There is a continuing criticism against delay caused in the Bangladesh Secretariat in the disposal of its business. The perceived delay not only affects the viability of the Secretariat as a mechanism for decision-making but also sets in motion an adverse chain reaction in the entire governmental system leading to poor performance of public administration. The present study seeks to understand the causes of delay in the disposal of public business by concentrating on the Bangladesh Secretariat as its unit of analysis.

The Bangladesh Secretariat is part of the governmental system with higher and lower subsystems above and below it. It has many backward and forward linkages. Structurally, delay may have many causes of occurrence at any of the sub-system level having ramifications for other sub-systems. Some of these causes will be internal to the system while others will be external over which the Secretariat has little or no control.

Beyond structures are the many intangible variables conveniently labelled by some as processes. These are the determinants of behaviour of people who run the organisations. A sound

organisational structure will be meaningless if the organisation members are not motivated to perform well. What motivates people to work, what kind of people are required for specific types of organisation, how should they be oriented towards the goal of the organisation and what should be the strategy of an organisation to obtain continuous support from its environment are all very important factors bearing on its performance. A comprehensive study of delay has to contend with all these factors.

It is, however, argued in this study that it is neither possible nor desirable to measure performance of all kinds of governmental operations by the criterion of efficiency as conventionally understood. For a large part of governmental activities such an attempt will not only be futile but counterproductive. Judgement about much of what happens in the institutional and technical sub-systems of an organisation is a matter of perception of the general public. However, such a perception is heavily influenced by what people see happening in the managerial sub-system. It is at this level that people's demands are processed and delivered and delay in delivering the goods and services have implications not only for their expected good life but even for their survival.

In the Bangladesh Secretariat, the managerial sub-system is geared towards the most efficient use of techniques. The Rules of Business and the Secretariat Instructions have detailed

cumbersome and obstructive procedures. However, this requirement presupposes the existence of an orderly state of affairs within which these can be carried out.

An important part of disposal is the quality of decisions made. Do these decisions satisfy the needs of the clients ? Are they complete ,final, unambiguous and clear ? Is disposal treated as a ritual to get rid of files by the officers to avoid bad names and look good to their superiors ? Does disposal result in substantive outcome ? There are many qualitative dimensions of decisions relating to equity, equality, economy and efficiency. This is another part of the efficiency equation of the disposal of business at the Secretariat. These are important questions and need to be studied thoroughly. This study, however, has not ventured into that domain and has remained contented with the techniques only. It is our expectation that on the basis of the findings of the present study, it would be possible to explore the qualitative aspects of decision-making through appropriately designed case studies.

PLAN OF PRESENTATION

The design of the study and its findings are presented in six chapters. In chapter I we bring out the major methodological issues involved in this kind of work and the scope and limitations of the present study. Chapter II is devoted to the development of a conceptual framework of analysis wherein an attempt

is made to bring out the many causes of the occurrence of delay and its measures. In Chapter III a static analysis of the Bangladesh Secretariat is made with a view to identifying the major criteria against which the speed of disposal in the Secretariat can be measured. Chapter IV delineates the processes of finding a suitable methodology for carrying out the survey while Chapter V presents the survey findings. In Chapter VI, on the basis of the survey findings some recommendations are made for improving the rate of disposal of business at the Bangladesh Secretariat.

CHAPTER TWO

ADMINISTRATIVE DELAY: CAUSES AND MEASURES

Bangladesh is predominantly an administered polity. There is hardly any sphere of life where the public can avoid direct contact with the Government and its functionaries. In this interface, people hold unique expectations about the role and performance of the Government and deviations from that expected role naturally create frustrations. Public organisations are perceived as being owned by the state and citizens: the public, therefore, think that they have more claims to attention and service from these organisations than they do have from the others in the private or non-Governmental sectors.¹ They even expect more of public servants in terms of their responsiveness, integrity, fairness and accountability.² Delay is undoubtedly vexatious and annoying : when it occurs at the hand of the public servants it becomes all the more unbearable. The public organisation is there to serve and perceived delay naturally hurts the most sensitive chord of the citizens.

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1. Many authors have highlighted this issue to bring out the unique nature of public organisations as compared to the private ones. See, among others, Paul H. Appleby, Big Democracy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945; Lewis C. Mainzer, Political Bureaucracy. Glenview, III: Scott, Foresman, 1973 and Gary L. Wamsley and Mayer N. Zald, The Political Economy of Public Organizations. Lexington, Mass : D.C. Heath, 1973.
 2. Gerald E. Caiden, The Dynamics of Public Administration. Hinsdale, III: Dryden Press, 1971.

Delay in the disposal of business at various levels of the Bangladesh Government is widely criticized by members of the public and also in the journalistic literature. Many people ascribe the causes of delay to downright inefficiency, some to corruption and still others to failure to run Government in a "business like" manner. There is also a growing concern about the quality of manpower at various bureaucratic levels. The intensity of popular criticism, however, has not been followed by any significant attempt to diagnose and analyse the causes of delay in a systematic and objective manner.³ We have largely contented ourselves by levelling the allegations at a broad and general level. Needless to mention that meaningful remedial action can hardly be derived from accusations. The prerequisite for any worthwhile improvement in speeding up disposal of government business needs a careful diagnosis of the causes of delay. Such an analysis will then lead to discovering various options for addressing the ills of delay. Without this, the issue of delay will continue to remain an elephantine problem with every person suggesting his own prescription which may not be very relevant to the issue.

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3. The only two studies that have come to our attention are: Saadat Hussain and Mosharraf Hossain, "The Speed of Case Disposal in Public Organisations in Bangladesh", COTA Bulletin 6(January - June, 1983) : 98-115 and S.A. Maqsood Records Management in the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, Dhaka : 1987.

Every affected citizen in Bangladesh has suffered the ill consequences of delay. At organisational and national levels also, the existence of the problem is well-recognised. This has truly become a problem of national dimension. Then why has it not been systematically explored and studied ? There are many reasons for this. First, we are so much afflicted with delay at every walk of our life that it is too obvious to be studied, requiring little or no empirical support for substantiation. Secondly, the detachment and secrecy of government operations make it difficult to collect relevant data from public offices. However, even if one has the will and the wit to undertake such a study, the conceptual and methodological problems surrounding the issue of delay would appear to be enormous. Delay lacks precision as to its meaning and ambiguity as to its measure.

DELAY AS A BUREAUCRATIC PHENOMENON

We would like to comprehend the nature of delay and the various causes of its occurrence within an organisational framework. One reason for taking this approach is that all administration, whether public or private, is run through organisations. Delay is primarily a phenomenon connected with administrative process and the best way to look for it would be organisations themselves. Secondly, organisations are conscious contrivances for the achievement of goals. For that purpose, all organisations are intendedly rational ensuring precision, speed, impartiality

and predictability.⁴ Delay is an anti-thesis of organisational rationality highlighting the unintended consequences of otherwise sound purposes and practices. An analysis of organisational design will provide us the ideal attributes against which the way an organisation actually operates could be compared. This will help us in identifying the dynamics that gives rise to the instances of delay. Last but not the least, despite many criticisms against the classical organisation theory in the West, it continues to provide the solid foundation for our organisational design. We are now at a level of societal development where structural issues in government organisations are still the dominant factors in determining efficiency.⁵ It is our assumption that the classical approach provides the best clue towards

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4. See, Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York. Oxford University Press, 1946. pp 196-244. A nice summary of the literature on organisation theory focusing the issue of rationality in its continuous development in the American context may be seen in William G. Scott, "Organization Theory. A Reassessment", Academy of Management Journal. (June 1974)
 5. The criteria of relevance of organisation theory in the context of developing countries are discussed in A.T.M. Shamsul Huda, "The Sociology of Organisation Theory : Implications for its Teaching and Practice in Developing Countries", Bangladesh Journal of Public Administration 1 (January 1987) 36-58. Also see, Peter Self, Administrative Theories and Politics. London : George Allen and Unwin, 1982. (Second Edition).

our understanding of various administrative issues.⁶ It is further assumed that modifications in formal structure will have predictable impact upon administrative processes including the phenomenon of delay.

ATTRIBUTES OF BUREAUCRATIC ORGANISATION

Modern administration is increasingly and inevitably bureaucratic. By definition, an organisation is a consciously created social unit for the purpose of attaining specific goals. Bureaucracy is also a kind of organisation which is formally established for dealing with complex and large-scale operations of modern societies.⁷ The main outlines of a bureaucratic organisation is given by classical theory. Interestingly enough, classical theory developed in three streams: bureaucracy, administrative theory and scientific management. The basic postulates and the assumptions of the three streams are strikingly similar, although they developed, more or less, independently. The fundamental assumption of

6. Despite academic criticisms against the classical theory, it played a significant role in the formulation of such major administrative reform reports as the Hoover Commission and the Fulton Committee. See, Commission on Organisation of the Executive Branch of the Government. Personnel and Civil Service. Washington, D.C., 1955 and Report of the Committee on the Civil Service, 1966-68. Lord Fulton Committee Report, Cmnd 3638. Vol. I.

7. Peter M. Blau and Marshal W. Meyer, Bureaucracy in Modern Society. New York: Random House, 1971. (Second Edition) p 4.

all the three streams was that bureaucratic organisations try to maximise efficiency. A number of propositions are advanced as origination attributes that will typically have this effect. We will present below a list of those attributes drawing from all three sources.

Departmentalisation: Given a general purpose of an organisation, tasks are to be identified for achieving its purpose. The central problem here is to group these tasks into individual jobs, the individual jobs into administrative units and the basic administrative units into higher administrative units until the organisation takes the shape of a pyramid with one supreme official at its apex. Luther Gulick propounded four principles for grouping tasks in an organisation for optimal efficiency and economy by process, by purpose, by client and by place.⁸

Grouping of tasks on these principles poses several problems in practice. Thompson has pointed out that while the Gulick scheme is based on unidimensionality, positions in complex organisations are not unidimensional. "Homogenizing them on one dimension does not homogenize them on all dimensions."⁹ The fact is that large

8. Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Organization" in Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick(eds), Papers on the Science of Administration. New York: Institute of Public Administration, 1937, pp 1-46.
9. James D. Thompson, Organizations in Action. New York : McGraw Hill, 1967. p. 27.

organisations perform functions relating to each one of the classificatory principles. The important issue here is not the question of making an absolute choice of the alternatives but of assigning priority to one according to which activities can be grouped.

If it is a question of assigning priority, organisation by client and by place need not be discussed here. The reasons why they are not very useful have been discussed by others.¹⁰ Grouping by process and by purpose are the two competing alternatives that need to be discussed.

Grouping tasks by process means that each unit is assigned to perform one of the major activities of an organisation. Thus for each of the major functions of an organisation like administration, planning, budgeting and research, there would be an exclusive unit of the organisation. The major advantage of grouping by process is the economies of scale that can be achieved. It also facilitates high specialisation. The disadvantage of this type of organisation is the strong interdependence that it engenders. The economies of scale achieved may be wiped out by the need for heavy co-ordination.

Organisation by purpose is an arrangement of work into self-contained units. Under this arrangement, each unit of an organisation is entrusted with completing specific tasks. The major

10. Peter Self, Op Cit, pp 55-56 and James G. March and Herbert A Simon, Organizations. New York: John Wiley, 1958. p.27

advantage of this type of organization is self-containment. March and Simon have defined this term as follows: "A unit is self-contained to the extent and degree that the conditions for carrying out its activities are independent of what is done in the other organization unit."¹¹ A major shortcoming of organization by purpose is that public organizations cannot divide work into self-contained units. Moreover, it cannot achieve economies of scale nor can it ensure uniformity of standard and administration.

The two grouping principles present a major administrative dilemma : no one principle is more advantageous over the other in absolute terms. In this situation, the choice of any principle could be made on the basis of net efficiency gains that accrue by comparison of the costs and benefits of the two alternatives.

Clear Delineation of Jobs: As a corollary to the attribute of departmentalisation, the classical theory also emphasized a clear delineation of jobs to be performed by each individual official. The classicists firmly believed in the virtues of division of labour in fostering specialisation and in increasing productivity. The classical approach thus made the division of labour its central tenet. It was assumed that the more the work can be divided into simple tasks, the more specialised and skilled an official will become.¹² The division of jobs into simple tasks make it

11. March and Simon, Op Cit, p 28.

12. Gulick and Urwick, Op Cit.

possible to allocate them to positions, each of which requires routine or repetitive movements of a single official. Authority to discharge the duties of each job can then be distributed to each jobholder. This also helps to frame laws and regulations under which the jurisdictional area of each official is clearly separated. Upon delineation, personnel assignments can be made on the basis of the requirements of the job and each individual's ability to perform the tasks.

Unity of Command: As organizations become differentiated, they are required to manage more internal and external interdependencies for the achievement of goals. Lawrence and Lorsch have called this phenomenon the process of integration: "a process of achieving unity of effort among the various sub-systems in the accomplishment of organization task."¹³ Internal interdependencies become more and more complex corresponding to the increase in size¹⁴ of organization and variability of technology.¹⁵ This integration is sought to be achieved through unity of command in an organization.¹⁶ It facilitates control because it charges every official with an area of responsibility and establishes a chain of command whereby every organization member knows to whom he

13. Paul R. Lawrence and J.W. Lorsch, Organization and Environment. Boston : Harvard Business School, 1967. p.4

14. Peter M. Blau, "A Formal Theory of Differentiation in Organizations," American Sociological Review (April 1970) : 20-18.

15. Joan Woodward, Industrial Organisation : Theory and Practice, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

16. Gulick and Urwick, Op Cit.

reports and who reports to him. There is no confusion over who is responsible for organizational activities and who gives orders and who carries them out.

Hierarchy of Authority: From unity of command logically emerges the concept of hierarchy of authority. This means "a firmly ordered system of super and sub-ordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones."¹⁷ In terms of enhancing the efficiency of an organization, hierarchy performs many useful functions. Firstly, in public organizations it is a major means for "co-ordination of large-scale activities without markets."¹⁸ Secondly, it helps the management of an efficient communication network. Thirdly, it also provides points at which conflicts can be resolved.¹⁹ Organizations are basically social units consisting of human beings where it is only natural that conflicts will arise. If these are not resolved quickly and satisfactorily, organizational efficiency may be impaired. Finally, Drucker makes the interesting point that hierarchy protects "the subordinate against arbitrary authority from above."²⁰ A bureaucratic organization, by clearly delineating the sphere of activities of each person, restrains the superior from unnecessarily

17. Max Weber, Op Cit, p. 197.

18. Anthony Downs, Inside Bureaucracy, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1967. p 52.

19. Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1964. p 27.

20. Peter Drucker, "New Templates for Today's Organizations", Harvard Business Review. (January-February 1974).

interfering into the activities of his sub-ordinate. The latter is also clear about his jurisdiction and tries to be responsible in the performance of his assigned tasks.

Span of Control : This indicates the number of subordinates a supervisor can effectively control. The classical theorists have argued in favour of a narrow span of control by holding the number of subordinates reporting to a supervisor to very narrow limits.²¹ Given the focus of centralisation in classical theory, it was natural for them to prescribe a tall hierarchy. Critics, however, argue in favour of wide spans resulting in a flat organization because of the communication and decision problems created by an organization with many levels.²²

The debate on span in a prescriptive mode is, however, not very useful. It is not possible to make any generalisation about an ideal span. What could be an effective span would depend, besides frequency and time of contacts between supervisor and sub-ordinates, on managerial ability, nature of work, stability of organizational task environment, delegation of authority and institutionalisation of organization.

21. Lyndall F. Urwick, "The Manager's Span of Control," Harvard Business Review 34(May/June 1956).

22. L.W. Porter and E.E. Lawler III, "The Effects of 'Tall' versus 'Flat' Organization Structures on Managerial Satisfaction", Personnel Psychology 17(1964) : 135-48.

Formalism : This is the most crucial aspect of a bureaucratic organization manifested through a formally articulated and differentiated structure. Formal rules delimit the jurisdictional area of each agency, spell out the duties of each position and establish a rather stable and predictable procedure for carrying out these duties.²³ Extensive use of rules is essential for organizational efficiency. These rules provide the public officials with guidance as to the manner in which each individual case is to be treated and disposed. They also save the officials the uncertainty and delay involved in coordinating complex activities. And, finally, these rules ensure uniformity of response to similar conditions. This point has been rightly emphasized by Weber : "the authority to order certain matters by decree - which has been legally granted to an agency - does not entitle the agency to regulate the matter by individual commands given for each case, but only to regulate the matter abstractly. This stands in extreme contrast to the regulation of all relationships through individual privileges and bestowals of favor, which is absolutely dominant in partimoniaism."²⁴

As a necessary part of the process of formalism, it is also required that administrative acts, decisions and rules are formulated

23. Max Weber, From Max Weber, Op Cit pp. 196-244.

24. Max Weber, Economy and Society, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich(ed). Berkeley : University of California Press, 1978. p 958.

and recorded in writing. Oral communication cannot maintain uniformity of standard and systematic interpretation and enforcement of rules.

