HANDBOOK

ON

ELECTION

REPORTING

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Tips, background and
relevant information to
help cover the
Parliamentary Elections
BANGLADESH

SEHD

The Reporter's Guide

HANDBOOK
ON
ELECTION
REPORTING

**Tips, background and relevant
information to help cover the
Sixth Parliamentary Elections, Bangladesh**

Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

The Reporter's Guide

HANDBOOK ON ELECTION REPORTING

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The Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) is a
nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to increasing public
understanding of free and fair elections, democratic rights, environment,
development, multilateral development banks (MDBs) and human
rights issues. Founded in 1993, the organization has researched quite
extensively on issues related to elections, democracy, forests, forest
communities (the indigenous peoples of the forest land), human rights
and environment. The organization is committed to providing an
information base on these issues, promoting investigative journalism
through training and undertaking action research.

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Contents

Section B

Section C

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Preface

Raising public awareness of free and fair elections and democratic rights through research, documentation and sharing of information on elections and democratic issues is one of the top priorities of the Society for Environment and Human Development. SEHD believes that the information media can and should play a positive and well defined role in institutionalizing electoral processes and democracy at large. We in SEHD feel that we share this task with the media people and we must combine our efforts if we are to achieve anything meaningful. The Handbook on Election Reporting is our first attempt towards that goal. We hope to update this handbook before each parliamentary elections and also supplement it with other works from time to time.

The first section of this handbook comprises practical guidelines for election reporting in general, and for covering the sixth parliamentary elections in particular. We hope, tips from some senior journalists of the country and journalism trainers would really be useful to others who may consult this book.

The second section tries to compile some essential background information on elections in this country. We have also tried to give thumbnail sketches of the laws and opinion polls concerning elections. Besides, election monitoring and media monitoring have been discussed briefly.

The last section annexes a list of the constituencies with the winners and runners-up in the 1991 elections; the code of conduct for the sixth parliamentary elections; names and contacts of the major political parties; and a list of election maladies that generally occur in Indian elections which may be comparable to our situation.

At the end of the articles we have tried to give relevant contacts and their telephone numbers which may enable the reporters to locate different sources of information quickly. We do hope, this handbook would be of help to the journalists, election monitors, researchers and others interested in the subject.

Work on this book began in February, 1995. Although we tried our best to make the handbook a useful one, it can still be improved a lot. For one thing, it could certainly have more original research. We should also have covered the local government elections to complete the picture. We learnt a lot during the process of preparing this book and hope to do a better job next time. We sincerely apologize for the ' shortcoming and any inadvertent error. SEHD would welcome suggestions from the readers for the next update of the handbook.

Acknowledgement

Along with the authors who contributed the articles, a team of individuals from different fields worked very hard to make this handbook possible. All of them have been with us right from the planning stage to the final production. Their help and advice have been invaluable to us and we thank them sincerely.

Section

a

Important Sources
of Election Reporting

Ataus Samad

A reporter can write three types of report on elections, strait-jacket, interpretative and investigative, just like in the case of other major topics.

There are some common sources and source-materials for all kinds of election reporting, i.e. who announces the election and its results, the laws in accordance with which the elections have to be conducted, the authority which makes these laws and the tribunals and courts of appeal for hearing complaints regarding election malpractices. But the nature of election, local or national, and the type of reporting will ultimately determine the sources that will be required to be found and used. Some of these sources may be different from those mentioned above, especially in the case of investigative reporting.

A general aspiration around national elections is that they be held in a democratic manner. In a hearing in the U.S. senate on the 1988 [Bangladesh] parliamentary elections, serious attention was given to whether or not Bangladeshi voters had enough alternative choices in selecting their candidates. An official of the U.S. government has also used the term *fully contested elections.* This means that: (a) the voters should have more than one person to choose from, (b) between them the candidates should represent the major political opinions in the country, (c) in addition, there may be candidates upholding or projecting some other views as well, and (d) all voters should be able to freely cast their votes.

Thus calling elections is not enough; the major political parties

should participate in the elections so that the voters have enough choices in selecting their candidates, and conditions should be such that all parties feel that they can run in the elections without hindrance and voters can vote in a similar fashion.

One working on elections has to understand the objectives of an election. We are now discussing election reporting in the context of the sixth parliamentary elections. What we need to bear in mind is that the two main functions of this Parliament are to put a government in place and to make laws. The elections to choose a government and legislators to make laws are very important.

Legislators and Candidates

Once a reporter is assigned to report on elections, it is very important that s/he is well-informed of the characteristics and qualifications of the candidates, some of whom will become members of the Cabinet and run the country, and 300 of whom (including members of the would- be Cabinet) will make laws intended to advance a country of 120 million people. The legislators who came to the Parliament through the fifth parliamentary elections, one may say, could not make laws fully to the satisfaction of the national aspiration because they did not work satisfactorily or they were not knowledgeable enough to be good legislators. A big percentage of the parliamentarians in the Fifth Parliament was that of businessmen. As a result, discussions in various sessions revolved around the business issues; agricultural issues were not given much priority.

A big number of the businessmen-cum-legislators, allegedly having contacts with hoodlums, could use the latters', gun, knife or muscle power. Consequently, the use of illegal firearms and muscle power was not reduced during their tenure. Ministers and legislators on both sides, government and opposition, were found to lack elementary knowledge about their fields of work and also often to think only in terms of narrow self-interest or partisan interest. So they either failed to do their own work or entrusted work into unworthy hands with disastrous results for the nation. When reporting the next parliamentary elections, a reporter has to keep this in mind. S/he has to work hard investigating the characteristics and qualifications of the candidates and find out if they are fit to become good ministers/ qualified legislators if elected. The voters must know details about

the candidates in the interest of a good parliament and an efficient government. The media might help fulfill the voters' aspiration by good reporting. Here good reporting means thoroughness, accuracy, fairness and application of a sound set of standards while judging the capability, potentials and weaknesses of the rival candidates. For example, if a party is setting up a former judge with a view to making him law minister in the next government, the reporter can dig into such records as to where he had learnt law from, how many of his verdicts had been confirmed by the superior courts and how many had been overturned, how patient he was with lawyers, how harsh or lenient a judge he was, what his reputation is regarding corruption and his age, with respect to whether he can work full time. And in the case of a candidate who wants to be home minister the reporter can examine whether he is an unbiased and firm person, whether he is truthful, understands the law, whether he is alert and can act quickly.

The reporter will have to make enquiries at the right places to find such information, so he has to be willing to work hard. But as tips to newcomers to the field, it may be stated that a reporter will have to talk to important leaders as well as to ordinary workers of a party, read its literature and analyze its past behavior to understand their objective in winning political power. S/he will then be able to judge whether the party's criteria of selecting candidates fit their stated and hidden agenda.

Constitution

Like other elections, the parliamentary elections will also be organized in accordance with laws, and the supreme law for elections is the Constitution. Electoral matters have been discussed in **Part VII** of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Section 118 talks about the establishment of the Election Commission. The Election Commission should have been established by a completely separate part in the Constitution, not under the title, **Elections**. This constitutional weakness has curtailed the independence of the Election Commission to a certain extent in that its power and sources of strength, besides and within the government machinery, have not been clearly spelled out. A reporter must understand the implications of this constitutional weakness.

Election Laws

Aside from the Constitution, Representation of the People Order and some other laws and ordinances apply in the conduct of the elections (see for details the article on essential election laws). These laws and ordinances are not always transparent and these have loopholes and limitations. For example, a border line is drawn around the voting center, say, at a radius of 200 or 400 yards for security reasons or to maintain smooth voting. According to laws, the presiding officer holds supreme authority within that 200 or 400 yard radius at a center and is entitled to take any measures in the interest of free and fair polling. But he is absolutely powerless outside that radius of 200 or 400 yards. A presiding officer cannot do anything to control any trouble outside the center which might disrupt a fair voting procedure. He is also powerless if a voter is locked outside the center or if the a road to his polling center is allegedly blocked by someone, because the laws have limited his/her power within only a limited radius. Recent ammendments of election laws have, however, provided for institution of pre-poll enquiry committes and have also increased the power the Election Commission with a view to preventing such occurences.

Another area of concern is election expenses. Laws permit the candidates to spend a limited amount of money and impose penalty upon a candidate who spends more than the specified amount. In reality, many candidates explicitly spend more than the amount specified in the law. But the Election Commission can hardly take any punitive measures against the violators of the election expense limit, because it does not have any mechanism to take measure(s) to bring the violators to the book. The existing law, on the contrary, allows the candidates to submit a false expense account to the Election Commission after the elections are over.

During the campaign period and on the election day, the Constitution and these laws become very important sources to the election reporters. The reporters have to read and understand different sections and sub-sections of these laws. These are indeed like *institutions* and not just words. Neither conduct of elections nor election reporting can take place without these.

At times, complexities in laws, their limitations and inadequacies may jeopardize the conduct of free and fair elections and put the

election institution into great controversy. The reporters are then placed in a difficult situation while writing reports on elections. At such times, the lawyers specialized in election laws and affairs become very important sources to consult. The reporters may have to talk to legislators, constitutional experts and legal experts for a correct interpretation or elimination of legal complexities.

Constituencies

Constituencies apparently, are important sources of information during the campaign period and on the election days. The reporters have to collect field level information from the constituencies.

Voters' behavior is an important matter to follow. Socioeconomic conditions, religious beliefs and bias, local and regional context influence the voters' behavior. A voter, not strictly committed to any political ideology, might often be influenced by the local problems and regional politics which might go against his/her political opinion. A survey on the fifth parliamentary elections showed that the BNP candidates predominantly won elections in areas where the paddy harvest was better than other places. The Awami League candidates won from poorer areas. Now, after the ravage by the fertilizer crisis in many places of the country and the drop in paddy prices, many believed that BNP might not get enough votes in affluent areas. The reporters have got to understand these factors of the rural areas. The only way out is to develop contact with the rural people and gather information from them. One has to keep in mind that the rural people make their choices largely in the local context. To them the immediate surrounding is much more important than political ideals. The reporters covering elections have to spend a fair amount of time in constituencies to understand voters' surroundings. Voters in cities are believed to be influenced more by articulation of political ideologies or by political image.

Administration

The local administration has immense influence on the election procedure. The Election Commission seeks assistance from the administration in the conduct of elections. The deputy commissioner's office, police and *thana* administrations - all get engaged in the election procedure. Generally the deputy commissioners used to serve as the returning officers when national elections took place. They nominated

the presiding officers who are the supreme authorities in the polling stations. The deputy commissioners (DC) work under the Cabinet Division. The cabinet secretary who is controlled by the prime minister controls the DCs. The prime minister, if s/he wishes, can try to influence the DCs and the presiding officers through the cabinet secretary. We have seen such influence occuring in elections that took place during the rule of deposed President H.M. Ershad.

In the near past, during the elections under H.M. Ershad and in the fifth parliamentary election in 1991 under a caretaker government, we saw two different roles of the police administration. In elections under the rule of H.M. Ershad, violence at the polling stations, bombardment, rigging, snatching of ballot boxes and many other abuses were rampant. These took place in the presence of the police and other security personnel. The police did nothing to stop these abuses, nor did they take any measures against the hoodlums. All these were possible because of the influence on the administration. In contrast, such electoral abuses did not take place in the 1991 elections, because the advisors in the caretaker administration were not party people.

A good reporter assigned to cover the elections must know who is who at the different tiers of administration, i.e. who are thana nirbahi officers, superintendents of police, deputy commissioners and the cabinet secretary.

For good election reporting, coordination is necessary in the newspaper office. The senior reporters can gather information at the Cabinet level and others can gather information from the district and *thana* levels. Put together, information gathered from these two ends explain who is doing what and why.

Election Commission

A principal source of information is the Election Commission secretariat (see for details the article on the Election Commission). Article 120 of the Constitution states: "The President shall, when requested by the Election Commission, make available to it such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions." And Article 126 reads: "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the Election Commission in the discharge of its functions." Articles 120 and 126 of the Constitution while clearly ask the government to

assist the Election Commission these also provide it room to interfere with election affairs. A reporter has got to know what assistance the Election Commission has sought from the government and how the government has responded to the Election Commission's requirements.

When the election results are published a reporter is often seen to be wasting time with unimportant or secondary sources. If one knows the law or who is the legal authority to announce results, one can by going directly to him save time and make less mistakes in informing the public. A reporter must know that now election results are announced by the returning officers. The Election Commission publishes the results in the gazette. The returning officer's office is the main source of information related to the election results.

There are many laws, acts, ordinances and different administrative levels dealing with the variuos aspects of conduct of election. A reporter has to understand these laws, their loopholes and limitations. He has to know how election officials at different stages, from the chief election commissioner to the polling officers, are appointed. All the people involved in each of these stages are a reporter's source of information.

Reliable Research Organizations

Reliable research organizations often become important sources of information on elections and related matters. However, the political parties in our country do not give adequate value to their research. A few research organizations such as Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Power and Participation Research Centre , and Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre have conducted important research works on voters' behavior and perception of the election institution; voters' support to main political parties i.e. AL and BNP; candidates' education, behavior, profession, economic status, relations with voters, etc.

Poll Watchers

Poll watchers, domestic and international, have generated useful information. The reporters should know the groups which fielded a few thousand poll watchers in the 1990 Upazila, 1991 (fifth) parliamentary, a few other by-elections and city corporation elections.

These groups have published some reports which provide good information bases on elections. The reporters can easily get information from these groups (see for details the article on the election monitoring groups, the articles A Penny for People's Thoughts and Election Features).

Election Coverage: Stage by Stage

Philip Gain and Shishir Moral

Reporting and analyzing events, abuses, incidents and violence, concerning political leaders and different civic organizations related to elections and democracy is an unending process. The reporters write numerous reports and provide analyses of events and issues pertaining to elections and democracy as their routine work throughout the year. But the campaign period and the election day itself hold particular attraction for the journalists. There are, of course, research organizations, domestic and foreign poll watchers and foreign media which cover the campaign and the election day. All those who cover the campaign, the election day and the follow-up events must take preparation and have in hand good background information. This chapter provides some practical guidelines on covering the campaign [pre-election scenario], abuses, election day and follow-up events etc.

Pre-election Reporting

1. Abuses and Irregularities during the Campaign Period

Electoral frauds or fraudulent practices are said to have become a part of Bangladeshi election culture. These occur during the election campaign period and on the election day. The journalists have to routinely report these. In recent times, the local and international

election monitoring groups have shown interest in monitoring the electoral abuses and malpractices and positive developments that may have taken place. Fraudulent practices destroy the faith of the electorate. Journalists and election monitors are the best agents to identify such incidents and caution the authority and the voters to control these.

Some common abuses that take place during the campaign period and on the election day:

a. Vote Buying: Vote buying is a common practice in many Asian countries. Bangladesh is a country where people are very familiar with this although no statistics are available about how much money is spent for every voter. *Asiaweek* in its April 21, 1995, issue has given an account of vote buying in several Asian countries. The following is its estimate of the amount which goes into each person's hand in different countries:

India	**$3.25**
Philippines	**$4.00**
Thailand	**$4.00**
Japan	**$125.00**
Taiwan	**$200.00**

The ministers or the government officials often engage in distribution of relief goods such as tin sheets, wheat, cash, clothing, food for work, meals, etc. during the campaign period with an intention to influence the voters for the ruling party. This is an abuse of power to buy votes. The voters may often be offered jobs, promotion, loans and other favors.

"There are, of course, ways of bribing the voters with their own money. In last year's [1994] state election in Andhra Pradesh in India, the *Telegu Desam*, a regional party, ousted the Congress government by promising voters that they would get rice at highly discounted rates. Now the state government has to deliver, and it is having trouble finding the fund to finance the subsidy. Oppositionists say money will have to be diverted from vital state functions" (ASIAWEEK, April 21, 1995).

The ministers and the administration often try to influence the election officers.

It can also be noted that during the election period the incumbent

might increase the development projects and activities to impress the voters in an attempt to buy votes.

A typical example of influencing the voters: In 1990, during the upazila election the then education minister, Sheikh Shahidul Islam visited Madaripur and Kalkini *thanas* from 19-24 March, 1990. Many teachers who were appointed presiding officers informed a local election observer team [CCHRB] that the purpose of the minister's visit was to persuade the administration and teachers to favor the Jatiyo Party candidate.

b. Buying Abstention: It may often happen that the voters get paid for not going to the polling station to cast their votes for a particular candidate.

c. Intimidation of Voters: Intimidation of voters is the worst kind of abuse in the electoral process. Intimidation of voters may take place in different forms. Some are:

● Threats of harming business(es) if votes are not cast in favor of a particular political party with potential political power and influence.

● Forcing officials and other employees to open up the polling booths for false balloting, stamping, snatching of ballot boxes and taking the election officials as hostages.

● Preventing minority voters in many areas from going to the polling stations on the election day. They were often chased out of the polling stations in many elections.

During a parliamentary by-election in September, 1991 a local election observer team reported that hundreds of voters in the *Borhanuddin* and *Daulat Khan* centers of Bhola-2 constituency were threatened by the "goons" of the incumbent. The Hindu minority voters in *Kutubdia* and other villages[in Bhola were allegedly stopped by the BNP workers from going to the polling centers on the polling day. A voter reported that on the night of September 10 cocktails were exploded in some areas to frighten the voters. Those who exploded the cocktails told the voters not to go to the centers on the election day (Gain. *Dhaka Courier*, 1991).

d. Exclusion of Eligible Voters: It happened in the past and is likely to happen in any given election that a number of eligible voters known to be diehard supporters of a particular political party (usually

in the opposition) get excluded from the voter list at the time of voter registration.

2. Violence

Violence and atrocities during the campaign period need to be closely monitored and reported. The police often provide important tips about violence-prone centers or constituencies. The law enforcing agencies identify centers where the musclemen or *mastaans* may disrupt elections. The police may take preparation to control these illegal acts. The journalists and the election monitors should take note of such centers. The journalists can also alert the police through reporting which areas may fall in the grip of violence.

In a two-day workshop from September 13 to 14, 1995 organized by the Election Commission, the participants - who included divisional commissioners, additional divisional commissioners, deputy election commissioners, deputy commissioners, additional deputy commissioners, additional district magistrates and district election officers - expressed their fear that the law and order situation during the sixth parliamentary elections would be very bad. They said that money, muscle power and local influence in some localities have already caused serious trouble for law and order.