Impersonality: The formalism of bureaucratic organization is extended to its impersonal and functional purposes. The imperatives of impersonality require the official to act "without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm".²⁵ Such impersonality is sought to be engendered by a complete separation of the members of the administrative staff from the ownership of the means of administration, on the one hand, and by a separation of the property belonging to the official from those belonging to the organisation, on the other.²⁶

Career System: The officials are appointed to positions in a bureaucratic organization on the basis of their competence through written competitive examinations for a life-long career. They are paid remunerations in the form of salary and are provided with pension after retirement.²⁷

Technical Efficiency: The efficiency of a bureaucratic organization rests fundamentally on knowledge. This is ensured by the maintenance of a level of specialised technical knowledge through

25. Ibid p. 225.

26. Max Weber, From Max Weber, Op Cit, pp 196-244.

27. Ibid, pp 196-244.

impersonal and formal method of recruitment and training within the framework of a life-long career.

The above attributes of a bureaucratic organization, when fully developed, gives rise to the most efficient human organization. Weber epitomises this conviction in the following way:

"Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs - these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, especially in its monocratic form".²⁸

The classical theory has been criticised by subsequent theorists of organization. The criticisms have basically proceeded on two directions. The first set of criticisms are directed against administrative theory for its lack of precision or comprehensive framework of analysis.²⁹ Weber's theory of bureaucracy has been criticised for presenting an idealised conception of bureaucracy: it has totally ignored its various dysfunctions and informal relationships in organizations.³⁰ It is not our intention here to delve

28. Ibid, p 214.

29. The most devastating critique against the administrative theory was written by Herbert A. Simon. See, Administrative Behavior. New York: Macmillan Co., 1957 (Second Edition).

30. Among others, see the works by Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality" in Amitai Etzioni (ed), A Sociological Reader in Complex Organizations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969. (Second Edition) pp 47-58; Philip Selznick, TVA and The Grassroots. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949 and Alvin Gouldner, Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1955.

into the extensive literature that already exists on the subject. We maintain the position that despite their many shortcomings, the classical theory provides a good framework in the context of Bangladesh for an analysis of the problem of delay in disposal of cases in the Bangladesh Secretariat. In that effort, we will try to conceptualise the problem of delay with reference to the structural framework of bureaucratic organization discussed earlier and the relevant criticisms made against it by later theorists.

ADMINISTRATIVE DYSFUNCTIONS

The criticisms against the classical theory of organization, particularly those related to the theory of bureaucracy have noted several administrative dysfunctions. Like the theory which these writers attack, the concept of dysfunction also lacks precision to the extent that it does not analyse the mechanisms for their occurrence. However, the concept provides sufficient clues to look for areas where productive research can be carried out.

The dysfunctions are defined as the unintended negative consequences of methods of organisations which are in themselves rational. Thus Merton suggests that emphasis on strict adherence to rules induces the individual official to use them as ends in themselves rather than means. The formalism of the bureaucratic organisation becomes more important to him rather than its goals. The dysfunctionality is further reinforced as a means to defend

his rigid and inflexible behaviour.³¹

In a somewhat similar vein Gouldner argues that impersonal bureaucratic rules partly reduce the tension created by too close supervision but these are also reinforced to cope with poor performance engendered in a bureaucratic organization.³² Michael Crozier characterises the bureaucratic system of organization as "a series of relatively stable vicious circles that stem from centralization and impersonality".³³

The Concept of Delay

Dysfunction, by definition, is a consequence of an organization method which is not intended. Bureaucratic impersonality and formalism are intended to enhance and ensure efficiency of organization. The whole thrust of the construction of bureaucratic structure by elaborate division of labour, hierarchical arrangement of authority, clear delineation of jurisdiction and detailed rules and procedure is to leave nothing to chance or whim of individual officials. Bureaucratic organization is a shield against all possible sources of interruptions against its singleminded pursuit of organizational efficiency.

In terms of system, an organisation is composed of at least three interrelated processes : a process for supply of resources

31. Merton, Op Cit.

32. Gouldner, Op Cit.

33. Michael Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964.

(inputs), a conversion process(throughput) and the final process culminating in the production of an object or objects(output). Intended speed is the rate of any part of an organization at which it can either supply or deliver the goods and services during any of the above processes. A delay may occur anytime during any of the processes due to interruption of the delivery of goods and services at the intended speed.

Delay, understood as above, may be both a cause and a consequence of bureaucratic dysfunctions. The dynamics of delay is intermingled with various types of dysfunctions in a manner that it is not possible to isolate its attributes and study it as an independent variable. It is, therefore, necessary to find out its many ramifications in various types of dysfunctions of bureaucratic organization. This will be done by trying to classify them under a few broad categories.

TYPES OF ADMINISTRATIVE DYSFUNCTIONS

Administrative dysfunctions can be broadly divided as falling under three distinct categories: those created by "impossible external demands"; the ones that are internally generated and the few others that can be explained as dilemmas.³⁴

Externally Induced Dysfunctions occur during the interface between an organization and its task environment. The organization has

34. The various dimensions and processes of administrative dysfunctions are discussed in Christopher Hood. Op Cit.

little or no control over its environment but is affected by its activities in the pursuit of its goal. For example, the quality of personnel of public organisations has deteriorated over the years in Bangladesh due to the falling standard of the educational system in the country, heavy brain-drain and declining attractions to public service. The recruiting agencies have no control over the situation though all of them are adversely affected by it. Hood recognises this to be very important in as much as it is necessary to understand the source of a particular dysfunction for appropriate remedial action.

Dysfunctions as Dilemmas refer to situations involving trade-offs: more of the one cannot be achieved without having less of the other. Blau and Scott discuss three situations of dilemma of formal organisation as are present in the needs of communication and coordination, bureaucratic discipline and professional expertness and managerial planning and initiative. The dilemma in all these cases are inherent in their conflicting requirements.³⁵ There are many administrative situations which appear as dilemmas. These can be identified but will defy all attempts at their resolution.

Internally Generated Dysfunctions are those which emanate, more or less, from the malfunctioning of formally articulated and

25. Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964. pp 242-253.

differentiated structure of the organisation. To the extent that these dysfunctions are related to the internal structure, it is possible to take corrective actions for increasing the overall efficiency of the organisation. In the light of popular criticism about delay in the disposal of cases in the Bangladesh Secretariat, a number of hypotheses about these dysfunctions can be generated.

(i) Jurisdictional Infringements :

One set of allegations relate to the continuous violation of clear delineation of jurisdictions between sub-systems of an organisation whereby the higher unit infringes into the territory of the lower units. The power of control and supervision of the activities of the lower unit is usually invoked by the higher unit for this kind of infringements. This phenomenon is also abetted by the lower unit through its preference for not taking any decision on controversial, delicate and hard issues and sending them up for resolution.

(ii) Passing the Buck:

Within an operational unit, officials sometimes do not like to take the decisions despite clear specification of duties and responsibilities of particular positions. Decisions are taken at levels two or three steps higher than what is prescribed. This creates a very unequal distribution of workload with too much work at higher levels and too little at the lower levels of the hierarchy.

Another manifestation of passing the buck syndrome is holding of unnecessary meetings and inter-organisational consultations. Undeniably inter-ministerial consultations

are essential for governmental decision-making. There is, however, perversion of this process when (i) this is not at all necessary, (ii) the organisation has the powers to decide but is not willing to take the risks of the outcome of a particular decision, (iii) the bureaucratic politics requires a certain matter to be delayed and (iv) the political exigencies are met through examination of sensitive issues by a Committee.³⁶

(iii) Distortion of Priorities:

Jurisdictional infringements create a situation of very strong centralisation. Very few things get resolved at lower levels. Ordinary routine matters like sanction of efficiency bar, grant of increment, sanction of posts and appointment of lower staff cannot be settled without reference to some higher organisation. Work multiplies at the lower level to meet the various queries raised by the higher organisation. Queries beget queries with the result that a major part of the activities at all levels of the government is devoted to the maintenance functions to the utter neglect of the substantive work for which organisations are created.

(iv) Employee Disorientations:

One of the classical problems of organisations has been the reconciliation of the organisational and individual goals. Various means are adopted by the organisation for the internalisation of its norms by the organisation

36. The bureaucratic abuses of meetings are discussed in Abdul Mueed Choudhury, "Measures for Improving Co-ordination" in A.T.M. Shamsul Huda(ed), Co-ordination in Public Administration in Bangladesh. Savar, Dhaka: Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, 1987, pp 151-168.

members. In Bangladesh, the dysfunctions emanating from jurisdictional infringements and distorted priorities create the further dysfunction of employee disorientations. The officials perceive a wide disparity between what they were required to do and what they actually end up doing. The mismatch between requirement and doing lead to tremendous under-utilisation of trained capacity. Consequently, employee morale becomes exceedingly low.

(v) Misallocation of Resources:

The formal blueprint of organisation is prepared following the rules and procedures of the government. Deployment of personnel, provision of support services and allocation of budget are also rationally made to match the requirements of the blueprints. Jurisdictional infringements upset all these rational calculations. While it is possible to call up cases for consideration at a higher level than prescribed under the rules, it is not legally possible to usurp the resources placed at their disposal. The higher organisation thus creates additional workload for itself without being able to make any corresponding increase of resources to support the load. It tends to cope with this eventuality in any of the following ways: (i) either to keep quiet and be content with the speed of disposal that is commensurate with the ratio of existing manpower to increased workload or (ii) informally use the resources of the lower organisation to cope with the increased load. Neither option is conducive to the best use of the scarce resources of the government.

MEASURING DELAY

Delay is both a cause and a consequence of administrative

dysfunctions. There is a tendency to treat all kinds of delays as inefficiency. This kind of inferences are made in a very general way and they do not tell us anything interesting or illuminating. The important point to note here is the complexity of organisational dynamics where many of its attributes are active simultaneously. Some of the attributes may be relevant to the study of dysfunctions while others may not. There is thus a need to isolate those attributes of an organisation with respect to which a certain factor is functional or dysfunctional.

INEFFICIENCY AS DELAY

One major source of confusion has its origin in the American tradition of Public Administration scholarship that has uncritically espoused the tenets of economy and efficiency as the principal goals of public administration.³⁷ The impact of the growth-oriented nature of American political economy has been rather all pervasive and its spill-over into administrative theory was inevitable.³⁸ Thus Luther Gulick defined efficiency as the

37. Throughout this book a distinction is made between "Public Administration" and "public administration". The former is used to indicate it as an academic subject-matter while the latter refers to activities of the state and the government.

38. For a critical analysis of the development of American Public Administration, see, Frederick C. Mosher (ed), American Public Administration : Past, Present, Future. Alabama : The University of Alabama Press, 1975. Also see, Nicholas Henry, "Paradigms of Public Administration", Public Administration Review 35(July/August, 1975):378-386.

accomplishment of a task at the least possible cost.³⁹ At a more sophisticated level Simon defines efficiency as "that choice of alternatives which produces the largest result for the given application of resources".⁴⁰

If we analyse the above two definitions, it will be evident that efficiency basically refers to an input-output relationship whose models are provided by economics. In that relationship, the term cost or resource is used in a comprehensive sense to cover a wide variety of relevant factors. This relationship also envisages a structure, a set of roles and a set of prescribed procedures through which organisational activities are set in motion for task accomplishment. There is an implicit condition of 'optimal' performance by all the inputs so that maximisation of output can be achieved. When input performs below its optimal level, it may be termed inefficient for that particular operation.

From public administration point of view, the question now being raised continually is : is it proper to denigrate performance below optimal level on the yardstick of economics only ? Should not one also look for the reasons, other than the economic ones, as to why in certain government operations some instances of below optimal performance will occur ? These questions lead us to a consideration of effectiveness of organisational activities.

39. Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Organization" in Gulick and Urwick, Op Cit.

40. Simon, Op Cit, p. 179.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

It is well-documented in the literature that public and private organisations are converging and facing similar constraints and challenges.⁴¹ This is true not only in the developed countries: in Bangladesh also this convergence between sectors is now very apparent. The role of the NGOs is a good example of this convergence.⁴²

Despite the convergence, there should not be any doubt as to the basic purpose of a government organisation. Government is "in a fundamentally different "business" from "business".⁴³ Welfare of the society is its basic goal and in that pursuit it has to perform tasks that other sectors cannot, will not and should not undertake.⁴⁴ The breadth of scope, impact and consideration of its operations obligate the government to consider not only the costs but also their effectiveness.

41. Several authors have noted this convergence. Among other see, John Kenneth Galbraith, Economics and the Public Purpose. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1973: Louis C. Gawthrop, Administrative Politics and Social Change. New York : St.Martin's Press, 1971 and Michael A. Murray. "Comparing Public and Private Management: An Exploratory Essay", Public Administration Review 34(July/August 1975):364-371.

42. An account of the role of NGOs in Bangladesh may be seen in the entire issue of Development Dialogue 1(June 1984). An account of one of the leading NGOs may be seen in A.T.M. Shamsul Huda, Approaches to Rural Health Care: A Case Study of Ganoshasthaya Kendra. Savar, Dhaka: Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, 1988.

43. Peter Drucker, "Managing the Public Service Institution", The Public Interest 33(Fall 1973) : 43-60.

44. Paul H. Appleby, Op Cit, and Mainzer, Op Cit.

While efficiency is concerned with processing costs, effectiveness primarily aims at achieving the departmental goals.⁴⁵ A department may be said to be efficient when it can achieve a higher level of input-output conversion by lesser organisational efforts compared to a previous level: fewer men, less equipment, less time or lower expenditures. Effectiveness is the degree to which an organisation reaches its goals.

It is evident that efficiency and effectiveness are inter-related. Efficiency ensures doing things right or doing better what is already being done. But it is also important that organisations do the right things in a better way.

Primacy of Effectiveness in Public Organisations:

However, it has to be noted that in developing countries with a concern for equity both efficiency and effectiveness will not go hand in hand always. There are activities which the government must undertake to ensure equity or to alleviate poverty irrespective of their costs. No government, with good political judgement, would like to limit its scope of activities on criterion of efficiency only. In such a situation, it is effectiveness of activities

45. The subtle distinction between efficiency and effectiveness are discussed in Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1964. pp 8-19. Also see, Peter Drucker, People and Performance: The Best of Peter Drucker on Management, London : William Heinemann Ltd, 1977, pp 32-34.

that will guide the political choice.⁴⁶

Having recognised the primacy of effectiveness in public organisations, interpreting efficiency as a measure of delay will require a comprehension about the relevant unit of analysis and relevance of the various co-efficients of the term efficiency. We will briefly discuss below only a few problems for expository purposes.

Test of Efficiency: The fundamental problem with the application of efficiency criterion for judging the performance of public sector organisations is that it is not at all an appropriate test. In business, 'the invisible hand' awards penalties and rewards on the basis of performance and thus prices, sales and profit can be useful indicators for judging their operating efficiency.⁴⁷

But there is no equivalent indicators in the public sector. The efficiency test, even if this could be made applicable for

46. The call for paradigm reformulation of Public Administration for accommodating questions of social justice and equity may be seen in Frank Marini (ed) Toward a New Public Administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective. New York: Chandler Publishing Company, 1971, Also see, Arthur M. Okun, Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff. Washington D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1975.

47. In the last decade "public choice" economists have stressed the lack of test of efficiency in public organizations and have suggested opening up many public services to the market for better performance. See, Gordon Tullock, The Politics of Bureaucracy. Washington D.C., Public Affairs Press, 1965; William A. Niskanen, Jr., Bureaucracy and Representative Government. Chicago: Aldine, 1971 and J.A. Stockfisch, The Political Economy of Bureaucracy. New York: General Learning Press, 1972.

parts of a public organisation or for an operation thereof, may have to be used with caution for the reason that such organisations are subject to greater public scrutiny of their actions. There are established mechanisms of check and balance, oversight and accountability and these are bound to affect the speed of their operations. This is one of the trade-offs between efficiency political accountability and needs to be understood clearly. "The Government must be accountable to the citizens, and accountability is as costly in resources as it is precious to the integrity of the political process."⁴⁸

II. Test of Effectiveness: In some cases, it is possible to test the effectiveness of a public programme if the goals are clearly defined and operationalised. But in government operations, goals are characteristically multiple, conflicting and vague.⁴⁹ Various criteria of goal attainment (i.e., number of people served, miles of road built, number of patients treated etc.) can be devised to test the results of a programme, but they provide only partial answers and needs to be supplemented by qualitative judgement.

III. Level of Analysis: There is also a great difficulty in determining the unit of analysis while studying questions of effectiveness of public organisations. "Business management is

48. Arthur M. Okun, Op Cit, p 60.

49. Giandomenico Majone and Aaron Wildavsky, "Implementation as Evolution" in Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation. Berkely, University of California Press, 1984, (Third Edition):

guided by specific but socially narrow tests of resource efficiency, which can be confined to the farm in question. The equivalent tests for government must refer ultimately to the welfare of the whole society, as politically articulated."⁵⁰ The diffuseness of impact of public programme make micro-level analysis of individual projects or activities next to impossible.

The above analysis of the meaning and attributes of administrative efficiency calls attention to two important factors. Questions of efficiency of public organisations can be raised and studied generally at macro level and these evaluations will be highly qualitative in nature. However, at that level, it is impossible to isolate delay as a co-efficient of inefficiency. If we are interested in seeking some relationship between inefficiency and delay, it will have to be done on a much narrower plane and with a very limited objective. This can be done for specific components of an organisation that are amenable to some kind of quantitative analysis and with the understanding that the discovery of the relationship may not have much to do with effectiveness.

50. Peter Self, Op Cit, p 269.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BANGLADESH SECRETARIAT

The purpose of this chapter is to make a static analysis of the organisation of the Bangladesh Secretariat in terms of the main attributes of the classical organisation theory. It is our assumption that the main features of the Secretariat organisation roughly correspond with the basic design variables of that theory. It is expected that this analysis will provide us a number of questions relating to various structural issues that will help us design a methodology for data collection.