Contact with police, at times, helps efficient reporting of violence. Besides, the organizations, such as PPRC, which may have mapped or made some predictions about violence aimed at alerting the law enforcing agencies so that less violence takes place may also be contacted about the places which are likely to be violence-prone.

3. Polling Stations and other Arrangements

It is important to be watchful about the polling stations - where they are set up and what activities go on in the polling stations during the elections. Some maladies that emerge centering around the polling stations are:

1. **Mixing weaker sections of voters with stronger sections.**
2. **Location of polling stations for weaker sections in areas inhabited by influential sections.**
3. **Location of polling stations at distances beyond prescription.**

4.   Natural barriers across polling areas, i.e. water ways in riverine regions or hilly areas with poor communications.

5.   Housing polling stations in private buildings.

6.   Inconvenient polling centers - i.e. too congested or too far away from roads etc.

7.   Too many polling stations in the same building.

8.   Last minute changes of polling stations.

9.   Proximity of polling stations to political party offices.

Note: These maladies have been listed consulting the list of maladies prepared by the Indian Election Commission (Kutty, 1994).

4. Election Expenses

Election expenses limit and its violation has been a big concern in the Bangladesh elections. A general concern is that a vast amount of black money may be used in general elections by the candidates to subvert the electoral process "by the hiring of `mastaans' to disrupt the polling day or by widespread bribing of voters or election officials" (Commonwealth Report 1991:20).

An amendment to the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972 in 1991 has set the election expense limit at TK.300,000 (US$7,500) for each candidate in the parliamentary elections. The RPO provides that "the election expenses of a contesting candidate, excluding the personal expenses incurred by such candidate, shall not exceed Taka Three lakh." This amendment was intended to make an effort to constrain the impact of the *black money* on the electoral process. The previous limit was TK.100,000 (US$ 2,500).

It is a difficult task to report or monitor how the candidates violate the expense limit set. It is also a major concern of the Election Commission now, as it prepares for the sixth parliamentary elections.

However, whether or not the candidates abide by the election expense limit is an area of serious investigation. To begin an investigation or analysis to check on election expense one can take note of the purposes for which a candidate cannot utilize election expenses or any of its portion.

A candidate is required to submit to the returning officer the possible sources of election expenses, accounts of his/her property,

annual income and taxes paid before the main campaign begins. Besides, all candidates must submit the accounts of their actual election expenses within 15 days after the election results are published in the gazette. There is a provision of punishment of two to seven years in prison and a fine for breaking the expense rules. But in reality nobody has so far been punished for breaking the expense limit. Legal experts contend that there are loopholes in the rules regarding the election expense limit.

One needs to be very careful in identifying the abuses relating to election expenses. One has to know the laws and watch out for amendments that may have taken place. In addition, a reporter needs to be watchful about the reports generated by the election monitoring groups and research organizations.

Once the elections are over, a reporter may require to visit the Returning officers' offices and the Election Commission Secretariat to see the documents on election expenses. One can collect copies of election expense records by paying a fixed fee.

One big concern is that the Election Commission does not have any scientific tool to measure the real expenditure of a candidate. So the Election Commission cannot do anything if a candidate lies when s/he submits his/her accounts of expenses. In this situation good press reports may trigger investigations, actions and changes.

5. Voter Registration

The Election Commission announced a schedule on April 24 for preparing a new voter list through registration of voters. Information collectors and voter identifiers began to visit houses of the voters to collect information about them from May 25, 1995. Information collection from houses closed on June 15. Printed registration forms were used to collect information about the voters. Preparation of voter list with printed registration forms filled up in front of the voters was practiced for the first time in Bangladeshi electoral history.

A total of 460,760 data collectors, supervisors and registration officials were appointed for the preparation of the voter list with the aid of 70,000,000 printed registration forms.

The draft voter list was published on July 5, 1995 after information collection and verification of information. Complaints from the voters were received till July 29 and corrections to the voter list made till

August 14. The final voter list was published on October 7, 1995. However, a citizen eligible to become a voter but not registered as a voter for any reason can become* one at any time before the announcement of the election schedule. In such a case the Election Commission makes someone a voter after verifying the application.

According to the final voter list the total number of registered voters is 5,60,28,289. According to the draft voter list the total number of voters was: 5,58,70,705.

In the 1991 parliamentary elections, the total number of voters was: 6,21,81,743. The voter list for the sixth parliamentary elections has 61,53,454 voters less than the 1991 voter list.

The variation of voters between the draft and final voter lists - 1,57,584 - does not match with the Election Commission's prediction of a variation of half a million. This year Bangladeshis living abroad could not register themselves as voters.

The Election Commission secretariat also informed that the reason behind the decrease in the voters' number comared to 1991 is that previously a voter could be enlisted from more than one place. But this year a voter could enroll in just one place. This reason applies most in the case of Chittagong. Those coming from Noakhali and Comilla to work in Chittagong used to become voters in both their working places and their permanent residences. Besides, a large number of people from this division live abroad especially in Britain. They could not become voters this time. Moreover, it is believed that the highest number of people who live in the Middle East come from this division.

The Commonwealth Observer Group observed in their 1991 election observation report: "A national electoral roll of nearly 62.3 million voters in a population of 113 million does reflect an unusually high registration, considering Bangladesh's young population and the omissions of voters that were being reported". If the observation made in the Commonwealth report is given consideration, one can understand why the total number of voters has been less in 1995 compared to that in 1991.

6. Political Parties

Political party headquarters, district offices and offices at further lower levels are important sources of information at the time of elections. Press releases issued by the party headquarters and press conferences

that are organized at critical times during the campaign provide information for routine assignment and often journalists are tipped for investigative or analytical stories. Frequent visits to political party offices are necessary to understand the political parties, their leaders and candidates. (Political parties, leaders and candidates have been discussed in other articles).

7. Security

Security of the electorate is an important prerequisite for free and fair elections. The reporters and observers must pay special attention to the security arrangements taken before and during the elections.

The voters had nightmarish experiences in the polling stations during elections conducted by military-turned civil governments. Many of them, however, saw violence and intimidation of voters take place in some of the by-elections held after the 1991 general elections. To restore public confidence in law and order, the caretaker government took several measures in 1991. In elections during the Ershad regime in particular, "members of the police and armed services had been involved in electoral malpractices" (Commonwealth report 1991:20).

The caretaker government made efforts so that civil authority be exercised over the activities of security personnel on the polling day. In each polling station, at least 12 security personnel - comprising two policemen and 10 or so members of Ansar (auxiliary police force who are equipped with *lathis* or sticks and available for occasional duty) - were deployed. Members of armed forces which included the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR - a force that patrols the country's land borders) and the regular army were stationed away from the polling stations to be called in need. The magistrates accompanying the mobile units were qualified to instruct the members of armed forces to intervene in a polling station. A total of 383,000 security personnel were reportedly deployed to maintain peace and discipline at 24,142 polling centers on the polling day in 1991 general elections.

Other measures to maintain peace and security in the centers included: (i) a threat to dissolve any local authority (or upazila now thana) and to suspend any local official who failed to ensure that polling in his/her area was not disrupted and (ii) the administration were to detain the known criminals, for a brief period, in the closing days of the campaign.

It is important for a reporter or an observer to monitor whether the same and/or fresh measures are being taken for the sixth parliamentary elections to contain violence during the campaign period and on the election day.

8. Constituencies

Total registered voters in Bangladesh for the sixth parliamentary elections are 5,60,28,289 - the average number of voters in a constituency is 1,86,760. In the 1991 parliamentary elections the total voters in the country was 6,21,81,743 — 2,07,272 voters in a constituency on an average. The wide variation in the number of voters between constituencies was astonishing. The disparity ranged from 2,74,196 voters in one constituency to 138,000 in another (Commonwealth report 1991:11). This, according to observers, put double weight on a voter in the later constituency.

The boundaries of constituencies are usually drawn up on the basis of the latest population census. The Election Commission has redrawn the previous boundaries after publishing the fresh delimitation of constituencies through the Bangladesh Gazette on May 30, 1995. A draft list of constituencies was published in the Bangladesh Gazette on February 1, 1995 inviting objections and opinions about the boundaries of the constituencies. A number of constituencies were redrawn after open hearings at the Election Commission.

9. Preparation of the Candidates

Reporting or monitoring the candidates' preparation is routine work for journalists. Most newspapers publish special reports on the candidates' preparations in their constituencies. In the past, in many constituencies independent candidates or the candidates of the smaller parties had complaints against the more influential candidates or the candidates of the bigger parties. Intimidation of weaker candidates takes place during the campaign period or on the election day.

Candidates make predictions about violence and other discrepancies which might generate reports to alert the law enforcing agencies.

During the campaign period and on the election day some candidates and their workers can also intimidate the voters. In the

1991 parliamentary elections, the local election monitoring groups reported that candidates in some sensitive pockets intimidated the minority voters. The minority voters in some places were intimidated and asked to vote for candidates of a particular political party.

Candidates may also make an effort to influence the voters through monetary incentives. Poll monitors in the 1991 parliamentary elections reported that voters in some areas were given cash to vote for candidates of certain political parties. In a center in Laksam, a woman voter demanded money from the presiding officer after she had cast her vote. When enquired, the woman voter said that she was promised an amount of money for stamping on a particular symbol. The candidates in some areas installed tubewells and repaired roads to influence the voters in their favor (Timm and Gain 1991:53). The Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB) found that in 219 out of the 1389 centers it monitored, [in 1991 elections] voters were enticed with monetary incentives.

The reporters and election monitors may find it worth monitoring the preparations of the candidates, unfair means that the candidates might seek to get elected and violations of the code of conduct.

10. Voters' Mood

Voters in the past elections were seen to be threatened, intimidated, humiliated [in many elections that took place prior to 1991 elections] while they were rather in festive moods during the 1991 elections.

It is important for a reporter or an election monitor to know if the voters in a constituency:

a.   are fearful about the party goons in the polling centers,
b.   are not sure about free and fair elections,
c.   are apprehensive of violence during the campaign period or on the election day,
d.   are sure of exercising their voting rights freely, etc.

It is also important to know if the women voters in particular, in a constituency, think they will be able to exercise their right to franchise freely or if they are fearful of going to the polling stations. Sometimes women voters' choice and decision works as an indicator of how free an election is going to be.

Election Day Reporting/Observation

The election day is the most important day in the process of election reporting/monitoring. To prepare for the election day one has to be acquainted with and watchful about the essential materials for the conduct of election in a polling station. These are:

a. **Ballot boxes:** one for a small booth and two for a large one (one extra for each station).

b. **Ballot papers:** Total number of ballot papers equivalent to voters.

c. **Indelible ink:** One bottle for each booth and one extra bottle for all booths in a station.

d. **Voter list:** A voter list comprising the total number of voters in a center and separate lists numbering voters for each booth in that center.

e. **Rubber stamps (official seal):** One for each booth.

f. **Square-size stamp to be used by the voters at the time of voting:** One for each booth and one extra for a polling station.

g. **Stamp pads:** One for each booth.

h. **Sealing wax:** One packet of half-pound for each polling station.

i. **Brass stamp:** one for each station.

j. **Jute bag for carrying materials for a polling station:** One for each station.

k. **Packets:** Every polling station receives 15 different kinds of packets from the returning officer's office to keep different kinds of ballot papers [after they are cast], counter foils and voter lists. Familiarity with these packets and their use may help monitor the discrepancies that could occur on the polling day, especially during counting.

Packet-1: To keep valid ballot papers cast for a candidate. One packet for each candidate. Two extra packets for every center.

Packet-2: To keep ballot papers not counted. Two packets for every Center.

Packet-3: To keep packet-1 and packet-2. Two packets for every center.

Packet-4: To keep unused ballot papers. Two packets for every center.

Packet-5: To keep canceled ballot papers. Two packets for every center.

Packet-6: To keep tendered ballot papers. Ten packets for every center.

Packet-7: To keep packet-6. Two packets for every center.

Packet-8: To keep challenged ballot papers. Four packets for every center. The presiding officer keeps these packets in his/her custody.

Packet-9: To keep the tick-marked voter list. Two packets for every center.

Packet-10: To keep counter foils of the used ballot papers. Two packets for every center.

Packet-11: To keep the tendered voter list. Two packets for every center.

Packet-12: To keep the challenged voter list. Two packets for every center.

Packet-13: To keep results [after counting]. Two packets for every center.

Packet-14: To keep an account of ballot papers. Two packets for every center.

Packet-15: To keep other papers. One packet for every center.

Note: One more packet will be added to these for the sixth parliamentary elections to contain an account of the ballot boxes.

These packets are very important when recounting becomes necessary or when a candidate files a case with the election tribunal.

Opening and Closing of Election

It is important that the reporters and the poll monitors remain present in some polling stations to record the exact time the voting commences. One should know from the presiding officer the reason if the voting starts before or after the time specified in the conduct of the polls. For intensive reporting or monitoring the voting procedure, one should record some other things as well. Some are as follows (Moral, 1992):

● Note if agents of all candidates are present in all booths of a station;

● Note if indelible ink is put on the fingers of the voters;

● Note if the signature or fingerprint is recorded on the stub of the ballot paper;

- Note the first number of the first ballot used in a booth and also record the serial number of the last ballot paper used in a booth.

- Record how much time is required for a voter to cast a vote and figure out how many voters are voting in an hour; this will help understand the voters' flow at different hours of the day;

- Record if anyone, not allowed by law, is entering the polling station, and trying to influence the voters to vote for a particular candidate;

- Note if the voters, candidates or the polling agents have any complaints inside or outside the polling stations;

- Note if the election officials have any complaints;

- Note the observation(s) made by the domestic and foreign observers if there are any;

- Note down the name and serial number of a voter alleged to be below 18 years of age;

- Record the name, time and serial number of any one who has come to vote but is not listed in the voter list; one who has found his/her vote already cast; and one who has come to vote twice;

- Record the complaints about false balloting; and

- Record the exact time when voting ends.

Familiarity with Key Persons at the Polling Site

A reporter or a poll monitor needs to be familiar with the key persons conducting election in a station. A total of 17 election officers will be stationed in a polling center in the sixth parliament elections:

Election administrators

Presiding Officer	1
Assistant Presiding Officer	5
Polling Officer	10
Additional Polling officer	1

Besides, polling agents who are appointed by candidates and the security personnel will be there. Observers (domestic and foreign) and journalists may also be allowed.

Voting Procedures

In the 30,000 polling stations (there were 24,142 stations in 1991 elections) for the sixth parliamentary elections there will be 2000

voters in a station on an average. Each polling station will have five booths on an average.

When an elector presents himself/ herself

at a polling station to vote:

a. The presiding/polling officer in a booth first checks the elector's identity. The election officer, satisfied about the elector's identity, calls out the elector's name and serial number and issues a ballot paper and marks the electoral roll.

b. The elector's finger is inspected to see whether there is any trace of indelible ink on the elector's finger. If there is, no ballot paper is issued.

c. Where there is no such trace, the elector's finger is marked with indelible ink, and the ballot paper is issued.

d. The serial number of the elector is written on the counter foil of the ballot paper, and the elector then places his or her signature or thumb impression on the counter foil. The ballot paper is stamped on the back with the official mark. (If any polling agent wishes to see whether the back of the paper has been duly stamped, the elector is required to show it to the agent.)

e. The presiding/polling officer ensures that the ink has dried before the elector leaves with the ballot paper for the purpose of voting (the ink takes about 10 seconds to dry).

f. The elector then goes to a screened compartment to mark the ballot paper under conditions of secrecy. To do so, the elector marks the ballot paper with a rubber stamp (which has been inked by the polling officer by whom the ballot paper is issued), and which is engraved with the words (in Bangla) "National Parliament Election [year of the elections]".

g. Marking is done by placing a stamped mark on the symbol of the party of the elector's choice, or so near as to be within the printed rectangle around that symbol.

h. The elector then folds the ballot paper, comes out of the screened compartment and inserts the ballot paper into the ballot box (which is kept within the view of the presiding /polling officer and polling agents).

i. The elector returns the marking seal to the presiding/polling

officer and leaves the polling station.

j.   The elector shall vote without undue delay and shall leave the polling station immediately after s/he has inserted his/her ballot paper in the ballot box.

Access to Polling Station

The presiding officer shall, subject to such instructions as the Election Commission may give in this regard, regulate the number of electors to be admitted to the polling station at a time and exclude from the polling station all other persons except :

a.   any person on duty in connection with the election;

b.   the contesting candidates, their election agents and polling agents; and

c.   such other persons as may be specifically permitted by the returning officer.

Frauds During Voting

A number of electoral frauds and abuses have taken place in Bangladeshi elections. A reporter or observer needs to be watchful to give a timely coverage of them. Some frauds/abuses found in the Philippines experiences (NAMFREL) have similarity with those in Bangladesh:

● False balloting - assuming identity of another voter and voting in his/her name.

● Accompanying a voter to the voting booth to influence him/her in casting his/her vote for a particular candidate.

● *Lanzadera* - Sometimes, a candidate appoints a certain number of persons to vote for him/her. To ensure that these people do that, a chain is maintained. The first voter secures a blank ballot from another polling station or a fake ballot then gets his assigned ballot paper. The voter then puts in the ballot box his fake or illegally procured ballot and passes his genuine ballot to another of the group who stamps on another ballot (which is his/her own) and gets out with this one and passes it to another crony. The next voter gets into the polling place with the stamped ballot and gets the ballot assigned to him but drops into the ballot box the ballot previously stamped. He then passes to the next voter

his own ballot.
- Delaying delivery of the official ballots and other election materials to discourage voters.
- Disrupting the means of transportation of voters on election day to discourage voters from going to the polling station and voting.
- Accompanying illiterate or disabled voters and voting for them irrespective of their choice.
- Forcibly taking or snatching away the ballot boxes in polling places.
- Theft or destruction of ballots, ballot boxes, election returns and other vital election documents.
- Bribery or intimidation of the election officers to influence their decision on challenges and protests made during the voting.
- Stealing, tearing, smudging or defacing the list of voters posted outside the polling place to discourage voters to vote.
- Delivery of official ballots in excess of authorized quantities to facilitate manufacturing of votes.
- Capturing, terrorizing and stamping of ballots by *mastaans* or muscle men sent by different parties.
- Chasing away the polling agents and voters out of polling stations by goons of political parties.