NATURE OF THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat can be viewed from two perspectives. In one perspective, taken in terms of a system, the Bangladesh Secretariat is the highest level sub-system of the governmental system with both upward and downward linkages. Below it are the various Government Departments, Autonomous, semi-Autonomous and Public Statutory Bodies and subordinate offices. The Departments and other bodies have, wherever necessary, their own field offices, at the divisional, district and upazila levels. In case of a few Departments, the field services even extend upto the village level. At the upper end, the Secretariat is linked with the Council of Ministers and ultimately with the President. According to the

Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the President is the head of both the state and the Government.¹ All executive authority vests in him and he exercises such authority either directly or through subordinate officers in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. All sub-systems of the Government are heavily dependent on each other for achieving the ultimate goals of the state. Lack of performance in one part is bound to adversely affect the activities of other parts of the system.

The other perspective emphasizes the indivisibility of the Secretariat. It is divided into Ministries and Divisions for facility of work and management purposes only.² Government is one and it resides in all the Ministries. It is, therefore, appropriate for purposes of this study to treat the Secretariat as one entity.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Secretariat organisation has been designed on the basis of certain assumptions. It is important that these assumptions are clearly understood before evaluating its performance on disposal. The nature of the Secretariat informs us that it is part of a larger system, and for that matter, the most important

1. Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, The Constitution of the Republic of Bangladesh. Dhaka: Government Printing Press, 1979 (As modified upto 28th February, 1979). Article 56(1).
2. M. Mujibul Hossain, "Remarks by the Chairman" in A.T.M. Shamsul Huda (ed), Co-ordination in Public Administration in Bangladesh, Op Cit, p 32.

part. We discuss below two important assumptions in its organisation.

Assumptions in Organising the Secretariat

The first assumption relates to an uninterrupted flow of duly processed inputs from the lower sub-systems. The Departments and Public Statutory Bodies are required to furnish the necessary information to the administrative Ministry for further processing at its level. Incomplete processing of information or non-compliance with Government procedures will necessitate return of the subject to the sender with request for due processing. Similarly, the higher sub-system has to be satisfied as to the technical, administrative, financial and other details of a subject before it can accede to it. Satisfactory performance at either end is assumed. Any breakdown will upset the systemic process.

A further assumption is made relating to the availability of all necessary support for the proper functioning of the Secretariat system. It is assumed that the necessary manpower of the type required for specific positions will be available, rules and procedures will be followed, co-ordination will be routine and management will be rational and goal-oriented. Disruption of support at any point will necessarily disrupt the scheme of things.

Having underscored the two basic assumptions in the design of the Bangladesh Secretariat, we would now like to discuss its

main organisational features.

Distribution of Business

All Government work is distributed and regulated by a complex system of laws, rules and conventions. The Rules of Business³ and the Secretariat Instructions⁴ contain the basic provisions relating to distribution of business among the various sub-systems of the Government. The distribution can be seen horizontally between different Ministries of the Government and vertically between a Ministry and its lower organisations.

(1) Horizontal Distribution: The Secretariat work is differentiated and distributed among various Ministries mainly on the basis of major purpose or function. A Ministry consists of one or more Divisions under the charge of a Minister. There are at present 31 Ministries in Bangladesh. The business of Government has been distributed among these Ministries under the provisions of the Rules of Business (Annexure I).

On matters involving finance, personnel and intricate questions of law or its interpretation or on issues where other Ministry's interests are involved, there is need for consultation.

3. Cabinet Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Rules of Business 1975. (Revised upto 1982). Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press, 1984. Schedule I.
4. Organisation and Management Division, Cabinet Secretariat, Secretariat Instructions. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press, 1976.

Policy involves a number of Ministries. Within the Secretariat, there is an inherent strong interdependence among its various components. The Rules of Business and the Secretariat Instructions recognise fully the heavy burden of policy co-ordination and have prescribed detailed procedures to avoid delay. In suitable cases, the Ministries of Finance and Establishment have made adequate delegation of powers to the various Ministries from time to time.⁵

(11) Vertical Distribution: Below the level of a Ministry and under its direct control and supervision are a number of agencies for executing the policies of the Government. Attached Departments and sub-ordinate offices are pure governmental organisations in the sense that they are controlled and guided by rules formulated by the Government itself. Attached Departments are basically executive agencies providing directions to its subordinate offices for the implementation of government policies. They also provide the necessary technical information and advise the Ministry on technical aspects of matters dealt with by them.⁶ The Attached Departments are mostly based at the capital for maintaining close liaison with their controlling Ministry.

5. The circulars relating to various financial and administrative delegations may be seen in Ministry of Establishment and Re-organisation, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, A Handbook of Important Laws, Rule & Orders on Personnel & Office Administration in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press, 1984.

6. Secretariat Instructions, Op Cit, p.3.

The subordinate offices are spread all over the country at the divisional, district and upazila level. A few major service Ministries like the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, the Ministry of Land and the Statistics Division have their staff even at the village level. These offices have the responsibility of actual implementation of government policy at the field level. They function under the direction of the Attached Departments and, in a very few cases, of the Ministry itself.

In addition, there are a number of Autonomous, semi-Autonomous and Public Statutory Bodies created under laws/rules for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. These bodies may be of various types; but normally they are either commercial, promotional or regulatory. The same body may have all, any two or one of these characteristics.⁷ These bodies were created with the specific intention of granting their management more operational freedom which was not otherwise available to Government Departments. Most of these bodies run commercial operations and there is a need to help them operate on commercial lines.

For these reasons, the role of the Secretariat in the affairs of these statutory bodies has been confined to: policy-making,

7. Cabinet Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Guidelines on the Relationship between Government and Autonomous Bodies/Corporations and Enterprises under them. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press, 1974, p 1.

appointment of Chairman/Directors/Members, approval of budget, appointment of Auditors and review of audit reports, evaluation of performance and such other matters as may be prescribed in the relevant laws, rules and regulations.⁸

The vertical distribution of business between a Ministry and the agencies under its control is based on a policy-execution dichotomy. The Ministries are primarily concerned with the formulation of policy while the agencies are concerned exclusively with their execution. There is, of course, a lot of controversy regarding the justifiability of the dichotomy⁹ but the Rules of Business has very clearly enunciated in Schedule I appended to it the responsibilities entrusted to a Government Ministry. These are :

- a) policy formulation;
- b) planning;
- c) evaluation of execution of plans;
- d) legislative measures;
- e) assisting the Minister in the discharge of his responsibilities to Parliament;
- f) personnel management at the top level e.g., managing the personnel matters of the officers not below the rank of Member-Directors in Public Statutory Corporations and those of the class I officers in the case of Attached Departments/subordinate Offices;
- g) such other matters as may be determined by the President from time to time.¹⁰

8. Ibid, p 1.

9. The contradictory viewpoints on this issue has been summarised in the Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganisation. Op Cit. pp 188-190.

10. Rules of Business, Op Cit, pp 1-4.

The Government's concern about jurisdictional infringements by the Ministries have been expressed in the instruction that "there will be no interference in the day to day operation of a Department by the Secretariat"¹¹ The Secretariat Instructions have further sought to minimise the infringements by holding the Head of a Department responsible for the technical soundness of his proposals which will not normally be subject to any technical examination by the concerned Ministry.¹²

Hierarchy

The Secretary is the administrative head of a Ministry. He acts as the principal adviser to the Minister and is responsible for the proper conduct of the business allocated to his Ministry under the Rules of Business. He also acts as the Principal Accounting Officer of his Ministry and has the ultimate responsibilities for all departmental expenditure. For clear delineation of duties intra-organisationally, a Ministry is divided into a number of Wings, Branches and Sections. An Additional/Joint Secretary, unless in charge of a Ministry/Division, is placed as the head of a Wing. In that capacity, he assumes responsibility for disposal of business of a clearly defined sphere of duty subject to the overall control of the Secretary. Several Branches make up a Wing and each Branch is headed by a Deputy Secretary. Similarly, a number of Sections make up a Branch and each Section is put under the

11. Secretariat Instructions, Op Cit, p 39

12. Ibid, p 39.

charge of an Assistant Secretary. The Section is the basic work unit of a Ministry which is the gateway of all communication to and from the Ministry. The Section is manned by a Section Assistant, a Record Keeper, a Typist and a Peon.

To keep the span of control within reasonable limits for expeditious disposal of cases, it is laid down in the Secretariat Instructions that, "not more than two officers(excluding the Secretary) will note upon a case before its final disposal except where more than one Section may have to be consulted."¹³

Disposal Time

The distribution of work among the officers of a Ministry of all business allocated to it under the Rules of Business is done by the Secretary. In doing so, it is ensured that:

- a) the distribution of work is equitable;
- b) the channel of submission of cases is vertical and not horizontal ; and
- c) the tiers through which a case has to pass are ordinarily not more than two excluding the Secretary.¹⁴

There are also clear instructions as to who will do what and under what circumstances.

The following cases are required to be submitted to the Secretary or Additional/Joint Secretary-in-charge of a Ministry/Division:

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- 13. Ibid, p 26
 - 14. Ibid, pp 3-4.

- a) All cases, summaries and reports called for by the President or the Council of Ministers;
- b) All cases involving major policy and any case/cases involving important administrative matters which the Ministry/Division feels should be seen by the Secretary;
- c) All cases of appointments or promotions that have to be referred to the Selection Board or the President;
- d) All cases involving foreign delegations and deputations abroad;
- e) All important cases relating to development plans, annual budget and foreign exchange requirements;
- f) All cases of transfer of Heads of Departments and their Deputies; and
- g) Proposals received from Heads of Departments.¹⁵

All other cases will be disposed of by the other officers in the following manner.

An Additional/Joint Secretary, unless he is in charge of a Ministry, shall assume full responsibility within his own sphere of duty and will submit all cases direct to the Minister for orders. Such cases will be returned to him through the Secretary. The Secretary, however, reserves the right to call for any such file prior to submission to the Minister or that he be consulted prior to such submission.

A Deputy Secretary will dispose of all cases in which no major question of policy is involved or which, under the rules
 15. Ibid, p 4.

or standing orders, he is competent to dispose of.

An Assistant Secretary will dispose of all cases where there are clear precedents and no question of deviation from such precedents is involved or which under the rules or standing orders he is competent to dispose of. In case of doubt, he may seek instructions from his superior officer.

The Secretariat Instructions, rules and standing orders have clearly delineated the duties and responsibilities of each individual position in a Ministry. The Secretary has been given the full powers of distributing the work of his Ministry in such a manner that work is equitably distributed among all officers. There are elaborate rules and procedures as to how to dispose of cases. For these reasons, Government has thought it possible to prescribe time-limit to be observed by officers in completing detailed analysis and examination of a case for its disposal. The time-limit prescribed for this purpose is as follows:¹⁶

Assistant Secretaries			72 hrs.
Deputy Secretaries			48 hrs.
Other Senior Officers			24 hrs.

The above limit may not be applied in dealing with cases of a complicated nature or requiring inter-agency consultation.

Communicating Decisions

The Government attaches importance not only to making decisions
16. Ibid, p 40.

on time but also to their timely communication. The Secretariat Instructions require the concerned Ministry to communicate the decisions of Government to the concerned party within two weeks of the receipt of the reference. In case a decision is not possible within two weeks, an ad interim reply has to be furnished stating that the matter is under the active consideration of the Government.¹⁷

Acknowledging the problem of logistics in the Secretariat, the Instructions have also gone into details as to how, by whom and when the drafts will be typed and final orders despatched. Interestingly enough, the approval and typing procedure of draft has been short-circuited to involve only the concerned persons to save time.¹⁸

SPECIFIC FEATURES

Within the broad legal framework of Secretariat organisation, each Ministry is organised according to the nature of the job to be performed and the nature, extent and complexity of its vertical spread. Within broad uniformity, there are wide diversities in the actual organisation of individual Ministries. In order to design an appropriate study of the structural issues of the Bangladesh Secretariat, at least two factors deserve special consideration: one is the nature of work performed by a particular

17. Ibid, p 9.

18. Ibid, pp 14-17.

Ministry while the other is the principle of division of work followed by it.

Classification of Ministries

Governmental business in Bangladesh is allocated to various Ministries on the basis of major functions. However, a further classification of the Ministries on the basis of the nature of those major functions will be illuminating to the extent that many tricklish organisation issues are settled on an understanding of it. Broadly speaking, Ministries can be classified under three categories on the basis of the nature of the major functions they perform; service, regulation and economic. The Ministries, when categorised on the above basis, may be placed in different categories as under:

Service

President's Secretariat (Public Division)
 Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
 Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
 Ministry of Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control
 Ministry of Communication
 Ministry of Ports, Shipping and IWT
 Ministry of Post and Tele-communication
 Rural Development and Co-operatives Division
 Ministry of Education
 Ministry of Religious Affairs
 Ministry of Youth and Sports
 Ministry of Works
 Ministry of Health and Family Planning

Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs
 Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation
 Ministry of Food

Regulation

Cabinet Division
 Parliamentary Affairs Division
 Ministry of Establishment
 Ministry of Defence
 Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
 Finance Division
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Ministry of Home Affairs
 Local Government Division
 Ministry of Law and Justice
 Ministry of Land
 Ministry of Labour and Manpower.

Economic

Internal Resources Division
 External Resources Division
 Ministry of Industry
 Ministry of Commerce
 Ministry of Textiles
 Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources
 Ministry of Planning.

The above listing admittedly suffers from lack of exclusiveness and there are many points of overlap and inter-connection. The Ministry of Establishment not only regulates centrally all actions relating to personnel management, it also provides

innumerable services to all public servants. The classification is based primarily on the major thrust of activities and is done here for convenience of the study. Service Ministries have more contact with individual clients as compared to economic Ministries whereas group or organisational interests are more at stake at the hands of the economic Ministries rather than the Ministries in the other two categories. In terms of vertical spread of organisation also, the service Ministries will have more extensive type of field organisation compared to those in the other two categories. All these have implications for speed of disposal of government business.

Principle of Organisation

The other factor to consider is the principle according to which Sections are organised. The basic work unit of a Ministry is the Section. Work may be distributed among various Sections in a Ministry either on the basis of purpose or process. The basic differences are highlighted through the following two figures of hypothetical organisation of Agriculture Division.