Frauds during Counting
- Misreading the contents of the ballots.
- Deliberate misrecording in the tally sheet as the votes are read.
- Miscopying of the votes reflected in the tally sheet to the election returns.
- Substitution of the votes credited to a candidate in the election returns with votes of another candidate.
- Deliberate distortion of entries in the election returns.
- Destruction, theft or substitution of election returns after the counting.

Frauds during Transit of Election Results/Returns from Polling Station to the Returning Officer's Office
- Theft or destruction of election returns during transit from the polling station to the returning officer's office in places where a

particular candidate has been defeated.

● Substitution of election returns through coercion or bribery.

● Providing misleading reports to the media to distort the actual results.

Media Coup

Media coup is a recent and notorious abuse in Bangladeshi elections. In 1986 general [third parliamentary] elections under the rule of General H.M. Ershad, voters were introduced to the media coup. The results broadcast by the government-controlled radio and television grossly contradicted with the actual results announced from the polling centers. The opposition [mainly Awami League and BNP which did not participate in those elections] alleged and the press extensively reported that the Ershad government grossly manipulated the election results in its favor through false announcements on radio and television.

Voters want to see the election results announced very quickly. The electronic media - radio and television - can, indeed, broadcast such results instantly. If the party in power heavily controls the radio and television, it might try to broadcast false or manipulated results in its favor and confuse the voters, seriously disturbing the democratic practice of elections.

Journalists and election monitors can do a lot in case of an attempt of a media coup by those who control the radio and television. They are the ones who best qualify to identify where the distortion of results take place. They best qualify to become the watchdogs in such gross violation of voters' right to franchise.

How a Media Coup Takes Place

There are several situations which are linked with a media coup. Some are:

● A wrong tallying takes place after the counting of votes and election officials such as returning officers and the chief election commissioner's secretariat get wrong results; so does the electronic media. Thus manipulated results are broadcast.

● Correct tallying takes place. The election officials get the correct results. But false results are drawn up in the electronic media

centers and manipulated results get publicized through radio and television.

- Ballot papers are destroyed after counting and false results are fabricated for broadcast.

- Broadcast of election results stops for reasons unknown and then manipulation takes place.

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Election Commission Informs

Muniruzzaman

The Election Commission conducts elections at all levels in Bangladesh. A reporter or anyone writing on elections for the news media must have a good understanding of the Election Commission.

The Election Commission is established according to the provisions of Article 118 of the Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh which states: "There shall be an Election Commission of Bangladesh consisting of a Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the president may from time to time direct, and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (if any) shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf, be made by the president".

The Constitution further states [Art. 119(1)]: "The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for elections to the office of President and to Parliament and the conduct of such elections shall vest in the Election Commission which shall, in accordance with this Constitution and any other law -

a. hold elections to the office of President;

b. hold elections of Members of Parliament;

c. delimit the constituencies for the purpose of elections to Parliament; and

d. prepare electoral rolls for the purpose of elections to the office of President and to Parliament."

Article 118(4) of the Constitution states that the Election Commission shall be independent in exercising its functions and be

subject only to this Constitution and any other law. Article 126 of the constitution states: "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the Election Commission in the discharge of its function".

Constitutionally the Election Commission is supposed to be neutral and non-partisan. Its jurisdiction includes preparing, conducting and gazetting the results of elections and monitoring the oath-taking ceremony. It does not fix the date for parliamentary elections, but can fix the dates for by-elections. It cannot cancel the election of a constituency after the result is gazetted.

Structure of the Election Commission

One Chief Election Commissioner and one or more Election Commissioners are appointed according to the constitutional provision [as stated above].

To assist the Election Commission in the conduct of the elections, there is an Election Commission Secretariat. It is like any other secretariat or division of the government and is functionally an assisting executive division under the supervision and control of the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

The Election Commission secretariat has one secretary, one additional secretary, [at present] two joint secretaries, five deputy secretaries, 17 assistant and senior assistant secretaries, one public relations officer and one assistant PRO.

A year ago, a research section was established with one full-time researcher. More recently, a training institute has been established to train those who are associated with the conduct of elections.

The Election Commission has its permanent office in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka. At the divisional (there are six divisions in Bangladesh) level, the Election Commission is represented by a deputy election commissioner and an sssistant election commissioner. At the district level it has a district election officer.

There was no Election Commission office at the *thana* level earlier, but the office of the *thana* election officer has been set up in 1995 as a permanent structure.

In the process of conducting elections, the Election Commission Secretariat appoints a returning officer at the district level who is assisted by one or more assistant returning officers in each

constituency [for the parliamentary elections].

The deputy commissioners of the districts and *thana* nirbahi officers are appointed as returning officers and assistant returning officers at the constituency level. Often the district election officers work as assistant returning offiers.

The returning officer appoints a presiding officer, assistant presiding officers and polling officers for each polling center. This year an additional polling officer will also be appointed. All such appointments are functional and temporary ceasing to exist after the election duties are completed.

Dependence of the Election Commission on the Executives : Though the Constitution provides independence to the Election Commission, functionally it is very much dependent on the executive department of the state.

The chief election commissioner cannot appoint, transfer or exercise any sort of administrative control over the officers and employees of the Election Commission Secretai iat.

While preparing an election report the constitutional, structural, and functional basis of the Election Commission and its secretariat must be kept in mind.

Election Enquiry Committes : Once the election schedule is announced, Election Enquiry Committees will be formed at the district level. The committees will comprise officials from the district judicial administration who will be directly supervised by the Election Commission. These committees will be responsible for hearing and addressing to all complaints of pre-election irregularities.

Sources in the Election Commission

Information generated by the Election Commission is available with three major sources. The chief election commissioner's office in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar will provide: general information about voter registration; number of voters; number of constituencies in which elections are going to be held; political parties which are running in the elections; number of contesting candidates, their party affiliation and symbols; number of polling stations; lists and names of the returning officers; the manner in which elections are to be conducted; information about election rules, procedures and election tribunals. The PRO is the contact person.

The second important source is the returning officer's office. Information such as the number and areas of constituencies under the jurisdiction of the returning officer; number of voters - male and female; number of polling centers in a constituency; number of polling booths, ballot boxes; names of the assistant returning officers, the presiding officers, the assistant presiding officers, polling officers and additional polling officers; number of candidates, their party affiliation and symbols; the latest situation regarding election preparation etc. are available here. The district election officer acts as the staff officer and all this information is available in his office.

The third important source is the polling center [on the election day]. Major sources in the polling center are the presiding officer, the assistant presiding officers, polling officers, additional polling officers, polling agents and the voters themselves. Information about polling activities such as the number of voters in the polling center, votes cast - male and female; names and symbols of the candidates; rigging (if any); hijacking of the ballot boxes (if any); role of election officers and security personnel; activities of the different candidates and their volunteers; main contestants; observation of election rules and procedures are available in the polling center.

If one would like to gather general information and accumulated election result of all candidates from a single source s/he must visit the chief election commissioner's office. One must be in constant touch with the PRO, cultivate good relations with the secretaries and regularly attend the press conferences organized by the office.

For procedural and polling day information one has to gather general information from the offices of the chief election commissioner and the returning officer before going to the field. One must remain prepared to face adverse situations. One covering the polling day events may select a constituency and collect information about the geography, administration, and transportation. A reporter must know how far the constituency is from the capital, how to travel there, etc. It is better to reach the selected constituency two/three days before the polling day.

Interview the CEC

A reporter may strive to write some exclusive reports talking to the chief election commissioner who is the topmost official in the conduct of elections. The chief election commissioner can be interviewed any time. An interview at the beginning of the campaign may bring to

the readers his/her preliminary impressions about the forthcoming elections. Reports based on interviews with him/her after the polling will bring to the readers his/her evaluation about the elections held. In case of an unfair election the chief election commissioner has to be talked to so that, along with all other stories the readers know his/her version.

Responsibilities of Election Officials

A reporter assigned to cover elections must know the responsibilities and duties of those who conduct the elections. The main election administrators and their responsibilities/duties during the campaign period and on the election day are as follows:

Returning Officer

- Accepts and scrutinizes the nomination papers.
- Sets up polling centers.
- Appoints the presiding officer, assistant presiding officers, polling officers and additional polling officers and trains them.
- Supplies all election materials including voter list and ballot boxes to polling centers.
- Selects replacements for presiding officer, assistant presiding officer and polling officers if any of them fails to perform his/her duties.
- Decides on the polling time and informs the public following the directions that comes from the Election Commission.
- Informs the EC secretariat immediately if polling in any center is suspended.
- Declares the date of polling in the suspended centers according to the decision of the Election Commission.
- Notifies the candidates and their agents about the date, time and place of tabulating the polling results. Tabulates results counted by the presiding officer in the presence of the candidates and their agents.
- Examines canceled ballot papers and includes counting of ballot papers canceled illegally.
- Counts postal ballot.
- Recounts the ballot papers after receiving a satisfactory appeal from a candidate.

- Decides through arranging a lottery the winner if two candidates claim equal number of votes.
- Preserves all kinds of used ballot papers [these include tendered, challenged ballot papers], their counter foils and their account and seals them on behalf of the Election Commission.
- Provides the journalists with written permission to report on election in the polling center(s).
- Declares unofficial final results.
- All contesting candidates will have to declare their probable sources of election expenses to the returning officer in a prescribed form. This has to be done within seven days after the withdrawal date of nomination.
- An elected contestant has to declare his/her election expenses to the returning officer in a prescribed form within 15 days after being declared elected.
- Assistant returning officer helps the returning officer in discharging his duties and responsibilities.

Presiding Officer

- Conducts polls in the polling centers as per article 9(2) of the Representation of the People Order, 1972. He informs the returning officer about any adverse situation regarding polls that may arise in the center.
- Cancels the used ballot papers which are not dropped in the ballot boxes or found in and around the center (Art. 21).
- Enlists tendered ballots in a prescribed form.
- Suspends polling if situation goes unruly and goes beyond his/her control (Art 25.1).
- Orders expulsion of any person for misconduct in the polling center (Art 30.1)
- Supplies ballot papers to voters and allows those who enter the polling center premises before the polling time is over to vote (Art 35).
- Reports to the returning officer after all duties regarding polls are discharged (Art 31-36).
- Explains the responsibilities and duties to the police, Ansars, and volunteers employed in the center and monitors their work.
- Sends the election results of his/her center to the returning officer by special messenger, telephone or wireless communication immediately after the counting is over.

The presiding officer shall, if requested by any candidate or election agent or polling agent present, give him/her a certified copy of the statement of the count and the ballot paper account.

Assistant Presiding Officer

- Works under the presiding officer and assists him/her, and
- Conducts polling in a center under the control and supervision of the presiding officer.

Polling Officer

- Checks the voter's identity, examines his/her finger tips, marks the voter list, puts indelible ink on his/her finger and provides a ballot paper to him/her

Some Useful Telephone Numbers at the Election Commission

PABX (Digital)	815212-16
PABX (Analog)	325006-10

ELECTION COMMISSION

Chief Election Commissioner	815315 (O)
(Justice A.K.M. Sadeque)	837517 (H)
Personal Secretary to the	329288 (O)
Chief Election Commissioner (Md. Nurul Huda)	503892 (H)
Election Commissioner	815796 (O)
(Justice Mohammad Abdul Jalil)	834821 (H)
Personal Secretary to the	324989 (O)
Election Commissioner	
(Mr. Sudhir Chandra Das)	

ELECTION COMMISSION SECRETARIAT

Secretary	815631, 324328 (O)
(Md. Irshadul Huq)	882333 (H)

Personal Secretary to Secretary	328333 (O)
(Mr. Golam Farooque Khan)	327274 (H)
Additional Secretary	815107, 815736 (O)
(S.M. Zakaria)	832730 (H)
Joint Secretary	812853, 815156 (O)
(Syed Abdur Rashid)	817051 (H)
Joint Secretary	324919 (O)
(Md. Abdus Salam)	864300 (H)
Deputy Secretary	315219 (O)
(Mr. Badrudozza Sarkar)	835469 (H)
Senior Assistant Secretary	815367 (O)
(Md. Zokoria)	404892 (H)
Public Relations Officer	814176 (O)
(Sheikh Md. Abdul Ahad)	806950 (H)
Assistant Secretary	325006-10 (extn.40)
(Mr. Achintya Ratan Biswas)	
Research Officer	325006-10 (extn.52)
(Mr. Farid Uddin Ahammed)	

DEPUTY ELECTION COMMISSIONERS' OFFICES

Khulna Deputy Election Commissioner	041-21161 (O)
(Md. Rafiqul Islam)	041-20478 (H)
Barisal Deputy Election Commissioner	0431-3021 (O)
(Mr. Abu Yusuf)	0431-3023 (H)
Dhaka Deputy Election Commissioner	02-400255 (O)
(Mr. A.S.M. Anuaruzzaman)	
Rajshahi Deputy Election Commissioner	0721-5693 (O)
(Mr. A.R. Siddique)	0721-2446 (H)
Chittagong Deputy Election Commissioner	031-222996 (O)
(Mr. Mir Hasib, Acting)	031-222445 (H)

Organizational Structure
of
Bangladesh Election Commission

Chief Election Commissioner	**Election Commissioner**
Personal Secretary	Personal Secretary

Bangladesh Election Commission Secretariat

Secretary → Personal Secretary

- Joint Secretary (Finance)
- Joint Secretary (Administration) → Senior Accounting Officer
  - Deputy Secretary (Administration)
    - Assistant Secretary (Admin-1)
    - Assistant Secretary (Admin-2)
    - Assistant Secretary (Admin-3)
    - Assistant Secretary (Admin-4)
  - Deputy Secretary (General)
    - Assistant Secretary (Budget)
    - Assistant Secretary (General-1)
    - Assistant Secretary (General-2)
- Additional Secretary (Election & Development)
  - Deputy Secretary (Election)
    - Assistant Secretary (Election-1)
    - Assistant Secretary (Election-2)
    - Assistant Secretary (Election-3)
  - Deputy Secretary (Local Organization)
    - Assistant Secretary (L.G. - 1)
    - Assistant Secretary (L.G. - 2)
    - Assistant Secretary (L.G. - 3)
  - Deputy Secretary (Law)
    - Assistant Secretary (Law)
  - Public Relation Officer (PRO)
    - Assistant PRO
    - Research Officer

Reporting from Remote Areas

Manik Saha and Shishir Moral

National dailies or important periodicals cannot always afford to send their Dhaka-based seasoned reporters, especially at the peak of election campaigning, to cover the small cities or rural areas. In this respect, except for the constituencies in and around Dhaka, or those which attain special significance because of the candidates, the larger number of electoral areas remain outside any direct scrutiny. But where election results are concerned, each and every constituency claims equal importance. Quite often, electorates in remote areas are influenced by various factors or forced to behave in a particular manner. Thus even small areas can become stages for big election dramas. If these on stage or back-stage stories are properly monitored and analyzed, the election scenario can reveal unknown patterns and dimensions. Therefore, one cannot overstress the importance of the *district correspondents* who cover these apparently neglected constituencies for the national newspapers, news agencies, the state run radio and television, and also provide the basis of information for the international media.

They play a most crucial role in the overall election reporting. They are the ones who often record very crucial events, negative and positive trends, that eventually have major implications at the national level. It is essential that the district or local level reporters receive special training or briefing so that they know what to look for and how to gather that. Besides, *district correspondents* are familiar with district and local level sources. So, it is much easier for them than for a Dhaka reporter to equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of their respective constituencies. We discuss here the various aspects

which a district correspondent needs to consider as part of his/her preparations for election coverage.

Constituency: Basic Features

Area

A district correspondent must know how many thanas, unions, villages/wards/mohollas fall within the constituency. S/he must also know where to expect reportable incidents in terms of campaigning and voting patterns. The reporter must develop reliable and non-partisan sources as well as political and official sources in each unit.

Voters

The correspondent must have the official voter list for his area and also have a clear idea of its composition: male/female, religious minority, age groups, fresh entrants and how many of them would actually take part in voting. Such information would help the reporter spot any rigging taking place. During the past elections there have been allegations that in some places minority communities were stopped from exercising their right to vote. Besides, the reporter must be careful about false voters and check if the number of voters in his/her area correspond with the distribution of voters nationwide. Sometimes, large numbers of people are shifted from one area to another in order to provide vote banks. A reporter must note any such sudden migration to his/her constituency prior to the election.

History of the Constituency

An idea of the past voting behavior of the constituency would help the reporter comprehend the election process itself. Therefore s/he must try to learn the results or trends of popular support as revealed in all the previous elections. It would be interesting to see if the voting pattern remains the same over the years or whether it makes any significant shifts. One may then probe into possible reasons. A record of the past election results is available with the district election office.

Candidates

One of the basic things that a reporter must do is to know about the candidates from his/her constituency. It is extremely useful to have

a profile of the candidates' political career. A candidate's personal life style, his/her occupation, social image and other such information also provide significant insight into his/her electoral performance. It is important to know about a candidate's financial situation; his/her known and hidden sources of income. One could also try to find out how much money a candidate is spending on the campaign through a source in the candidate's bank(s). One should also monitor the backing that a candidate gets from influential local people/groups.

Voter Registration and Identity Cards

Different quarters have raised questions about the latest registration of voters. Reporters must note if there are any anomalies or allegations of abuse as regards the registration system in his/her locality. How identity cards are issued, if at all, is also a vital aspect to be monitored. Printing of ID cards has been contracted out to some private firms. These could give reporters a few useful tips.

Law and Order Situation

At election times, trouble can be expected more in areas which have a weak law and order situation. A reporter can help ensure a better atmosphere by reporting this beforehand.

Economic Condition/Status

The voting pattern in an economically flourishing area will be very different from that in a relatively poor area. For example, a BIDS survey observed indications of BNP winning in the prosperous regions and Awami League doing better in economically backward belts in the 1991 polls. Besides, a candidate's financial and social position often tends to influence the electoral process significantly. In fact, money plays a big role in elections. Government's regular relief and development activities, if timed before the elections, could influence the voters.