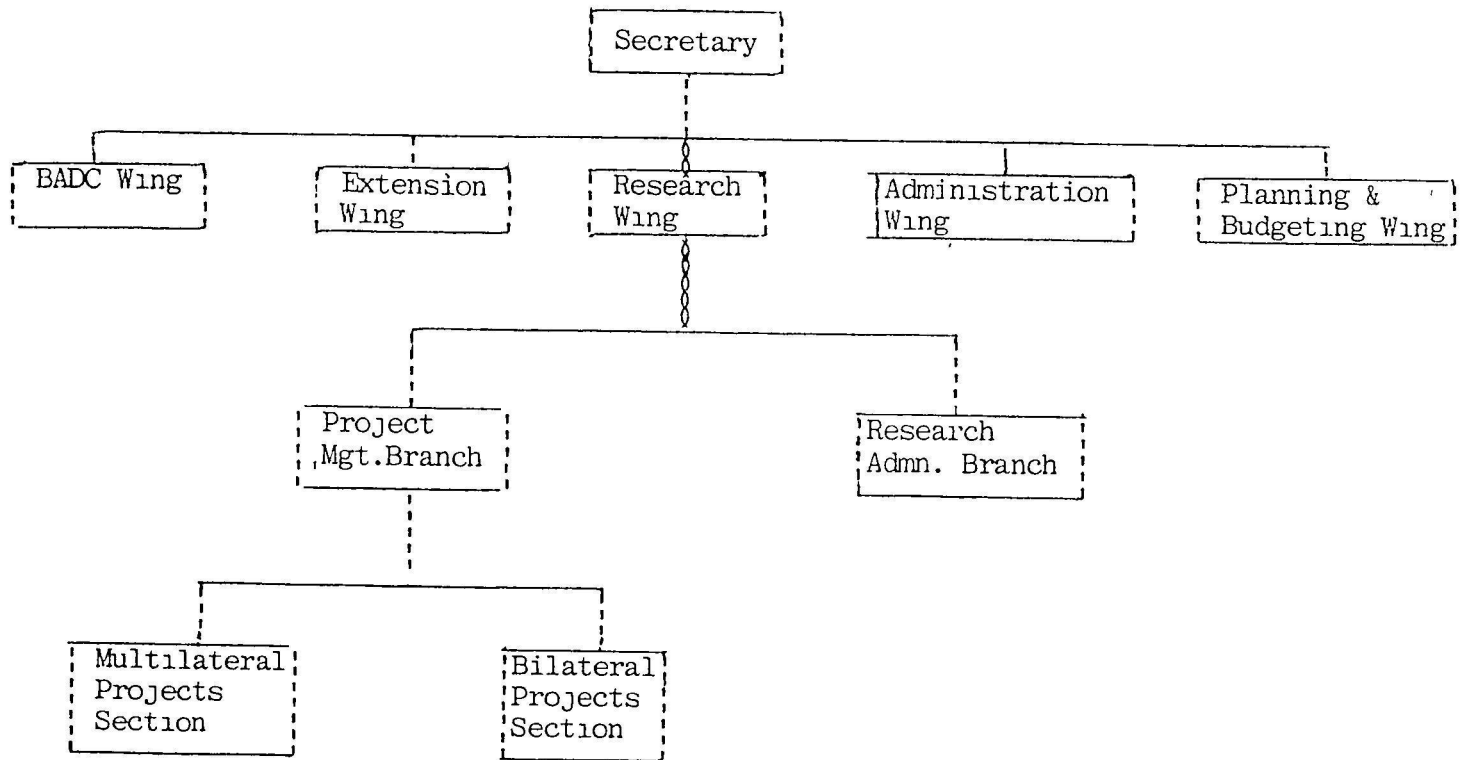


Fig. I. Organisation by Purpose

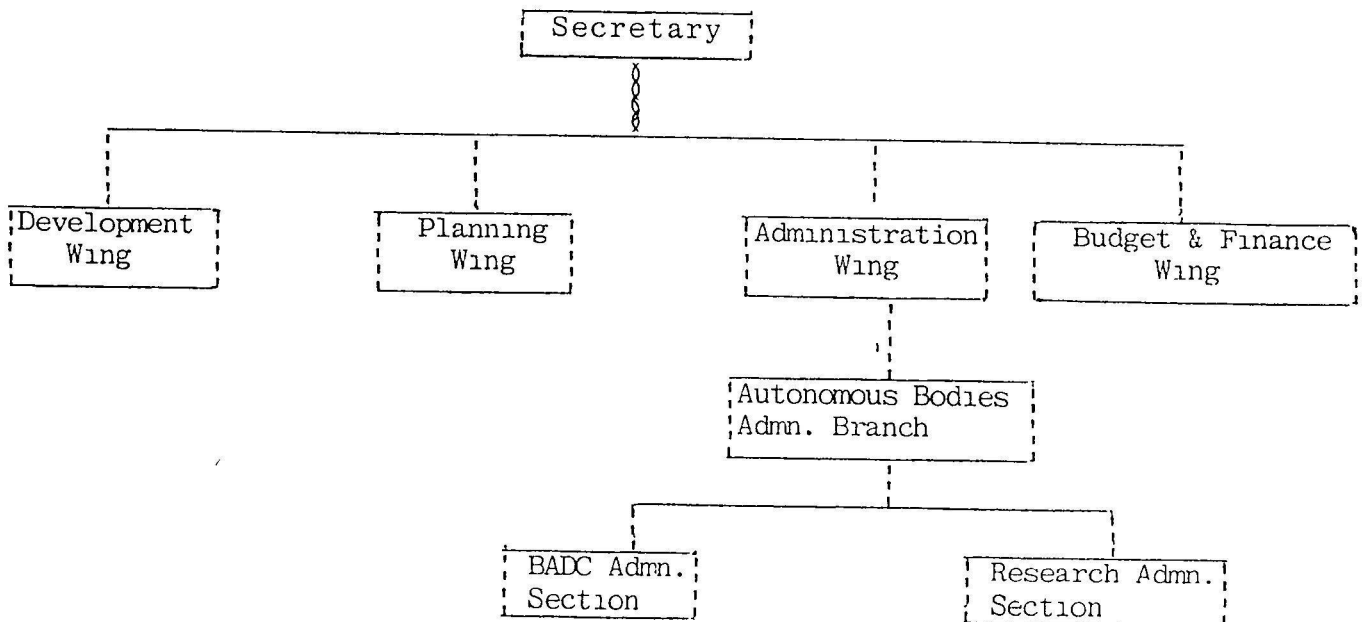


Fig. 2. Organisation by Process.

In the case of organisation by purpose, work is compartmentalised and is placed under one chain of command while under process, work is allocated on the basis of its nature for greater specialisation and uniformity of standard. In the Bangladesh Secretariat, Sections are organised on either basis. In some Ministries, however, there is a mix of both the principles. Organisation by process may result in unequal distribution of work between Sections whereas organisation by purpose creates need for heavy co-ordination. All these also have implications for speed of disposal of cases.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY DESIGN

Survey for collecting data for the study was made at the Sections of the selected Ministries during March 13-20, 1987. However, the final survey was preceded by two short surveys. Their findings were helpful in designing the final survey and needs to be recounted briefly.

THE ANTECEDENTS

Government became concerned at the alarming increase of visitors to the Bangladesh Secretariat during early 1986. It was estimated that an average of 6000 persons visited the Secretariat daily. Streams of visitors crowded the corridors and office rooms in the Secretariat and naturally hampered its smooth functioning. To wave off the tide of visitors, Government restricted the visiting time to only two hours from 12 noon to 2 p.m. and set up an elaborate procedure of entry so that only persons having genuine business in the Secretariat would take the trouble to pay visits there. Even then the number of visitors continued to average 2000 persons a day. Persistence of such a high figure raised the question that citizens must have genuine reasons for making such visits despite discouraging rules of entry. Interests were shown by the concerned authorities to find out the reasons as to why so many people should take the trouble to visit the Secretariat. It was hypothesised that Ministries may have started

dealing with subjects previously handled by the agencies under their control. It was also speculated that irrespective of whether Ministries had infringed into other's jurisdiction, there may have been an overall deterioration in the speed of disposal for various other reasons.

Secretariat Visitor's Survey:

In order to enquire into the causes of large-scale visit to the Secretariat, a short spot investigation was conducted on December 22, 1986 with the help of 50 trainees of the Sixth Foundation Course then under progress at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC). All the visitors to the Secretariat on that day numbering 1734 were covered. Information were collected through a pre-designed questionnaire incorporating aspects like : background and locality of the visitor, purpose and destination of visit, number of visits for the same purpose and so on.

The most important findings of the survey are summarised below :

- (a) Background of Visitors. Of the total visitors, service personnel constituted the highest percentage(48), followed in order of percentage ranking by businessmen(34) and student(6).
- (b) Desired Ministry to be Visited. The largest number of visitors for any one Ministry turned out to be the Education Division constituting 11 percent followed by the Ministry of

Land (9 percent). Approximately 8 percent visitors had work in the Ministry of Works while 7 percent in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Establishment, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Religious Affairs had visitors constituting 5 percent or less in each case.

(c) Desired Persons to be Visited. Approximately 40 percent of the visitors desired to see the Ministers and their Private Secretaries. 14 percent had come to see Assistant Secretaries, 11 percent Deputy Secretaries and 12 percent Joint Secretaries in connection with official problems.

(d) Purpose of Visit. The purpose of visit was classified as under :

Official Purpose (Expedite files, Posting/ transfer, Delivering letters etc.)	18 percent
Private Affairs (Private discussion, Meeting officers etc.)	17 percent
Matters relating to Development Work (Release of fund, Food for works, Upazila Parishad fund etc.)	8.5 percent
Land Affairs (Land disputes, Derequisition of land etc.)	7 percent

Foreign Training	5 percent
College Administration (Absorption of teachers in Nationalised Colleges)	5 percent

(e) Frequency of Visits. Roughly 66 percent of the visitors stated that their cases were pending in the Secretariat for a period of six months and 7 percent of the pending cases were awaiting disposal for the last three years. 15 percent visitors paid visit upto 7 times including 8 percent among them who visited the Secretariat every now and then for the disposal of their cases.

The Preliminary Survey

The visitors' survey confirmed the speculation that a large percentage of visitors visit the Secretariat for expediting disposal of their long-pending cases, although there are a good number of frivolous visitors also. It revealed a serious malfunctioning of the Secretariat system. This needed to be followed up by a more comprehensive and systematic study.

For this purpose, a survey of 49 Sections of 14 Ministries was conducted during January 14-17, 1987. The survey was designed to study the disposed cases only during July-December, 1986 in the selected Ministries with the following objectives in view :

- 1) nature of business transacted in Ministries;
- ii) speed in disposal; and
- iii) level of decision-making.

The survey was carried out by 132 participants of the Sixth Foundation Training Course being conducted by the BPATC. A total of 1506 cases were studied in detail by following a pre-designed questionnaire.

The survey findings give the following information on the major items :

Nature of Business. Survey data showed that during the period under study, correspondence relating to personnel management was the highest i.e. about 46 percent, followed by financial management (30 percent), foreign training (11 percent), purchase and sale (9 percent) and repair and maintenance (4 percent). The details may be seen at Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Correspondence by Subject and Ministry

Sl.No.	Name of Ministry	Category of Correspondence					Total
		Personnel Management	Financial Management	Purchase & Sales	Repair & Maintenance	Foreign Training	
1.	Finance Division	40	68	2	5	41	156 (10.36)
2.	Education Division	4	147	-	-	85	236 (15.68)
3.	Commerce	45	7	25	5	15	97 (6.44)
4.	Relief & Rehabilitation	21	36	15	15	-	87 (5.78)
5.	Health and Family Planning	55	6	8	5	2	76 (5.05)
6.	Fisheries and Livestock	62	17	15	1	-	95 (6.31)
7.	Social Welfare and Women's Affairs	77	24	4	3	14	122 (8.10)
8.	Land	94	5	38	-	1	138 (9.16)
9.	Works	57	7	13	-	-	77 (5.11)
10.	Home Affairs	74	5	8	7	2	96 (6.37)
11.	Religious Affairs	36	84	5	7	1	133 (8.83)
12.	Establishment	49	4	2	3	1	59 (3.92)
13.	Food	28	17	6	-	9	60 (3.98)
14.	Irrigation, Water Resources and Flood Control	50	21	-	3	-	74 (4.91)
Total		692 (45.95)	448 (29.75)	141 (9.36)	54 (3.59)	171 (11.35)	1506 (100.0)

Note: Terms in the parentheses indicate percentage.

Speed in Disposal. Time taken to dispose cases varied from Ministry to Ministry. Finance Division took the shortest average time i.e. 5 days to dispose of a case while the Ministry of Works took the longest average time i.e. 7 months. The Ministries of Relief and Rehabilitation and Education Division each took an average of 6 days to dispose a case. In almost all Ministries maximum number of correspondence were disposed within 15 days and those requiring a period of 2-3 years constitute a fraction of the total, not exceeding 3 percent as such. The details may be seen at Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Disposed Cases by Ministry

Sl.No.	Name of Ministry	Duration of Disposal		
		Month	Day	Rank
1.	Finance Division	00	05	1
2.	Education Division	00	06	2
3.	Commerce	00	26	7
4.	Relief and Rehabilitation	00	06	2
5.	Health	00	23	5
6.	Fisheries and Livestock	01	16	10
7.	Social Welfare and Women's Affairs	00	17	4
8.	Land	01	10	9
9.	Works	07	01	12
10.	Home Affairs	00	24	6
11.	Religious Affairs	01	06	8
12.	Establishment	00	20	5
13.	Food	00	12	3
14.	Irrigation, Water Resources and Flood Control	01	23	11

Level of Decision-making. Officers at the level of Joint Secretary were found to have disposed the highest number of cases constituting about 27 percent of the total disposed cases. They are followed by Deputy Secretaries who appear to have disposed 25 percent of the disposed cases. The Senior Assistant Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries altogether were found to have disposed only about 3 percent of the disposed cases. Similarly, at the Additional Secretary's level only 1 percent cases were disposed. Details may be seen at Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Correspondence by Ministry and Level of Officers

.No.	Name of Ministry	Level of Officers									Total	
		Presi- dent	Advi- ser	Minis- ter	Secre- tary	Addl. Secy.	Jt.Secy.	Dy. Secy.	Sr.Asst. Secy.	Asst. Secy.		Unknown
1.	Finance Division	-	2	1	11	1	54	45	-	10	32	156 (10.36)
2.	Education	-	-	-	3	4	91	120	-	-	18	236 (15.68)
3.	Commerce	9	-	7	20	-	51	9	1	-	-	97 (6.44)
4.	Relief and Rehabi- litation	-	-	5	8	-	10	14	-	-	50	87 (5.78)
5.	Health and Family Planning	3	-	-	30	1	12	27	-	-	3	76 (5.05)
6.	Fisheries and Live- stock	1	-	4	47	-	17	21	-	1	4	95 (6.31)
7.	Social Welfare and Women's Affairs	-	-	5	23	-	60	30	-	3	1	122 (8.10)
8.	Land	-	-	1	1	-	2	37	-	9	88	138 (9.16)
9.	Works	-	-	4	5	-	29	35	3	-	1	77 (5.11)
0.	Home Affairs	-	-	24	25	-	14	-	-	-	33	96 (6.37)
1.	Religious Affairs	-	-	5	24	-	8	8	-	5	83	133 (8.83)
2.	Establishment	12	-	1	9	9	10	6	8	-	4	59 (3.92)
3.	Food	6	-	14	6	-	32	1	-	1	-	60 (3.98)
4.	Irrigation, Water Re- sources and Flood Control	-	-	2	17	-	15	27	-	9	-	74 (4.91)
Total		31 (2.06)	2 (0.13)	73 (4.85)	229 (15.21)	15 (.99)	409 (27.16)	380 (25.23)	12 (.80)	38 (2.52)	317 (21.05)	1506 (100.0)

Note: Terms in the parentheses indicate percentage.

The preliminary survey of the Sections of the selected Ministries revealed severe limitations of the study. First was the question of the representativeness of the sample. According to our classification of Ministries by the basic thrust of their work, there are 16 service Ministries, 12 regulation Ministries and 8 economic Ministries. In the survey, 9 of the selected Ministries fell under the category of service Ministry, 4 under regulation Ministry and only 1 under economic Ministry. The same was, therefore, heavily biased in favour of the service Ministries. Secondly, we concentrated on delay at processing stages only. We realised that considerable delay also takes place in communicating decisions to the concerned individual or organisation. A study of delay has to look into this aspect also. Finally, the major deficiency of the design was that it looked only at the disposal cases and took no account of the undisposed ones. The conventional wisdom regarding the subject is that most of the cases that get disposed of within reasonable time-limit are the ones that are vigorously pursued. It is not theoretically interesting to study them. The more rewarding will be a study of those cases that take an unusually long time to get disposed of or do not get disposed of at all. Keeping these type of cases outside the purview of the study was a major flaw.

It need to be mentioned that the study was very helpful in conceptualising the issues involved and in getting some

preliminary idea as to the magnitude of the problem. In fact, data collected through the study helped us in selecting the Ministries for our final survey. Moreover, the intensive nature of the study, despite the bias of sample, yielded valuable information on the level of decision-making which can be used in interpreting the results of the final survey.

THE FINAL SURVEY

In the light of our experience of the two previous surveys, it was intended to carry out a final survey of some Sections of a few selected Ministries to enquire into the probable causes of delay by concentrating on a few key variables. The survey had the following objectives in view:

- i) to identify the nature of work done at the Secretariat;
- ii) to find out the levels at which decisions are being made ;
- iii) to find out the time generally taken at each level in decision-making;
- iv) to find out the time lag between final decision and its communication to the concerned individual or organisation; and
- v) to find out the causes of delay in the disposal of business at the Secretariat.

For this study, six Ministries constituting about 13 percent of the total Ministries at the Secretariat were selected. The selected Ministries are assumed to be representative in character

to the extent that 3 fall under service category while 2 represent the regulation and 1 economic category. Representation of selected Ministries in their respective categories is proportional to their total numbers. The six Ministries comprise of 89 Sections of which 59(66%) Sections were selected for the purpose of the study. These 59 Sections were distributed proportionately to each of the Ministries concerned. Thus the sample Sections covered a total of 59 Sections, the distribution of which was as follows :

Table 4.4 Distribution of Sample Sections by Ministry

Sl.No.	Name of Ministry	Number of Sections (Population)	Number of Sections (Sample)
1.	Local Government Division	12	8
2.	Land	12	8
3.	Health and Population Control	15	10
4.	Education Division	14	9
5.	Relief and Rehabilitation	12	8
6.	Commerce	24	16
Total		89 (100%)	59 (66%)

The scope of the survey was extended to cover all correspondence and all cases, disposed or undisposed, during the period January-December 1986. A total of 59 Assistant Secretaries/

Senior Assistant Secretaries were drawn from the Secretariat itself to carry out the study during March 13-20, 1987.

A questionnaire was prepared to collect information on the following aspects in details:

Types of Communication:

Find out the total volume of correspondence received in the Ministry during the year under study. What percentage of it was frivolous and disposable without any action by the Ministry ? What percentage did require actions by the Ministry ? The other issue sought to be looked into was the identity of the clientele. Who were making the correspondence - Government servants themselves ? Private citizens ? Agencies under the Ministries ? NGOs ? Donor Agencies ? or other Ministries ?

Nature of Correspondence:

What did they correspond for - personnel or financial matters ? Matters relating to project management ? Policy and the like ?

Initiation Time:

How much time did elapse between receipt and initiation ? Was there any discrimination in initiation in terms of subject or clientele ?

Disposal Time:

The Secretariat Instructions have fixed two weeks as the normal disposal time. All cases disposed within that time-limit is considered as disposed for the purpose of the study. On the basis of that criterion, the survey sought to find out how many cases were disposed, how many were disposed at

delays and the range of delay and how many cases remained undisposed during the year.

It further sought to find out the kind of cases that were disposed and the speed of their disposal.

Communicating Time:

What was the time lag between decision and its communication ?

Reasons for Delay:

The survey also sought the opinion of the concerned Assistant Secretaries as to what were the causes of delay in the disposal of cases.

Reasons for non-Disposal:

Finally, we also wanted the opinion of the concerned officials as to the reasons for non-disposal of cases.

The survey entailed the collection of an enormous variety of data. Their collation needed prior classification and codification for processing through the computer. For this purpose, the probable answers under the 7 categories were mentioned and each item was given a code number.

The number of probable answers against two of the substantive categories are shown below:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Source of Correspondence | Government servants working under the Ministry, other individuals, private institutions, NGOs, subordinate offices, Statutory Bodies, Departments, Ministries, Foreign Mission and International Agencies = 9. |
|-----------------------------|--|

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 2. Nature of Correspondence | Personnel management, financial management, general administration, project management, training, purchase and sale, repair and maintenance, ministerial business and policy = 9. |
|-----------------------------|---|

It may be mentioned here that under each of the 9 categories on the nature of correspondence, there were several sub-categories. For identifying the sub-categories under "ministerial business", the items mentioned in Schedule I of the Rules of Business so far as they related to selected Ministries were used. To cover the items not mentioned in the data sheet, an "others" sub-category was invariably appended as the last item under all the categories.

For easy comparability and calculability of time across references and Ministries, the idea of recording the exact figures was abandoned in favour of a range. Thus the time taken in disposing a case or communicating a decision has been calculated in terms of weeks rather than days.

For each correspondence, a separate data sheet was used. Data so collected were processed through the computer of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

CHAPTER FIVE

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey findings, as processed through the computer of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, may be presented under the several broad headings of the design itself.

TYPES OF CORRESPONDENCE

During the calendar year 1986, the Sections under study received a total of 5606 correspondence of which roughly 9 percent, (479 cases) required no processing by the concerned Ministries.

Table 5.1 : Distribution of Category of Correspondence by Ministry

Name of Ministry	Category of Correspondence		
	No Action Required	Action Required	Total
Land	30 (6.26)	689 (13.44)	719 (12.83)
Relief and Rehabilitation	11 (2.30)	341 (6.65)	352 (6.28)
Education Division	17 (3.55)	911 (17.78)	928 (16.56)
Local Government Division	67 (13.99)	1106 (21.58)	1173 (20.93)
Health and Family Planning	178 (37.16)	1061 (20.70)	1139 (22.11)
Commerce	176 (36.74)	1017 (19.85)	1193 (21.29)
Total	479 (100)	5125 (100.0)	5604 (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Frivolous Type

To the category of correspondence requiring no action by the Ministries belong such receipt as copies of tour programme, post copies of telegrams and routine acknowledgements, copies of joining reports, copies of posting/transfer orders of officers and staff of lower organisations, press cuttings which are for information only, unsigned or anonymous communications or advance copies of representation on which no instructions have been recorded by officers, identical representations from individuals or groups of individuals excepting the one that was received first, publications on which no specific action is to be taken and the like. Highest percentage of this type of correspondence is received in the Ministry of Health and Family Planning(37.16 percent) closely followed by the Ministry of Commerce(36.74 percent).

Correspondence Requiring Action

Of the total correspondence received under "action required" category, the Local Government Division received the highest number i.e. 21.58 percent followed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning (20.70 percent), Ministry of Commerce(19.85 percent) and the Education Division (17.78 percent).

Share of Correspondence by Sources

The aforementioned correspondences were received from ten sources. Of the total cases received by each of the sources, the share of action required cases exceeds 90 percent for all sources except government servants under Ministry, private institutions,

NGOs and others. As compared to other sources, the number of action required and no action cases for the category "Inter-Ministerial" was the highest i.e. 18.42 percent and 20.04 percent respectively.

Table 5.2 : Distribution of Category of Correspondence
by Source

Source of Correspondence	Category of Correspondence		
	No Action	Action Required	Total
Government Servants Under Ministry	68 (14.20)	530 (10.35)	598 (10.67)
Other Individuals	14 (2.92)	676 (13.19)	690 (12.31)
Private Institutions	47 (9.81)	328 (6.40)	375 (6.69)
NGOs	10 (2.09)	33 (0.64)	43 (0.76)
Subordinate Offices	79 (16.49)	790 (15.41)	869 (15.51)
Statutory Bodies	17 (3.55)	298 (5.82)	315 (5.62)
Departments	67 (13.99)	828 (16.16)	895 (15.97)
Inter-Ministerial	96 (20.04)	944 (18.42)	1040 (18.56)
Foreign Missions & International Agencies	41 (8.56)	370 (7.22)	411 (7.33)
Others	40 (8.35)	328 (6.40)	368 (6.58)
Total	479 (8.55) (100.0)	5125 (91.45) (100.0)	5604 (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Similarly, the number of both action required and no action cases turned out to be the lowest for the NGO category accounting for 0.64 percent and 2.09 respectively.

In order of magnitude, Inter-ministerial was followed by the Departments and the subordinate offices accounting for 15.97 and 15.51 percent of the total correspondences respectively. The correspondences made by the government servants, other individuals and private institutions constituted 10.67, 12.31 and 6.69 percent of the total correspondences respectively.

The Ministry of Land comes out first in terms of correspondence received by it from its own employees (15.99 percent) followed by the Local Government Division (11.00 percent), the Ministry of Health and Family Planning (10.90 percent) and the Ministry of Commerce (9.05 percent). Ministry of Land also received the highest percentage of correspondence from other individuals (34.35 percent), followed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning (14.04 percent) and the Local Government Division (13.81 percent). Private Institutions, of course, made the highest percentage of correspondence with the Ministry of Commerce (19.78 percent). The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation was a distant rival only at 7.39 percent. Contact by private institutions with other Ministries was negligible. However, except the Ministry of Commerce, the subordinate offices accounted for a major share of correspondence of their own Ministries. The highest percentage (22.67) again was found in

the share of correspondence of the Ministry of Land closely followed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning(20.90 percent). The percentage share of other Ministries were Local Government Division(15.86 percent), Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation(13.92 percent) and Education Division(13.69 percent).

Table 5.3: Distribution of Ministry by Source of Correspondence

Source	Name of Ministry						
	Land	Relief	Education	Local Govt.	Health	Commerce	Total
Government Servants Under Ministry	115 (15.99)	30 (8.52)	81 (8.73)	129 (11.00)	135 (10.90)	108 (9.05)	598 (10.67)
Other Individuals	247 (34.35)	42 (11.93)	42 (4.53)	162 (13.81)	174 (14.04)	23 (1.92)	690 (12.30)
Private Institutions	25 (3.48)	26 (7.39)	29 (3.12)	20 (1.71)	39 (3.15)	236 (19.78)	375 (6.69)
NGOs	2 (0.28)	2 (0.57)	3 (0.32)	3 (0.26)	17 (1.37)	16 (1.34)	43 (0.76)
Subordinate Offices	163 (22.67)	49 (13.92)	127 (13.69)	186 (15.86)	159 (20.90)	85 (7.13)	869 (15.51)
Statutory Bodies	36 (5.01)	9 (2.56)	23 (2.48)	116 (9.88)	29 (2.34)	102 (8.55)	315 (5.62)
Departments	7 (0.97)	60 (17.04)	335 (36.10)	129 (11.00)	150 (12.11)	214 (17.98)	895 (15.97)
Inter-Ministerial	113 (15.72)	77 (21.88)	173 (18.64)	186 (15.85)	233 (18.80)	258 (21.63)	1040 (18.56)
Foreign Missions & International Organisations	3 (0.42)	46 (13.07)	25 (2.69)	47 (4.01)	152 (12.27)	138 (11.57)	411 (7.33)
Others	8 (1.11)	11 (3.13)	90 (9.70)	195 (16.62)	51 (4.12)	13 (1.09)	368 (6.57)
Total	719 (12.83) (100.0)	352 (6.28) (100.0)	928 (16.56) (100.0)	1173 (20.93) (100.0)	1239 (22.11) (100.0)	1193 (21.29) (100.0)	5604 (100.0) (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Education Division received the highest percentage of correspondence(36.10 percent) from Departments under its control followed by the Ministry of Commerce(17.98 percent) ,Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation(17.04 percent) and Ministry of Health and Family Planning (12.11 percent).

Inter-ministerial correspondences constituted more than 15.00 percent of total correspondence received in each individual Ministry under study.

Foreign Missions and International Agencies made the highest percentage of correspondence with the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation(13.07 percent) followed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning (12.27 percent) and the Ministry of Commerce(11.57 percent).

NATURE OF CORRESPONDENCE

The subject-matter of the correspondences received from various sources were classified into nine categories i.e., personnel management, financial management, general administration, project management, training, purchase and sale, repair and maintenance, ministerial business and policy. The Ministries under study were found to have received the highest number of correspondences on ministerial business i.e., 26.83 percent and the lowest on repair and maintenance accounting for 0.59 percent only. Matters relating to personnel management and financial management occupied the second and third position representing 21.81 and 14.68 percent of total

Table 5.4: Subjectwise Distribution of Source of Correspondence

Source	Personnel Mgt.	Financial Mgt.	Gen. Admn.	Proj. Mgt.	Trg.	Pur. & Sales	Repair & Mainten.	Minis. Business	Policy	Unspecified	Total
Government Servants Under Ministry	185	105	62	30	9	23	-	106	10	68	598
Other Individuals	158	81	47	8	18	17	15	317	3	26	690
Private Institutions	7	29	14	8	1	44	-	236	7	29	375
NGOs	3	9	3	1	-	1	-	11	9	6	43
Subordinate Offices	185	103	88	107	28	66	1	265	1	45	869
Statutory Bodies	76	84	34	33	8	19	1	34	3	23	315
Departments	304	182	64	66	30	43	6	105	19	80	895
Inter-ministerial	170	108	126	118	177	54	5	145	43	74	1040
Foreign Missions & International Agencies	3	33	14	43	134	8	1	73	55	47	411
Others	47	9	58	12	58	3	2	135	-	44	368
Total	1238	763	490	426	463	278	31	1423	150	442	5604

correspondence respectively. The share of general administration and project management turns out to be 9.40 and 7.12 percent respectively. The policy oriented correspondence constituted only 2.46 percent of the total correspondence received from various sources.

Ministrywise Share of Different
Categories of Correspondence

Of the total action required cases assumed by each of the Ministries, cases falling under the category 'ministerial business' constituted the highest for the Ministries of Land, Relief, Local Government and Commerce while those falling under 'personnel management' constituted the highest for the Education Division and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning. It is observed that in all the Ministries the cases belonging to 'repair and maintenance' category were the lowest accounting for even less than 1 percent of the action required cases. It is interesting to note that the Ministries of Land, Relief and Education did not have any policy oriented cases to be taken care of.

Table 5.5 : Distribution of Action Required Cases
by Ministry and Subject.

Source	Ministry						Total
	Land	Relief	Education	Local Govt.	Health	Commerce	
Personnel Management	98 (14.22)	52 (15.23)	334 (36.66)	212 (19.17)	269 (25.35)	153 (15.05)	1118 (21.81)
Financial Management	98 (14.22)	77 (22.58)	176 (19.30)	193 (17.45)	120 (11.31)	88 (8.65)	752 (14.68)
General Administration	36 (5.23)	50 (14.66)	147 (16.14)	138 (12.48)	49 (4.62)	62 (6.10)	482 (9.40)
Project Management	2 (0.29)	20 (5.87)	44 (4.83)	76 (6.87)	214 (20.17)	9 (0.88)	365 (7.12)
Training	19 (2.76)	5 (1.47)	144 (15.81)	99 (8.95)	122 (11.50)	63 (6.20)	452 (8.82)
Purchase & Sale	1 (0.15)	6 (1.76)	2 (0.22)	16 (1.45)	25 (2.36)	277 (22.32)	277 (5.40)
Repair & Maintenance	-	1 (0.29)	4 (0.44)	3 (0.27)	16 (1.51)	6 (0.59)	30 (0.59)
Ministerial Business	409 (59.36)	129 (37.83)	45 (4.94)	334 (30.20)	196 (18.47)	262 (25.76)	1375 (26.83)
Policy	-	-	-	7 (0.63)	6 (0.57)	113 (11.11)	126 (2.46)
Unspecified	26 (3.77)	1 (0.29)	15 (1.65)	28 (2.53)	44 (4.14)	34 (3.34)	148 (2.89)
Total	689 (100.0)	341 (100.0)	911 (100.0)	1106 (100.0)	1061 (100.0)	1017 (100.0)	5125 (100.0)

Note : Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

INITIATION TIME

Data reveal that of the total action required cases, the time lag between receipt of correspondence and initiation of action was the lowest i.e., less than one week for the highest number of cases accounting for 63.43 percent. The cases requiring 2 and 4+ weeks constituted 12.78 and 10.11 percent of the total action required cases respectively. The share of those cases taking 1 week and 4 weeks turned out to be 3.51 percent each.

Of the total number of action required cases as assumed by each of the Ministries, the lag was found to be less than a week

Table 5.6 : Ministrywise Distribution of Time Lag Between
Receipt of Correspondence and Initiation of Action
(In week)

Name of Ministry .	<1	1	2	3	4	4+	Not Initiated	Total
Land	378 (54.86)	27 (3.92)	93 (13.50)	52 (7.55)	33 (4.79)	106 (15.38)	-	689 (100.0)
Relief & Rehabilitation	274 (60.35)	6 (1.76)	33 (9.68)	14 (4.11)	5 (1.46)	9 (2.64)	-	341 (100.0)
Education	546 (59.93)	33 (3.62)	102 (11.20)	54 (5.93)	33 (3.62)	135 (14.82)	8 (0.88)	911 (100.0)
Local Government	681 (61.67)	47 (4.25)	159 (14.28)	61 (5.52)	47 (4.25)	104 (9.40)	7 (0.68)	1106 (100.0)
Health & Family Planning	687 (64.75)	35 (3.30)	142 (13.38)	70 (6.60)	35 (3.30)	85 (8.01)	7 (0.66)	1061 (100.0)
Commerce	685 (67.35)	32 (3.15)	126 (12.38)	62 (6.10)	27 (2.66)	79 (7.77)	6 (0.59)	1017 (100.0)
Total	3251 (63.43)	180 (3.51)	655 (12.78)	313 (6.11)	180 (3.51)	518 (10.11)	28 (0.55)	5125 (100.0)

Note : Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages of row total.

for the highest number of cases(60.35 percent) in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. Within the same time period, the Ministry of Land was found to have initiated action on the least number of cases i.e., 54.86 percent.

Of the total correspondences requiring a time of 4 weeks and more for initiating action, the highest number of cases belonged to the Education Division (26.06 percent) while the lowest to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (1.74 percent).

Initiation Time by Subject

Total cases on which action was initiated in less than a week's time,ministerial business occupied the highest position (26.67 percent), followed by personnel management(20.92 percent) and financial management(15.13 percent). The same pattern is repeated for all the other time intervals also.

In terms of share of total correspondences for each of the sources initiated at different time intervals,it may be seen that all the sources had their highest number of cases initiated in less than a week's time. Those that were left out were taken care of at a much slower pace to the extent that the second largest number of cases on personnel and financial management and the third largest number of cases on ministerial business were initiated on the 4th week or after.

Table 5.7 : Subjectwise Distribution of Time Lag Between Receipt of Correspondence and Initiation of Action.

(In Weeks)

Subject	<1	1	2	3	4	4+	Total
Personnel Management	680	39	132	65	42	154	1112
Financial Management	492	21	74	41	28	94	750
General Administration	324	15	66	23	14	36	478
Project Management	241	14	44	29	12	25	365
Training	291	19	72	27	13	29	451
Purchase & Sales	179	9	37	21	6	25	277
Repair & Maintenance	22	1	1	1	3	2	30
Ministerial Business	867	49	193	85	56	117	1367
Policy	91	8	14	6	-	7	126
Un-specified	64	5	22	15	6	29	141
Total	3251	180	655	313	180	518	5097

STATE OF DISPOSAL

Of the total action required cases assumed by each of the Ministries, cases disposed within one week have been found to be the highest i.e., 39.00 percent in case of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation and the lowest for the Ministry of Land accounting for 17.13 percent. Similarly, cases disposed at delays turned out to be the highest i.e., 57.30 percent for the Ministry of Health and Family Planning and the lowest for the Ministry of Land 47.17 percent. The undisposed cases are the highest i.e., 35.70 percent in case of the Ministry of Land and the lowest for the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation accounting for 5.57 percent only.

Table 5.8: State of Disposal of Cases by Ministry.

Name of Ministry	Disposed within one week	Disposed but delayed	Un-disposed	Total
Land	118 (17.13) (9.50)	325 (47.17) (11.77)	246 (35.70) (21.93)	689 (100.0) (13.44)
Relief & Rehabilitation	133 (39.00) (10.71)	189 (55.43) (6.85)	19 (5.57) (1.69)	341 (100.0) (6.65)
Education Division	219 (24.04) (17.63)	513 (56.31) (18.58)	179 (19.65) (15.95)	911 (100.0) (17.78)
Local Govt. Division	229 (20.70) (18.44)	627 (56.70) (22.71)	250 (22.60) (22.28)	1106 (100.0) (21.58)
Health & Family Planning	282 (26.58) (22.70)	608 (57.30) (22.02)	171 (16.12) (5.24)	1061 (100.0) (20.70)
Commerce	261 (25.66) (21.02)	499 (49.07) (18.07)	257 (25.27) (22.91)	1017 (100.0) (19.84)
Total	1242 (24.23) (100.0)	2761 (53.88) (100.0)	1122 (21.49) (100.0)	5125 (100.0) (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of row and column total respectively.