Local Issues

In certain areas, local issues rather than national political agenda, decide the voting choice. Shrimp cultivation in Khulna, the issue of land ownership in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the water issue in the Farakka Barrage affected areas or infrastructural facilities such as roads could explain certain voting behavior. Thus, a BNP candidate

can win in an 'Awami League' area because of his/her contribution to a local cause. In fact, this factor could explain certain Jatiyo Party or Jamaat victories in some localities in the 1991 election.

Local Administration

The local administration in general, the thana nirbahi officer (TNO), deputy commissioner (DC), police commissioner and the superintendent of police (SP) in particular, play major and influential roles in the election process. They can be very useful as sources: At the same time the reporter must ascertain their level of neutrality. The role of the Home Ministry regarding the local administration, that is, if these agencies are allowed to operate free from any central pressure, is also an important point to note.

Local Political Culture

By this we mean the usual political behavior of the constituency, i.e. political allegiance of the majority of the electorate, political tolerance of the people and the political parties and such other factors. In some areas, religion plays a decisive role while others may have a secular culture. It would be interesting to note if there is any sudden deviation from the usual pattern. Sometimes, a certain candidate may keep on being nominated and elected in successive elections, though under different party banners. In certain areas, a family may exert sufficient influence and winning may become a familial legacy.

Deputy Election Commissioners' Office

Operating under the chief election commissioner's office this office supervises the district level offices.

1. District Election Office: For background and various other information, this office is the official source at the district level. It would help the reporter to have reliable sources in this office and an easy access to the information they can provide. This office supervises the thana level offices. This becomes the office of the returning officer during and after polling. This office has been primarily responsible for the registration of voters this time. Usually, polling centers are selected immediately before the elections. But in some districts this office had reportedly been asked to prepare a list of polling centers as early as September, 1995.

2. The ⬛⬛⬛tion Office: These are the offices dealing most directly with the con⬛⬛uency units. This institution is a new one in our country. The⬛⬛⬛ election officers can presumably provide specific information about the units. It could be useful to be familiar with those who run these offices. It is also important to have a profile of these office bearers. A reporter must have a clear idea of the role and functions of these offices. However, the duties and responsibilities of these officers have not been announced yet. One must also note the criteria for and the procedure of appointment of these officers.

Office of the Returning Officer

The office of the returning officer is one of the most important sources of information on general elections. It plays a very important and influential role in conducting elections. In fact, as a source this becomes more important than the Election Commission Secretariat since this is at the base. The reporters need to keep a close contact with the returning officer's office.

The reporter has to know the identity of the returning officer, his/her qualifications for becoming so, past records as well as responsibilities as per the constitution and laws related to elections. Traditionally, the deputy commissioner used to serve as the returning officer of his/her district. But this practice has been much criticized on the grounds that the administration could be politicized and made to work in favor of the party in power. Election Commission sources said, this time, officials from the judiciary could be asked to serve as the returning officers.

It is also important to note the activities of the returning officers, that is, whether they are lenient to any particular candidate, the company they keep, their attitudes to different political parties and voters, their reputation, integrity etc. The reporter should also observe how the returning officer gets along and functions with the deputy election commissioner, district election officer, deputy commissioner, police commissioner, SP, and election commission secretariat.

Political Party Offices

Political party offices are very important sources of information during the campaign and on the election day. Here are some tips about the kind of information available from a party office:

a.   Preparation of the candidates,

b.   Campaign strategy: raising money, public relations etc.
c.   If anything is being planned to ensure victory,
d.   If there is any unspoken alliance between different political parties locally,
e.   Relationship among different political parties/candidates,
g.   Relationship with the government/election conducting officers,
f.   Liaison with the central offices of the parties.

Other Local Factors

a.   NGOs tend to play an indirect, or often a direct role in the election process. Sometimes they lend support to a particular candidate, or on rare occasions they put up their own candidates. Since NGOs can command a large number of votes through their beneficiary or project groups, their role becomes of considerable interest to the political parties too.

b.   Student politics plays a crucial and often decisive role during elections. Therefore, one should always keep an eye on the campuses in the constituencies.

c.   In troubled areas, issues such as insurgency (Shantibahini in the CHT); recurrent natural disasters, and underground political activities (*Sarbahara* in Jessore, Magura, Kushtia, Barisal, etc.) have an influence on the electoral process.

d.   The business community in an area, even if not directly involved in politics, can have a significant influence by lending their support to one or the other candidate. And they may choose their candidate considering their own business interests, not out of any political allegiance. Issues often crop up before the elections (the killing of Yasmin Akhter allegedly by the police in Dinajpur) which may account for sudden shifts in popular support.

e.   In agrarian societies, big land holders or money lenders act as opinion leaders. They often tend to influence the religious leaders of the area and thus have more control over people's views.

f.   At times, trade issues (Shrimp in Khulna, Ready-Made Garment Industry, etc.) may command more attention than political agenda.

These are just a few baseline tips for a district correspondent. But the main point to keep in mind is to be very alert to the overall situation and be free of any generalized pre-conceived notions. Reporting general elections is not just publishing result sheets. A conscious reporter must always try to put the voting pattern in proper contexts and look for the news behind news.

Covering Elections for the International Media

Richard Galpin

General elections in a country as young as Bangladesh and where democracy has so often been undermined, are always of interest to the international media and are likely to be widely covered. But the forthcoming polls are of particular significance. The conflict between the government and opposition which began in 1994, means that these·elections will be a defining moment in the country's political development. If voting takes place peacefully and in a free and fair atmosphere, then democracy will be enhanced. If not, the country could, once again, face a protracted period of political instability. Ironically all this comes just a few years after the great wave of optimism created by the overthrow of the last military ruler, General Ershad, and the restoration of democracy in 1991.

As before when the country moved through a critical period in its history, so once again it's likely that the coverage provided by the international media will be an important source of information for the people of Bangladesh themselves. With much of the population still relying on the radio to find out what is happening, as well as the increasing availability of satellite television, the electronic media has a particular responsibility. Especially so as the national television and radio stations are still very much in the hands of the government and are unlikely to provide objective coverage of the elections.

So, for the handful of foreign correspondents based in Dhaka, it will be a hectic time from the moment the date of the elections is announced and Parliament dissolved, right up to the declaration of the results and the formation of the new government.

Reporting on the elections can be broken down into several distinct phases, each with a different emphasis in terms of the kind of stories covered.

The first phase has, in effect, already begun. The conflict between the government and opposition over who should run the country during the election period has been the focus of international media attention for more than a year. The opposition's demand that a neutral caretaker government be installed several weeks before voting takes place has dominated politics since March 1994. And it has certainly set the agenda: the country has been forced to consider whether or not a proper election can be held with the ruling party still in power. Also at a broader level there has been much debate about the whole issue of how best to ensure that voting is free and fair, given the previous history of rigged elections and the vulnerability of an electorate which is mostly uneducated as well as being extremely poor. This debate is bound to be at the heart of all media coverage from now until after the results are announced. Assuming that a compromise is reached ensuring that the opposition parties take part in the elections, the government in power at the time will be the subject of close scrutiny, not least from the international media which will be analysing the role it plays. Whatsmore, the declarations from the election monitors on whether voting was free and fair will be a final testimony to the kind of governmental system the country needs in place during the election period. The role of the Election Commission and whether it is perceived to have acted independently, will also be crucial; likewise the behaviour of the police and government officials.

Once campaigning gets underway officially, the agenda for the media can be broadened out much more. For the electronic media, it provides the opportunity to accompany politicians from all the main parties as they tour the country on the campaign trail. This should be the chance to put together a series of features analysing what differences in policy, if any, there are - particularly between the biggest opposition party, the Awami League and the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party or BNP.

One area of particular interest to foreign journalists will be economic policy. With the support of the international community, not least the World Bank, the present government has pursued a range of reforms aimed at freeing up the economy to make it more

market-oriented and more accessible to foreign trade and investment. So far at least, it is not clear how Awami League would handle the economy if it comes to power, though there are indications that it would pursue similar reforms.

In the absence of any proper national opinion polls, travelling with politicians around the country should also be an opportunity for correspondents to gauge levels of support for the different parties. At present in Bangladesh, very few opinion polls are being conducted and these are generally small-scale and infrequent. As a result it's extremely difficult for journalists to judge accurately the mood of the electorate, still less to predict the outcome of elections. So virtually the only way to get any idea of how people are going to vote is to go and ask them directly!

The lack of opinion polls in Bangladesh has already proved to be a major obstacle to the overall development of democracy. Throughout the long political crisis created by the demand for a neutral caretaker government, politicians from all sides have been able to avoid responding to the broad sweep of public opinion. Instead of being forced to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the electorate, they have continued believing in their own propaganda. This is often manufactured by staging large rallies of the party faithful, which are then described as manifestations of "public support" for one side or the other.