Of the total cases disposed within one week, the cases disposed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning turned out to be the highest i.e., 22.70 percent while those by the Ministry of Land to be the lowest representing 9.50 percent. Of the cases disposed at delays, the share of the Local Government Division was the highest at 22.71 percent while that of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation the lowest accounting for 6.85 percent only. Out of the total undisposed cases, the proportion of the Ministry of Commerce was the highest i.e., 22.91 percent while that of the Ministry Relief and Rehabilitation the lowest representing 1.69 percent only.

Disposal of Cases by Source

. Of the total cases received from each of the 9 sources, highest number of correspondences (38.49 percent) made by the Government servants working under the Ministries were disposed within one week while disposal in the same period was the lowest for correspondences made by the other individuals (17.31 percent). Similarly, the highest number of cases that were disposed at delays belonged to the subordinate offices (61.26 percent) while the lowest number of cases in this category (14.21 percent) belonged to the private institutions. The undisposed cases appear to be the highest (32.84 percent) in respect of other individuals

and the lowest (15.85 percent) in respect of government servants working in the Ministries.

Table 5.9 : Disposal of Cases by Source.

Source	Disposed within one week	Disposed but delayed	Un-disposed	Total
Govt. Servants under Ministry	204 (38.49) (16.43)	242 (45.66) (8.76)	84 (15.85) (7.49)	530 (100.0) (10.34)
Other Individuals	117 (17.31) (9.42)	337 (49.85) (12.21)	222 (32.84) (19.79)	676 (100.0) (13.19)
Private Institutions	79 (24.09) (6.36)	145 (44.21) (5.25)	104 (31.70) (9.27)	328 (100.0) (6.40)
NGOs	7 (21.21) (0.56)	20 (60.61) (0.72)	6 (18.18) (0.53)	33 (100.0) (0.64)
Subordinate Offices	179 (22.66) (14.41)	484 (61.26) (17.53)	127 (16.08) (11.32)	790 (100.0) (15.41)
Statutory Bodies	53 (17.78) (4.27)	176 (59.06) (6.38)	69 (23.16) (6.15)	298 (100.0) (5.82)
Departments	173 (20.89) (13.93)	502 (60.63) (18.18)	153 (18.48) (13.64)	828 (100.0) (16.16)
Inter-ministerial	267 (28.28) (21.50)	488 (51.70) (17.68)	189 (20.02) (16.84)	944 (100.0) (18.42)
Foreign Missions & International Organisations	95 (25.68) (7.65)	197 (53.24) (7.13)	78 (21.08) (6.95)	370 (100.0) (7.22)
Others	68 (20.73) (5.47)	170 (51.83) (6.16)	90 (27.44) (8.02)	328 (100.0) (6.40)
Total	1242 (24.23) (100.0)	2761 (53.88) (100.0)	1122 (21.89) (100.0)	5125 (100.0) (100.0)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of row and column total respectively.

Of the total cases disposed within one week, the correspondences received from Ministries turn out to be the highest (21.50 percent) and those from the NGOs the lowest (0.56 percent). Out of the total cases disposed at delays, the cases received from the Departments were the highest (18.18 percent) while the share of the NGOs is the lowest accounting for 0.72 percent only.

Of the total undisposed cases, the cases received from other individuals turned out to be the highest (19.79 percent) and those received from the NGOs the lowest (0.53 percent).

Sourcewise Rate of Disposal with Disposal Time

It was found that 1122 cases(21.9 percent) of the total action required cases were not disposed at all. The cases disposed within less than a month constituted 50.4 percent of the total action required cases while those taking six months and above accounted for 1.7 percent only. The cases disposed within a period of 1-2 and 3-4 months constituted 12 and 6.8 percent of the total disposable cases respectively.

Table 5.10 : Sourcewise Disposal Rate of Correspondence by Ministry

(In Month)

Source	Undisposed	Duration of Disposal						Total
		0	1	1-2	3-4	5-6	Above 6	
Government Servants Under the Ministry	84	45	301	53	33	9	5	530
Other Individuals	222	34	291	64	44	11	10	676
Private Institutions	104	11	155	34	19	3	2	328
NGOs	6	3	17	2	5	-	-	33
Subordinate Offices	127	56	422	106	43	21	15	790
Statutory Bodies	69	17	122	42	26	11	11	298
Departments	153	20	438	110	68	22	17	828
Inter-ministerial	189	53	500	120	54	18	10	944
Foreign Missions & International Agencies	78	13	178	40	41	9	11	370
Others	90	10	159	42	16	6	5	328
Total	1122	262	2583	613	349	110	86	5125

Only 2.1 percent of the total disposable cases were found to have been disposed within five to six months.

Ministrywise Rate of Disposal
With Disposal Time

The proportion of un-disposed cases were found to be the highest (22.91 percent) in the Ministry of Commerce and the lowest in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation(1.69 percent).

Table 5.11: Ministrywise Disposal Rate of Correspondence.

(In Month)

Ministry	Undisposed	Duration of Disposal						Total
		0	1	1-2	3-4	5-6	Above 6	
Land	246 (21.93)	15 (5.34)	266 (10.30)	73 (11.91)	57 (16.33)	18 (16.36)	15 (17.44)	689 (13.44)
Relief & Rehabilitation	19 (1.69)	12 (4.58)	257 (10.03)	33 (5.38)	12 (3.44)	5 (4.55)	1 (1.16)	341 (6.65)
Education	179 (15.95)	20 (7.63)	477 (18.47)	125 (20.39)	64 (18.34)	26 (23.64)	20 (23.26)	911 (17.78)
Local Government	250 (22.28)	86 (32.82)	509 (19.70)	143 (23.33)	80 (22.92)	24 (21.82)	14 (16.28)	1106 (21.58)
Health & Family Planning	171 (15.24)	71 (27.10)	589 (22.80)	126 (20.56)	71 (20.34)	18 (16.36)	15 (17.44)	1061 (20.70)
Commerce	257 (22.91)	59 (22.53)	483 (18.70)	113 (18.43)	65 (18.63)	19 (17.27)	21 (24.42)	1017 (19.85)
Total	1122 (100.0)	262 (100.0)	2583 (100.0)	613 (100.0)	349 (100.0)	110 (100.0)	86 (100.0)	5125 (100.0)

Note : Figures within parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Of the total cases disposed within less than a month, the Ministry of Health and Family Planning turned out to have disposed the highest number of cases (22.80 percent) while the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation the lowest (10.03 percent). Of those cases which took six months and more to be disposed, the share of the Ministry of Commerce, Education Division and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning turned out to be 24.42, 23.26 and 17.44 percent respectively.

Subjectwise Disposal Time of Delayed Cases

Of the total cases disposed at delays, highest number of cases, 691 (25.21 percent) were disposed in less than 15 days while 15.39 percent of the cases took the longest disposal time i.e., 91 days and above.

Of the cases disposed in less than 15 days, those belonging to personnel management constituted the highest number i.e., 25.58 percent while the repair and maintenance cases accounted for the lowest (1.01 percent). It is also observed that the cases that took the longest time i.e., 91 days and above, cases pertaining to personnel management again occupied the highest position (25.41 percent) and those related to repair and maintenance the lowest (0.47 percent). Within that range, of the cases disposed within 15-21, 22-30, 31-45 and 46-90 days, the proportion of cases belonging to ministerial business turned out to be the highest accounting for 24.28, 26.05, 26.03 and 26.34 percent respectively.

Table 5.12 : Disposal Time of Delayed Cases by Subject of Correspondence

Subject	Range of Delay						Total
	<15	15-21	22-30	31-45	46-90	91+	
Personnel Management	178 (25.58)	107 (23.94)	80 (21.05)	80 (21.92)	95 (21.21)	108 (25.41)	648 (23.47)
Financial Management	131 (16.82)	68 (15.21)	53 (13.95)	50 (13.70)	69 (15.40)	55 (12.94)	426 (15.43)
General Administration	71 (10.20)	36 (8.05)	38 (10.00)	23 (6.30)	44 (9.82)	34 (8.00)	246 (8.91)
Project Management	40 (5.74)	41 (9.17)	33 (8.68)	35 (9.59)	29 (6.47)	25 (5.88)	203 (7.35)
Training	39 (5.60)	31 (6.94)	31 (8.16)	38 (10.41)	51 (11.38)	55 (12.94)	245 (12.87)
Purchase and Sale	37 (5.32)	28 (6.26)	23 (6.05)	26 (7.12)	23 (5.13)	24 (5.65)	161 (5.83)
Repair and Maintenance	7 (1.01)	4 (0.90)	-	3 (0.82)	1 (0.22)	2 (0.47)	17 (0.62)
Ministerial Business	162 (23.28)	113 (24.28)	99 (26.05)	95 (26.03)	118 (26.34)	98 (23.06)	685 (24.81)
Policy	21 (3.02)	14 (3.13)	10 (2.63)	6 (1.64)	4 (0.89)	7 (1.65)	62 (2.25)
Not Specified	10 (1.44)	5 (1.12)	13 (3.42)	9 (2.47)	14 (3.13)	17 (4.00)	68 (2.46)
Total	696 (100.0)	447 (100.0)	380 (100.0)	365 (100.0)	448 (100.0)	425 (100.0)	2761 (100.0)

Ministrywise Disposal Time of Delayed Cases

All the Ministries under study had disposed of the highest number of delayed cases in less than 15 days' time. Among the cases disposed in less than 15 days, the share of the Ministry of

Table 5.13 : Disposal Time of Delayed Cases by Ministry.

							(In Days)
Ministry	Duration of Disposal						Total
	/ 15	15-21	22-30	31-45	46-90	91+	
Land	76 (10.92)	46 (10.29)	39 (10.26)	39 (10.68)	68 (15.18)	57 (13.42)	325 (11.77)
Relief & Reha- bilitation	74 (10.63)	37 (8.28)	23 (6.05)	17 (4.66)	22 (4.91)	16 (3.76)	189 (6.85)
Education	135 (19.40)	75 (16.78)	76 (20.00)	68 (18.63)	91 (20.31)	68 (16.00)	513 (18.58)
Local Govt.	126 (18.10)	103 (23.04)	98 (25.79)	98 (26.85)	90 (20.09)	112 (26.35)	627 (27.71)
Health and Family Planning	161 (23.13)	111 (24.83)	79 (20.79)	81 (22.19)	91 (20.31)	85 (20.00)	608 (22.02)
Commerce	124 (17.82)	75 (16.78)	65 (17.11)	62 (16.99)	86 (19.20)	87 (20.47)	499 (18.07)
Total	696 (100.0)	447 (100.0)	380 (100.0)	365 (100.0)	448 (100.0)	425 (100.0)	2761 (100.0)

Note : Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of column total.

Health and Family Planning was the highest (23.13 percent) while that of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation the lowest (10.63 percent). Among those disposed between 15-21 days, the cases belonging to the Ministry of Health and Family Planning turned out to be the highest i.e., 24.83 percent. Of the cases disposed within 22-30, 31-45 and 91 days and above, the proportion of cases belonging to the Local Government Division appeared to be relatively high as compared to other Ministries. Among cases disposed within 46-90 days, the cases belonging to the Ministry of Land turned out to be highest.

Undisposed Cases

A total of 1122 cases remained undisposed at the close of the 1986 calendar year. The Table below will show the duration in days during which these cases remained undisposed.

Table 5.14 : Undisposed Cases by Duration of Pendency.

							(In Days)
1-7	8-15	16-21	22-30	31-45	46-90	90+	Total
29	33	32	30	62	188	748	1122

It is evident that a majority of the undecided cases had remained so for 90 days or more.

Undecided Cases by Subject and Ministry

One-third of the undisposed cases (374) belonged to ministerial business followed by another large number of cases (215) on

personnel management. Financial management cases constituted the third largest category of the undecided cases. Though only 81 cases were found as undisposed under the policy category, proportion of its in-category share is exceedingly high in as much as only very few cases on policy were dealt in the Sections during the year.

Table 5.15 : Distribution of Undisposed Cases by Subject and Ministry.

Name of Ministry	Subject								
	Policy	Per Mgt	Fin.Mgt.	Gen.Admn.	Proj. Mgt.	Trg.	Pur & Sale	Repair & Mainten.	Ministerial Business
Land	16	18	34	3	0	0	0	0	175
Relief	0	2	9	1	3	0	2	0	2
Education	7	58	22	21	8	56	1	1	5
Local Government	12	32	38	21	26	30	3	0	88
Health	19	68	10	5	22	27	1	0	19
Commerce	27	37	16	19	0	21	51	1	85
Total	81	215	129	70	59	134	58	2	374

Data show that about 45 percent undisposed cases on ministerial business belonged to the Ministry of Land. Local Government Division and the Ministry of Commerce have respectively 88 and 85 cases undisposed under this category. Ministry of Health and Family Planning had the largest number of undisposed cases on personnel management followed by the Education Division.

DISPOSAL BY HIERARCHICAL LEVELS

Disposal Time by Level

Time taken to dispose a file varied between levels in the same Ministry and between same levels in different Ministries. On an average, an Assistant Secretary took 8 days to dispose a matter while a Deputy Secretary and an Additional Secretary took just a day. Joint Secretaries and Secretaries required 2 days on an average while the Ministers 3 days. As indicated by survey data, the longest time at Assistant Secretary and Secretary's level were taken at the Ministry of Land.

Table 5.16 : Average Duration for Disposal of Cases
by Level and Ministry.

(Number of Days)

Ministry	Level					Minister	Other Ministry
	Asst. Secy.	Dy. Secy.	Jt. Secy.	Addl. Secy.	Secretary		
Land	11	2	7	-	9	7	1
Relief & Reha- bilitation	4	1	2	0	2	10	29
Education	7	1	2	1	4	4	8
Local Govt.	8	2	1	-	2	2	26
Health & F.P.	10	2	2	-	1	3	10
Commerce	7	1	1	1	2	3	24
All Ministries	8	1	2	1	2	3	16

In the Ministry of Health, Local Government and Education Divisions, average time taken by Assistant Secretaries closely followed that of the Ministry of Land at 10, 8 and 7 days respectively.

Disposal of Cases by Level
and by Subject

Assistant Secretaries and Secretaries had disposed the highest number of cases on personnel management representing 25.79 and 25.25 percent of the total cases disposed by them respectively. In the cases of other levels including that of the Minister, disposal of personnel management cases occupied the second highest position. Disposal of personnel management cases by all levels constituted 21.76 percent of the total cases disposed second only to disposed cases on ministerial business. This item constituted 26.73 percent of the total disposed cases under which disposal at the Minister's level was the highest i.e., 36.59 percent of the disposed cases at that level. Ministerial cases also involved heavy inter-ministerial consultation as is evident from the highest percentage of disposal (46.06 percent) of the total cases by other Ministries. Cases on training were mostly disposed at the level of Secretary and Minister represented by 11.88 and 18.41 percent of the total cases disposed by them respectively.

Table 5.17 : Disposal of Cases by Level and by Subject

(All Ministry)

Subject	Level								Total
	Asst.Secy	Dy.Secy.	Jt.Secy.	Addl.Secy.	Secretary	Minister	Other Ministry	President	
Personnel Mgt.	138	235	345	16	253	86	39	3	1115
Financial Mgt.	71	230	249	14	128	17	41	-	750
General Admn.	72	119	111	9	99	36	24	5	475
Project Mgt.	45	68	122	3	75	20	31	-	364
Training	24	71	106	7	119	81	28	13	449
Purchase/Sale	33	62	101	4	42	12	20	-	274
Repair/Maintenance	3	9	15	-	3	-	-	-	30
Ministerial	104	262	417	28	216	161	181	1	1370
Policy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unspecified	45	31	73	23	67	27	29	3	298
Total	535	1087	1539	104	1002	440	393	25	5125

Number of CasesDisposed by Level

During the year under study, a total of 5125 cases were disposed. It is found that the Joint Secretaries had disposed the highest number of cases (1539) and the Additional Secretaries the lowest number (104 cases). The Assistant Secretaries had disposed only 535 cases.

In terms of Ministry, data reveal that the Joint Secretaries in the Education Division had disposed the largest number of cases (40.94 percent) followed by the Ministry of Commerce (33.53 percent) and Ministry of Land (30.04 percent). At the Secretary's level, the Secretary, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had disposed the highest percentage of cases (31.38 percent) while the Secretary, Ministry of Land the lowest percentage (9.00 percent) of cases.

At the Assistant Secretary's level, the highest percentage of disposal was a meagre 13.48 percent at the Ministry of Health and Family Planning with the lowest disposal showing up at the Ministry of Land (6.68). At the Minister's level, the highest percentage of cases (20.07 percent) were disposed by the Minister for Local Government while the lowest percentage of cases were disposed by the Minister for Land (1.16 percent).

Table 5.18 : Ministrywise Disposal of Cases by Level

Level	(In Number)						Total
	Ministry						
	Land	Relief	Education	Local Govt.	Health	Commerce	
Asst. Secretary	46	39	80	105	143	122	535
Deputy Secretary	190	83	198	172	258	186	1087
Joint Secretary	207	61	373	253	305	341	1539
Addl. Secretary	11	13	23	15	16	26	104
Secretary	62	107	147	284	207	195	1002
Minister	8	34	45	222	57	64	440
Other Ministry	155	4	41	44	67	82	393
President	-	-	4	12	8	1	25
Total	689	341	911	1106	1061	1017	5125

COMMUNICATING DECISIONS

About 50 percent of the decisions, irrespective of the time taken in disposal of cases, are communicated within a weeks' time after disposal. The rate of communication then comes to a very negligible figure with the passage of time for the cases disposed within a week or even 2 to 3 weeks. The situation, however, improves with regard to cases disposed in four weeks' time or more.

The significant fact about communicating decision is that about one-fourth of the decisions made in file are not communicated at all. This is very dominant with regard to cases disposed in 1 week's time where 50 percent of the decisions are not communicated. Similarly, of all decisions taken in 2 weeks' time, more than one-fourth of them are not communicated. The number of "not communicated" cases decreases with the increase in disposal time of cases.

Table 5.19 : Number of Cases by Duration of Disposal and Communication.

Duration of Communication In Days	Duration of Disposal in Days						
	1 - 7	8 - 15	16-21	22-30	31-45	46-90	91 +
	1242	696	447	380	365	448	425
1 - 7	576	442	265	188	182	193	177
8 - 30	6	75	95	114	91	106	90
30 +	6	3	2	3	20	43	72
Not Communicated	654	176	85	75	72	106	86

Reasons for Delay in
Communicating Decisions

The reasons for delay in communicating decisions were noted to be manifold such as heavy workload, delay in approval of draft, absence of typist, absence of Section Assistants, lack of logistics and direction to withhold from higher authority. Heavy workload was found to be the main reason for delay in communicating decisions for 21.63 percent cases. Delay in approval of draft and absence of typist accounted for 7 percent delay in each case.

REASONS FOR NON-DISPOSAL

The largest number of undisposed cases (23 percent) were found in the Ministry of Commerce while the lowest (2 percent) in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. The proportion of undisposed cases belonging to the Ministry of Land and the Local Government Division turned out to be 22 percent each. The Ministry of Education and Health had a share of 16 and 15 percent respectively of the total undisposed cases.

The reasons for non-disposal of cases as cited by the concerned officers were many and varied. Of the total number of undisposed cases, the highest number i.e., 44 percent could not be disposed due to incomplete processing. Lack of urgency of disposal and multitude of hierarchy were cited as the main reasons for non-disposal of 7.00 and 2.0 percent of the total undisposed cases respectively. Cases not disposed for large number of queries and lack of effective supervision/guidance account for 3.0 percent of the total undisposed cases each.

Table 5.20: Distribution of Main Reasons for non-Disposal of Cases by Ministry

Reasons	Ministry						Total
	Land	Relief	Education	Loc.Govt.	Health	Commerce	
Incomplete processing	110	7	94	99	89	89	488 (43.49)
Multitude of Hierarchy	2	1	2	4	6	5	20 (1.78)
Large Number of Queries	4	-	10	10	-	10	34 (3.03)
Lack of Urgency of Disposal	11	1	26	24	1	19	82 (7.31)
Lack of Effective Guidance	10	-	4	1	2	15	32 (2.85)
High Incidence of Consultation	4	2	1	1	11	2	21 (1.87)
Lack of Policy Direction	20	1	2	6	5	5	39 (3.48)
Inter-ministerial Dispute	1	-	-	4	2	-	7 (0.02)
Court Cases	5	-	1	2	-	10	18 (1.60)
Wrong Despatch	-	1	-	1	-	-	2 (0.18)
High Central & Desp.Syst.-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2 (0.18)
Inadequate Logistic Support	-	-	-	-	-	7	7 (0.62)
Rules & Regulation Unknown	-	-	2	1	-	-	3 (0.27)
Tendency to Push up	2	-	-	-	-	2	4 (0.36)
File Lost/Missed	2	-	-	-	-	3	5 (0.45)
Correspondence Lost/Missed	-	-	-	1	-	6	7 (0.62)
Others	70	6	17	72	27	55	247 (22.01)
Not Specified	5	-	20	24	26	29	104 (9.28)
Total	246 (21.93)	19 (1.69)	179 (15.95)	250 (22.28)	171 (15.24)	257 (22.91)	1122 (100.0)

Of the total undisposed cases, the highest number i.e., 33 percent belonged to ministerial business followed by personnel management accounting for 19 percent. It is observed that most of the cases covering all subjects under study could not be disposed mainly due to incomplete processing.

Table 5.21 : Distribution of Main Reasons for non-Disposal of Cases by Subject.

Reason	Subject										Total
	PM	FM	GA	PM	TR	PS	R & M	MB	PL	NS	
Incomplete Processing	101	35	24	32	69	6	-	193	1	27	488
Multitude of Hierarchy	9	2	-	2	2	3	-	2	-	-	20
Large Number of Queries	11	5	8	2	1	3	-	4	-	-	34
Lack of Urgency of Disposal	18	22	7	5	12	10	1	5	-	2	82
Lack of Effective Guidance	7	13	3	-	-	1	-	7	-	1	32
High Incidence of Consultation	2	3	1	1	2	1	-	10	-	1	21
Lack of Policy Direction	5	3	3	1	5	1	-	20	-	-	39
Inter-ministerial Disputes	-	2	1	1	2	-	-	1	-	3	7
Court Cases	4	-	1	-	-	1	-	9	-	-	2
Wrong Despatch	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
High Central Desp.Syst.	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Inadequate Logistic Support	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	7
Rules & Regulations Unknown	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Tendency to Push-up	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
File Lost/Missed	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	5
Correspondence Lost/Missed	4	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	7
Others	36	30	15	9	24	21	-	94	1	17	247
Not Specified	14	9	5	4	15	3	-	28	21	5	104
Total	215	129	70	59	134	85	2	374	23	58	1122
	(19.16)	(11.50)	(6.24)	(5.26)	(11.94)	(5.17)	(0.18)	(33.33)	(2.05)	(5.17)	(100.0)

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

In a search for causes of delay in the disposal of business at the Bangladesh Secretariat, the survey was carried out with the limited purpose of measuring the speed of disposal on a few dimensions. The phenomenon of delay is surrounded by myths,lores and stories to an extent that an understanding of the problem on an empirical basis was a necessity. To that end, the focus of the study has been primarily diagnostic rather than finding causal relationship between variables. Delay is so inextricably interwoven in a seamless web of causalities that to try to make a scientific study on the subject will not only be unrewarding but also impossible. It may, however, be emphasized that the measures used in the survey are sufficient in identifying the weak areas for intervention. In analysing the findings, we will first highlight the state of disposal in the Secretariat and then try to relate the emerging pattern with a few probable causes. An attempt will also be made to infer from the available data some behavioural response of both the officials and the clientele to the current mode of disposal. In the concluding section of this chapter we will venture some suggestions for improving the rate of disposal and overall efficiency of public administration in Bangladesh.

STATE OF DISPOSAL

Disposal means taking a final decision on a pending reference and communicating it to the concerned party or organisation. Disposal has two aspects : a final decision in the file and its communication. In our analysis we will cover both the aspects.

Disposal in Files

During the calendar year 1986, the sampled Sections under the six Ministries received a total number of 5604 correspondences, of which 497 required no action while 5125 were to be processed. Of the total action required cases, the Ministries disposed at different time intervals 4003 cases (78.51 percent) keeping 1122 cases (21.49 percent) undisposed at the end of the year.

Rules require most of the cases to be decided and decisions communicated within two weeks from the date of receipt of the correspondences. Data reveal that 24.23 percent cases were disposed within a week on file while only 37.81 percent cases could be disposed within the stipulated time. Of those disposed, about 25 percent belonged to personnel management all of which do not lawfully fall within ministerial jurisdiction.

The situation, however, improves with corresponding increase in time range. Thus Ministries were found to have disposed off 53.95 percent cases in a month's time and 78.11 percent cases in 3 months time or more. About 10 percent of the disposed cases

took more than 3 months for their disposal. It is to be noted that ministerial business and policy-oriented cases accounted for only 24.71 percent of such cases. The overwhelmingly larger share of these highly delayed cases were taken by such subjects as personnel management (25.41 percent), financial management (12.94 percent), training (12.94 percent) and general administration (8 percent). Most of the correspondences under these subjects were not to be dealt with by the Ministries under the existing rules and procedures. Much of the blame for delay seems to be a consequence of Ministry's overconcentration of governmental business at the Secretariat.

Undisposed Cases

Of the 1122 undisposed cases, 748 had been pending with the Ministries for more than three months. One-third of the undisposed cases (374) belonged to ministerial business followed by the second largest number of cases (215) on personnel management. 45 percent of the undisposed ministerial cases belonged to the Ministry of Land while the Ministry of Health and Family Planning and the Education Division had respectively the largest and the second largest number of undisposed cases on personnel management.

Ministries are primarily set up to deal with various policy issues of the government. It is interesting to note the total number of policy cases and their disposal. It will be seen that

except in the Ministry of Commerce, number of policy-related cases in other Ministries is negligible and even these are not disposed within reasonable time.

Table 6.1: Disposal of Policy Cases
in Different Ministries

Ministry	Total Cases	Disposed	Undisposed
Land	16	0	16
Relief	0	0	0
Education	7	0	7
Local Govt.	19	7	12
Health	25	6	19
Commerce	140	113	27
Total	207	126	81

Among the undisposed cases, the largest number (222 cases) related to members of the public followed by correspondence from Ministries (189 cases), Departments (153 cases) and subordinate offices (127 cases). The highest number of undisposed cases were found in the Ministry of Commerce (23 percent) while the least in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. The Ministry of Land and the Local Government Division closely followed the Ministry of Commerce by each having a proportion of 22 percent of the undisposed cases.

Communicating Decisions

The Secretariat Instructions have provided that decisions would be made and communicated to the concerned party or organisation within two weeks' after the receipt of a correspondence. Judged by that criterion, the state of communicating orders is in a total mess in the Secretariat. Of the decisions made in two weeks' time only 50 percent could be communicated during the same period. Worse still is the fact that 40 percent of those were not even communicated by the close of the year under study. The remaining 10 percent of the decisions were communicated at delays at different time intervals. It is quite apparent that promptness in decision-making on file is largely negated by delay in communicating and more so by not communicating at all. If the state of disposal on file was bad, the state of communicating them is many times worse.

There is, however, something to be said on communicating decisions. There is a requirement of a minimum processing time for converting a decision on file into an operationable order. There are broadly two modes in which Secretariat decisions are communicated. In the first mode, decisions are transcribed on the file of the referring Ministry and despatched to the concerned officer of that Ministry for further action. This is rather straightforward and does not involve much processing time. In the other mode, decisions on file are to be written in appropriate

language and form, shown to officers at higher levels of the hierarchy for approval, typed and duplicated and then sent to the Despatch Section of the Ministry for transmittal. This involves lot of staff and logistic support. Sometimes drafts are also required to be vetted by concerned Ministries when decisions involve finances of the government or intricate questions of law or its interpretation or involve modification, addition or alteration of existing government policies. The time lag between a decision and its communication is inherent and may not always strictly follow the statutory prescriptions.

The other fact is that not all decisions will call for their communication on a one-to-one basis. It is not very rare in governmental operations that one order disposes off a number of correspondences. Sometimes decisions on files are communicated verbally and these are not always followed up either by written minutes or written communication. There would still be a few occasions when the decision is taken at such a belated stage that its relevance has already been overtaken by other developments and there is no sense in its communication.

From our experience of working in the Secretariat, we consider that 5 percent of the total disposed cases will cover those occasions when decisions could not be communicated or were not required to be communicated. Even after making such allowances, the number of cases not communicated remain very large indeed.

As for the speed of communication of decisions, let us accept a rate of correspondence between decisions and their communication in one weeks' time at 50% of the decisions made on the basis of survey data. If that rate of correspondence is extended to higher time intervals, a significant percent of carry-over decisions yet to be communicated would still be found pending. It will be not at all surprising to speculate that 5 to 10 percent of the decisions do not get communicated even after a lapse of 3 months.

The main points that emerge on the status of disposal from the above analysis may be summarised as follows:

- i) Only 25 percent cases were disposed on file in a week's time of which only one-third were communicated to the concerned quarters.
- ii) More than half of the correspondences (53.95 percent) were disposed in a month's time of which about two-thirds (63.69 percent) were communicated.
- iii) Over a period of 3 months or more, 78.11 percent cases were cleared on file of which only 68.68 percent were communicated.
- iv) About 10 percent of the disposed cases took more than 3 months for their disposal.
- v) A large percentage of cases (21.89) remained undisposed in the Ministries of which 67 percent were pending for more than 3 months.

- vi) One-third (374 cases) of the undisposed cases belonged to ministerial business. Cases on personnel management (215 cases) constituted the second largest category of the undisposed cases.
- v) Out of 5125 cases, only 207 belonged to the policy category. Of these, only 126 were disposed during the year. Except in the Ministry of Commerce, very few policy-related cases were dealt with in the other Ministries.

CAUSES OF DELAY

Many reasons for delay in the disposal of business at the Secretariat are discussed in various documents of the government, donor agencies and other institutions. As already mentioned in chapter I, these are mostly intuitive in nature and are articulated without a frame of analysis. In this section, we would like to discuss only those causes that are evident from a reading of the survey data. In terms of the design of the study, the causes will of course relate to structural issues.

The most obvious reason for delay in the Secretariat is the heavy work-load the Ministries have assumed for themselves. The Rules of Business have clearly demarcated the sphere of activities of all the Ministries both horizontally and vertically. Their staffing pattern and provision of logistics correspond to the load envisaged in the allocation of business. Unfortunately, all those rational calculations have been swept aside by a process

of what we have termed as jurisdictional infringements. Overload in the Secretariat is a direct consequence of such infringements.

Jurisdictional Infringements

There is overwhelming evidence in the survey data that the Ministries have infringed into the jurisdictions of the agencies under their control by ignoring the clear division of work statutorily prescribed. In doing so, they have assumed responsibilities which they are unable to discharge at the prescribed speed. That the Ministries have usurped the powers and functions of the agencies under them is evident from the fact that 21.81 percent of the total action-required cases belonged to personnel management second only to ministerial business (26.83 percent). More specifically, of the 5604 correspondences received, 1238 related to personnel management. Of the 895 and 869 correspondences made respectively by the Departments and subordinate offices, 304 and 185 had bearing on personnel matters. By any calculation, work on personnel management in the Ministries should not come to such a high percentage in as much as the Ministerial jurisdiction on personnel matters is limited by rules and orders to the cases of the Heads of Departments and their Deputies in the case of Departments and to the Chairmen and Directors/Member Directors in the case of Public Statutory Bodies.

The aggregate percentage of personnel management cases can be better appreciated when we look into the share of cases

on personnel management against the total number of cases received in individual Ministries under the study. Among the six Ministries selected for study, the Education Division and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning have respectively the largest and the second largest agglomeration of officers belonging to the two cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) under each of them. Under the Education Division, the authorised cadre strength for the BCS (General Education) is 7791 and for the BCS (Technical Education) is 924 bringing the total to 8715. Under the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, the authorised cadre strength for the BCS (Health) is 7175 while that for the BCS (Family Planning) is 322 making a total of 7497 officers. Survey data revealed the share of correspondence on personnel management for the Education Division and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning to be 36.66 and 25.35 percent respectively. These are also the first and the second highest percentages on the subject in the sampled Ministries. The evidence unmistakably point to the usurpation of personnel management functions by the Ministries that are clearly allocated to the Departments under the rules'.

Interestingly enough, both the Ministries of Health and Education have major Departments under them to look after personnel matters of their employees. Thus the Education Division has the Department of Higher and Secondary Education, the Department of Primary Education and Department of Technical Education to take

care of the personnel matters of most their officers. Similarly, the Ministry of Health and Family Planning has an extensive Department of Health Services and the Department of Family Planning for the same purpose.

Passing the Buck

The Section Officers scheme was introduced in 1961 with the expectation that 50 percent of the cases will be disposed off at the Assistant Secretary's level. The lesser the levels of hierarchy involved in decision-making, the faster would be the speed in disposal. Data reveal that the Assistant Secretaries were performing much below the rate of performance of Joint Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries. The Joint Secretary's level came out as the most effective level in the disposal of cases, closely followed by the level of Deputy Secretary and that of Secretary. The performance at Additional Secretary's level also showed up very poorly. This tendency to push up things are due to many reasons. One main reason is the lack of experience and knowledge of the working of the Secretariat by the Assistant Secretaries and the consequent lack of confidence to take decisions at their level. This situation is further aggravated by a lack of trust in their ability by the superiors and the tendency towards centralisation.

The other related fact is the unusually long time taken at the Assistant Secretary's level in processing a case. Data show that an Assistant Secretary took on an average 8 days to process

a case. This is mainly due to the fact that he had to handle a greater number of cases than envisaged at the time of determination of his load. This also partly explains as to why he could not concentrate on a few cases but rather found it convenient to deal with most of them in a casual manner by transferring the decision-making burden at higher levels even on such cases where he was competent to take decisions.

In-operative Assumptions

As has already been mentioned, the speed of disposal in the Secretariat is based on basically two assumptions. The first assumption envisages an uninterrupted flow of duly processed inputs from the other parts of the governmental system. The agencies under the control of the Ministry are expected to supply inputs which are complete and consistent with the requirements of existing laws, rules and regulations.

The other assumption relates to the availability of all necessary support for the proper functioning of the Secretariat. To meet this assumption, positions in the Ministries must be filled in by officers with appropriate background having the drive, initiative and imagination to assume full responsibilities of the duties of the post.

Survey data have revealed that the two assumptions are only partly met. Cases received from the other units in the governmental system were mostly incomplete, vague, inaccurate and sometimes

contradictory with each other. Of the total number of undisposed cases, the highest percentage i.e. 44 percent cases could not be disposed due to incomplete processing. Of the 488 cases not disposed due to incomplete processing, 193 and 101 cases respectively belonged to ministerial business and personnel management cases. It is speculated that processing of these cases remained incomplete due mainly to non-compliance with required procedures under the laws/rules. The spectre of incomplete processing is also true for a large number of cases disposed at delays.

The assumption on availability of necessary personnel and logistic support has largely been negated by the Ministries themselves by usurption of non-Ministerial functions. Traditionally, the Ministries have a very tight staffing pattern with very little scope of slack. Absence of even one person in the Section affects its efficiency. In that situation, the assumption of extra functions without a corresponding increase in staff has thrown the sections to utter confusion and mismanagement. Staff and logistic problems are endemic in the Sections and were cited as principal reasons for delay in communicating decisions.

Communication Bottlenecks

The status of disposal in the Secretariat would have looked much better if the decision taken on file were communicated to the concerned party or organisation. It is highly distressing to note that about one-third of the decisions were not communicated.

Making allowance for 5 percent of the decisions which cannot or need not be communicated, the remaining percentage of decisions not communicated was quite substantial. Disposal in file is virtually meaningless unless it is communicated for further action. To the concerned person, non-communication is as bad as non-disposal.

Multiplicity of Hierarchical Levels

The Secretariat Instructions have prescribed a maximum of three levels for final disposal of a case. These Instructions have also clearly laid down the type of cases that are to be submitted to the Secretary for disposal. Data, however, reveal that the Secretaries had disposed about 20 percent of the cases. As against that, the Additional Secretaries were found to have disposed only 2 percent cases. This means that the Additional Secretaries had not either assumed nor were given full responsibility for independently disposing off cases. They had just merely added another level in the hierarchy. This in effect indicates that for the 20 percent decisions given at the Secretary's level, most of the files had to move four hierarchical levels. This is contrary to all prescribed procedures for the Secretariat and is bound to cause delay. If no significant disposal is made at the Additional Secretary's level, there is no justification to retain this position only to create further problem on delay in an already bad situation.

BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE
TO OVERLOAD AND DELAY

Persistence of overload of work is bound to erode the norms of rationality set up in the Rules of Business and the Secretariat Instructions. We have seen from the survey data that the Secretariat, under the present conditions of work, cannot dispose off majority of correspondences and communicate the decisions to the concerned persons or organisations within two weeks' time. We have seen the neglect shown in the Secretariat towards disposal of policy-related cases. We have also found that 21.49 percent of the total action-required cases could not be disposed within the year, one-third of them being pending with the Ministries for 90 days or more. Worst of all is the revelation that about one-fourth of the decisions made in file are not communicated at all.

This erosion of prescribed norms has not taken place suddenly in a year : it has been probably going on ever since the liberation of the country. The changing norms will have their implications in the behaviour pattern of the major stakeholders in the working of the Secretariat. For convenience of analysis, we would consider all these stakeholders under two categories: the bureaucrats themselves who work for the Secretariat and the clientele who look for decisions to be made and communicated for their benefit.

BUREAUCRATIC RESPONSE
TO DELAY

Faced with a situation of overload, the bureaucratic response to cope with it has been one of expediency. This tendency is manifested in several ways, a few of which are discussed briefly.

Distortion of Priorities

Ministries were created on the basis of a policy-execution dichotomy between their work and those of the agencies under their control. In other words, the major function of a Ministry is policy-making. Unfortunately, the Ministries now have assumed so much responsibilities for work of administrative and executive nature that the prime focus of their work has receded to the background. We are rather surprised to find that out of 5606 correspondences received in the sample Sections during 1986, only 207 cases related to policy. Of that number also, 140 belonged to the Ministry of Commerce alone : the remaining cases were shared by the Local Government and the Education Division and the Ministries of Land and Health and Family Planning. The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had no policy files in its sampled Sections. Worse still is the fact that by the end of the year 81 cases remained undisposed. The percentage of undisposed policy cases (39.13 percent) is much higher than the percentage (21.49) of all undisposed cases. Because policy cases demand more attention, rigour and analysis in their resolution, the Ministries find it expedient to postpone

taking action on them. Moreover, for many policy issues there are no articulate and organised pressure groups as against the pressure exerted by the elite individuals and service-holders. Finally, clear and unambiguous policy limits the discretionary powers of officials and politicians alike. There is, therefore, less urgency in dealing with these cases compared to cases on personnel management and foreign training.

Response to non-Bureaucratic Norms

A person can attend to only a few cases a day. In rational system, there is a need to fix the priorities of work and the criterion of prioritisation is normally their relative importance. The hallmark of a bureaucratic system is its objectivity and impersonality. In the Bangladesh Secretariat also, there is a need for fixing priorities and it ought to have been done on an impersonal basis. However, in addition to distortion of priorities that have already taken place, there is also differential treatment of the cases dealt in the Ministries on many non-bureaucratic criteria.

Operation of one such norm that is clearly evident from the survey data is the discrimination in favour of the correspondences made by the government servants themselves. As a group, the government servants had the highest percentage (84.15 percent) of disposed and the lowest percentage of undisposed cases (15.85 percent)

among the 9 groups for which data were collected. Compared to this, the other individuals had the lowest percentage of disposal (66.86) and the highest percentage of undisposed cases (32.84 percent). Private Institutions had also similar fate like the private individuals (disposed 68.29 percent and undisposed 31.71 percent). In terms of speed of disposal also, the government servants got 65.28 percent of their cases cleared in less than a month's time as against 48.07 and 50.60 percent cases cleared respectively for private individuals and private institutions. These percentages incidentally represent the highest and the lowest percentages of cases disposed in less than a month's time.

The reasons for comparatively more cases of government servants being disposed at a greater speed is their easiness of access to the decision-making authorities. This group can also exert pressure through their intimate relationship with others in the service and their knowledge of rules and procedures as well as the many informal ways of expediting the processing of their cases. Because the Sections are already overloaded with work, the officers concerned find it expedient to deal with those matters first for which pressures are exerted. It is not always the merit of a case but the amount of pressure and the person making it that determine the priority of attending to cases.

This situation is sufficient to explain the low attention paid to the cases of private individuals and institutions. They lack access to the Secretariat and consequently lose out in the hassle for drawing the attention of concerned authorities to their cases. This phenomenon, however, is not universally true to the extent that those among them who have the power and the access easily get their cases cleared through the bureaucratic process. Thus 48 percent cases of the individuals and 51 percent cases of the private institutions were indeed disposed in one month's time though these two categories also had the highest and the second highest percentage of undisposed cases at the end of the year. This only highlights the point that individuals power and status rather than group character have much more influence in obtaining services from the government agencies.

Neglect of Ministerial Business

The ministerial business for each Ministry are enumerated in Schedule I appended to the Rules of Business. Even if we accept that policy cases require a large amount of time for their satisfactory resolution and should not be judged by the criteria prescribed, there remain many other subjects under the responsibility of every Ministry whose speed of disposal is no less unsatisfactory. The operation of non-bureaucratic norms of behaviour have also adversely affected their disposal.

The neglect towards ministerial business is occasioned by exertion of pressure and persuasion to attend to matters of peripheral interest to a Ministry. It is just not physically possible to handle the present work-load. Ministries, therefore, attended to only that much of ministerial business which they could not avoid or could avoid only at the cost of severe retribution from higher authorities or very adverse public criticism.

The process of neglect began from the very initiation of processing of cases. The most pressing cases were initiated rather promptly : 63.42 percent of ministerial business was initiated in less than a week's time. But after that business got rather very slow. Ministerial business had the largest percentage of cases initiated in 2,3 and 4 weeks' time after receipt of correspondences. It occupied the second highest position after personnel management for the cases initiated on the 4th week or after.

The Secretariat could have done better in dealing with its own business if other peripheral business did not come in through the backdoor. The Assistant Secretaries and Secretaries had to share their time in disposing ministerial business with personnel management cases. 25.79 and 25.25 percent of the cases respectively disposed by the Assistant Secretaries and the Secretaries belonged to personnel management. The corresponding percentages for ministerial business were 19.44 and 21.56.

Avoiding Responsibility

According to the Secretariat Instructions, the Assistant Secretaries must complete processing of a case at their level within 72 hours from the time of receipt of a correspondence. Survey data have revealed that the Assistant Secretaries took on an average 8 days to dispose a case. Among other things, overload is creating an undesirable congestion of work. Hardpressed by time and continuous overflow of cases on their desks, they can neither devote the time nor pay the attention the cases deserve in their scrutiny and examination. Because of the haphazard and casual manner in which the cases are processed, the Assistant Secretaries do not feel confident in taking the decisions. Moreover, in our administrative culture rewards given for good and speedy work are unknown whereas the retribution and penalty for even a minor or unintended fault are very severe. There is thus the tendency to push up files even on cases where the Assistant Secretaries have the power and the competence to dispose them off. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that the Assistant Secretaries as a class disposed only 10 percent of the total disposed cases, as against a stipulated target of 50 percent cases. This behavioural response is very much evident at other levels also forcing the Secretaries to dispose off 20 percent of the total disposed cases. This rate of disposal is many times higher than what is envisaged under the rules.

BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE OF THE
CLIENTELE TO DELAY

Now that the fact of delay in the government business in general and in the Secretariat procedures in particular has become part of the administrative culture of the country, the members of the public have found out a variety of ways of coping with the situation.

The method most frequently practiced by the members of the public is to look out for a patron, preferably from within the political establishment or from the ranks of the bureaucracy, who can pursue their cases with the concerned officials. People follow this method very earnestly for the reason that many cases are initiated and disposed through the power of persuasion of elites of the society. This partly explains the phenomenon as to why approximately 40 percent of the surveyed visitors had desired to see the Ministers and their Private Secretaries. In the same survey, we found 37 percent visitors desirous of visiting officials of the level of Joint Secretary and below. Most of them did not have work directly with these officers but wanted them to make requests to others on their behalf.

The other type of response is rather negative and is born out of deep-seated frustration and animus against the public functionaries. The members of the public do send out petitions against specific officials alleging their malafide intentions in not processing cases, distorting cases or sometimes in withholding

government decisions. Among the 479 correspondences (9 percent of the total correspondences received) which called for no action by the Ministries as per existing government instructions, a majority consisted of anonymous petitions. However, no action is generally taken on such petitions on the ground that if these are encouraged officially, the Secretariat would be virtually swamped with such petitions most of which are assumed to be devoid of any cause for action. Whatever the merit of the petitions, the fact that so many people take the trouble to draft them and send them to concerned quarters do speak of deep resentment at the state of affairs in the Secretariat.

There are also talks about 'speed money' in speeding disposal. People also discuss about organised middle men through whom the transactions take place. However, this aspect was outside the scope of the present study and we do not like to make any comment on this issue without convincing evidence. However, this is an area where research has been rather shy and it would be worthwhile to probe the issue.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was basically diagnostic in nature with the principal aim of finding out the status of disposal in the Bangladesh Secretariat on a few dimensions and the causes of delay so far as they related to the Secretariat structure. However, the

survey findings have overwhelmingly laid bare a few maladies that are amenable to corrective action. It is our belief that administrative initiatives taken on the issues discussed below would result in significant improvements in the speed of disposal of cases in the Bangladesh Secretariat.

Reduction of Load

The first set of measures are suggested to effect a significant reduction of the extra load since assumed by the Ministries. It is our contention that the Rules of Business and the Secretariat Instructions are basically sound instruments for the conduct of business at the Secretariat. The current maladies afflicting the Secretariat are largely due to either ignorance or willful violation or both of the established procedures. If the Secretariat has to be restored to the confidence and trust of the public, there is a necessity to ensure that all concerned with its working abide by its rules of procedure.

In consonance with that belief, we recommend that the Secretariat strictly limits its scope on personnel management to the appointment of Heads of Departments and their Deputies in the case of Departments and to Chairmen and Directors/Members in the case of the Public Statutory Bodies. We, however, find that the Ministries are responsible for the administration of all class I officers working under various Departments. The problem has been further complicated by the creation of 30 cadres of the Bangladesh

Civil Service. It is true that prior to 1971, Ministries used to deal with the administration of all class I officers. But we have also to take cognizance of the fact that the number of class I officers have increased five times between 1971 and 1984 from 6,130 to 33,233 officers.¹ Side by side, the status of the erst-while Directorates have been upgraded to that of Departments. There are organisations and manpower to take care of this load if only the political will exists to let them do that.

We are aware of the perverse sense of an exercise of power in dealing with matters on personnel management in a society which still remains traditional in its outlook and societal relationships. However, if the power structure could have acquiesced with delegating the personnel management functions to the Public Statutory Bodies, there is no reason why this cannot be extended to the pure government sector also. The first step involved in the process would be suitable modification of the cadre and service rules for transfer of these functions to the Departments.

Government may like to proceed with this initiative on an experimental basis starting with a few major Departments. There is, of course, a need to ensure uniformity of standard in the dispensation of personnel cases. This can be ensured by deputing officers with suitable background and aptitude from the pool of

1. Both the figures are quoted from Syed Giasuddin Ahmed, "Structure of Services in Bangladesh" in Career Planning in Bangladesh, Op Cit, pp. 45-58.

the Ministry of Establishment to man the principal positions in the Personnel Divisions of the Departments. This is already in practice in the Public Statutory Bodies and may be tried in the Departments also.

The second set of measures towards reducing unnecessary load consists in the acceptance of the Project Proforma (PP) as the final operating instrument for project implementation. It is a common phenomenon that the concerned Ministries take things very casually at the time the projects are formulated. This is borne out by the fact that relatively junior officers normally attend the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) meetings which are presided over by very senior officers of the administrative Ministries. Even at higher level meetings, there are hardly any thorough examination of the issues, financial outlays or personnel requirements. The PPs are passed and handed down to the Project Directors for implementation. Unfortunately, it is at the implementation stage that the concerned Ministries wake up from their slumber and start raising objections to otherwise agreed parameters. Then starts the endless flow of communication on all fronts creating an all-round confusion, avoidable delay, cost and time overruns and overall inefficiencies.

There can be a vast improvement of delayed cases on project and financial management if the norm is established that the PP is the final document on each project and is, more or less,

irrevocable once it is approved at the appropriate level.

Speed in Communicating Decisions

We have found that delay in communicating decisions or not communicating them at all have contributed greatly in bringing the status of disposal to its deplorable state. The Secretariat Instructions have laid down well thought-out and detailed procedures for quick communication of decisions. We would like to repeat a few of the prescriptions.

One way to ensure that decisions would be communicated rapidly is to require an expected draft reply the first time a case is processed.

The requirement that the officer under whose signature a communication is to be issued should get the fair copy typed by his staff should be strictly followed. Currently this requirement is not met at all by the senior officers in the Ministries. There is a tendency to pass down the typing job to the Section even for matters of such a nature as demi-official letters from senior officers. This does not at all ensure the best uses of the logistics. To the extent that the senior officers allocate to themselves the best typists and the equipments but do not like to get their own typing done in their own offices, there is a misallocation of resources. This ought to be remedied by sharing equitable load in the processing of decisions for communication.

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LIST OF MINISTRIES/DIVISIONS WITH THE
NUMBER OF AGENCIES UNDER THEIR CONTROL

Ministries/Divisions	Number of Departments	Number of Statutory Bodies
1	2	3
1. President's Secretariat		
(a) Public Division	2	1
(b) Cabinet Division	-	1
(c) Parliamentary Affairs Division	-	-
2. Ministry of Establishment	4	1
3. Ministry of Defence	12	1
4. Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism	1	4
5. Ministry of Finance		
(a) Finance Division	11	10
(b) Internal Resources Division	23	-
(c) External Resources Division	-	-
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3	1
7. Ministry of Home Affairs	18	-
8. Ministry of Agriculture and Forests		
(a) Agriculture Division	5	7
(b) Forests Division	1	1
9. Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock	2	1
10. Ministry of Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control	-	1
11. Ministry of Food	1	-

1	2	3
12. Ministry of Communications		
(a) Road and Road Transport Division	2	1
(b) Railway Division	1	-
13. Ministry of Ports, Shipping and IWT	6	7
14. Ministry of Post and Telecommunication	2	-
15. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives		
(a) Local Government Division	2	3
(b) Rural Development and Co-operatives Division	1	3
16. Ministry of Law and Justice	6	-
17. Ministry of Land	3	-
18. Ministry of Industry	4	11
19. Ministry of Commerce	10	9
20. Ministry of Jute	2	2
21. Ministry of Textiles	1	1
22. Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources	4	5
23. Ministry of Education		
(a) Education Division	7	12
(b) Cultural Affairs Division	4	6
(c) Science and Technology Division	-	2
24. Ministry of Religious Affairs	2	2

1	2	3
25. Ministry of Youth and Sports	2	1
26. Ministry of Works	7	4
27. Ministry of Information	6	4
28. Ministry of Health and Family Planning	10	8
29. Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs	2	1
30. Ministry of Labour and Manpower	6	2
31. Ministry of Planning		
(a) Planning Division	2	1
(b) Statistics Division	1	-
(c) IME Division	-	-
	177	114

Source : Ministry of Establishment, Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1987.