During the campaign there will also be many other important issues that the international media are likely to tackle through feature reports and interviews. In the wake of the controversy surrounding the feminist author, Taslima Nasreen and the resurgence of right-wing religious groups in 1994, there's likely to be much interest in the level of support for the fundamentalist Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami and what role it might play if there was to be a hung parliament. Also of interest will be the extent to which the Jatiyo Party has managed to rehabilitate itself since its founder and leader, the military ruler General Ershad, was forced out of power by a democratic movement in 1990. Both of these parties have been able to capitalise on the loose alliance they have formed with the main opposition party, the Awami League, to campaign against the government.

Other topics for features during the campaign are likely to include

the success or otherwise of voter identity cards and the Election Commission's code of conduct, especially whether it manages to cut down on the use of illegal money and to cap the amount that can be spent on campaigning.

The day voters finally go to the polls will perhaps provide some of the greatest difficulties for the foreign media. Collecting information in Bangladesh for hard news stories is not easy at the best of times. Neither the government nor the opposition parties have developed effective public relations departments willing to provide a quick service of basic facts and quotes as and when required. Government officials and the law-enforcing agencies can also be equally tight-lipped with the media. The problems this creates are compounded by a telephone system, which at best, can be described as rudimentary.

However, assuming that a large team of international observers is invited to monitor the elections, they should help boost the information flow. Perhaps most importantly in terms of whether voting is going ahead free of intimidation, direct interference, or violence.

The foreign press corps will generally have good access to both the international observers and other members of the international community based in Dhaka, such as the United Nations, aid agencies and diplomats. A different perspective on the elections will naturally come from them, which could be useful for the national media in Bangladesh to pick up for their own stories.

Foreign correspondents, particularly those working for television and radio, are also likely to push for big-name interviews, for example with the leaders of all the main political parties, both during the election campaign and once the results are announced. Amongst other issues, these interviews will focus on trying to extract clear statements of policy from the politicians. This kind of material could also be useful for the Bangladeshi press. At the same time the international media will be closely monitoring the main national newspapers in Bangladesh, as well as television and radio, for any news developments, ideas for features and for different angles on the story. The local press will be an important source of information especially for any correspondents who have flown in to Dhaka at the last minute to cover the elections. The analysis and context provided by editorials, guest columns and longer feature reports in both the daily and the weekly Bangladeshi newspapers and magazines, will also be extremely important for all the international media.

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Things Deserving More Coverage

Subrata Shankar Dhar

In spite of a long history of political struggle for independence in successive stages and conscious participation of the people in the political process, the democratic political culture in Bangladesh has not yet stepped beyond its early infancy. This grim reality can be attributed to a number of factors. Most prominently, recurrent military intervention in politics since the Pakistan days, colonial inheritance of an over-developed bureaucracy and its ignominious attitude toward politics and politicians, central conspiracy to discredit regional politics during the Pakistan period, failure of the politicians in inculcating democratic practices in their own behavior, absence of a sane process for developing democratic institutions and democratic values and absence of democratic statesmanship among the politicians - each contributed to the gradual growth of an undemocratic political culture.

The political situation in the early 1990s in many ways held out a significant opportunity for a positive change manifested in the yearning from the civil society for a democratic political culture. However, one should be quick to add right here that the heightened consciousness was not quite matched by the necessary political preparedness. Expectation and enthusiasm rose to their pinnacle which have now waned considerably.

This could be evaded. Indeed, many members of the civil society voiced a note of caution right after the fall of the Ershad regime against the possible reversion to autocracy in the garb of democracy unless measures were taken for institutionalizing democratic practices and norms. There were a number of new newspapers at that time which provided a forum for open discussion on various issues related

to democratic governance. The interim government took a number of measures which beckoned an auspicious future for politics in Bangladesh. Indeed, a ground was being prepared for a political government to follow things through. But the lack of democratic statesmanship and prudence of the politicians and the institutional legacy of an anti-democratic culture sullied the opportunity.

Nevertheless, possibility of institutionalizing good governance is still there as long as we belong to a rational society. Understandably, the media have a significant role to play in this regard. In fact, the relationship between good governance and the media is symbiotic. The vigilance of the media is imperative for good governance and conversely, the media cannot function properly unless within the ambiance of a conducive political environment. Therefore, they ought to be vigilant over public institutions for democratic practices in order to ensure a democratic social homeostasis. Incontrovertibly, the most important institution in parliamentary democracy is the parliament itself. And monitoring the process of elections to the parliament has to be reckoned as extremely important to the media.

While the importance of comprehensive coverage of the parliamentary elections is rightly understood, there are certain aspects which haven't received as much coverage as perhaps they should. The object of this article is to discuss some of these areas so that the journalists covering the elections can take special initiatives to bring these issues to public notice.

Voter List

Flaws in the voter list have always been a case discussed at the time of elections, mostly on the day after the elections. The matter comes to the notice of the media only after hundreds of people fail to exercise their voting rights. This doesn't help.

The disadvantage of using defective voter list was evident on the day of the 1991, parliamentary elections. CCHRB observers found that in almost all centers in the metropolitan city, other cities and rural areas, hundreds of genuine voters who voted in the previous elections found their names missing from the voter lists. Allegations came to CCHRB observers that in many areas minority voters were eliminated from the voter list. At a center in Jhigatola in Dhaka city, many scheduled caste Hindu voters called *Rishis* complained to a

CCHRB mobile team that some 400 *Rishi* voters of Rishipara were eliminated from the voter list during the Ershad regime. They reportedly applied for re-registration but all applications except 20 were rejected (Timm and Gain, 1991).

While some of these instances are mere cases of omission, there are others where one can discern some deliberate political ploys. Neither of the cases should be ignored by the media. To ensure that everybody gets to vote, the role of the media should be pre-emptive in identifying the potential omissions and bringing them to public notice. Understandably, the media may not have the resources required for a thorough investigative report on the whole voter list of the country and check it for its correctness. But such investigations can be conducted on the basis of a random sampling or on the cases already under question.

Besides, there are some common mistakes which have always been found in the voter lists in the past. Names of the voters who do not live in the area, under-aged voters, *dead* voters, eligible people not registered as voters, voters registered in more than one place, voters registered more than once in the same voter list, women voters registered on the male voter list and vice-versa, wrong names/ addresses of the voters are a few examples of these common mistakes. Choosing certain areas, the reporters can investigate comprehensively to find out these common mistakes, the sources of these mistakes, flaws in preparing the voter list and suggest what can be done to eliminate these problems. The proper time for doing all these is, of course, when the voter list is prepared. However, the problems, in any case, can be pointed out later and as early as possible before the elections so that something can be done about them. Indeed, the preparation of the current voter list got considerable coverage and a number of newspapers were particularly meticulous about the procedures in preparing the voter list.

The Election Commission

People may have a good deal of curiosity as to how the Election Commission functions, how much autonomy it enjoys and how it relates with the rest of the government. For historical reasons, people in our country have a pervasive skepticism about the independence of the Election Commission. Therefore, reports on how the Election Commission works will interest many people who otherwise don't

get to know much about it. The reports can also concentrate on the aspects that constrain the effectiveness of the Election Commission in running the elections with propriety.

Election Manifesto

Almost all political parties, and definitely the major ones, participating in the elections produce election manifestos where they present their vision, mission, plan and strategy of intervention in the social, political and economic areas and their priorities. People are expected to take decisions partly on the basis of these pronounced commitments. But very few people get to know the programs of the political parties as there is hardly any serious discussion on these election manifestos in the media. Indeed, such discussions would not only allow the people to make informed choices, they would also make the political parties to commit to doing what they promised (Hakim, 1993).

The media should devote substantial time or space in interpretive reports on various aspects of the proposed programs; how well-thought-out they are; how realistic they are in achieving tangible results in a given time-frame from one election to another and in terms of available resources; whether they match with the party constitutions and the professed ideologies of the parties; if not, how they justify the departure; internal coherence among different aspects of their political projects etc. The consistency of the electoral enunciations can also be judged in terms of activities of the parties in the recent past.

Another good idea would be to compare the programs of different political parties, discuss their commonalities, identify the general differences and points of contention, especially opposing stances on debatable issues, and sharpen the positions of the political parties as much as possible. Opposing political parties can be asked to comment formally and at length through the media on the programs of other parties.

Indeed, the political parties representing different ideological stances can be invited to a round table discussion or a panel discussion where they would be given a chance to clarify their positions and sharpen their marked differences with others on different issues. In certain cases, major political personalities can be invited to an open debate.

And finally, of course, there can be a number of opinion polls of the voters on the election manifestos.

Nomination

The process of nomination is another important area which holds out ample opportunity for in-depth reporting on various aspects and from various perspectives. A good idea would be to analyze the trends in nomination from different parties over a period of time, say, 20 to 25 years. Certainly, there have been remarkable changes in the pattern of politics and the pattern of electioneering. Now-a-days, political commitment, proven adherence to the ideology of a political party and sacrifice for politics are not the most important criteria for getting party nominations. Perhaps the most important criterion is who has enough money to get elected in the changed political chemistry. The use of muscle power in the elections has also increased alarmingly, quite often under the patronage of the candidates. This has implication also for who can seek nomination and who can get it.

While analyzing these trends in nomination one aspect that will be of interest to the public is the metamorphosis of the individuals who get nominations repeatedly. Indeed, such individuals embody the changing political culture of the society. Their present financial positions and that at the beginning of their political career, changes in their followings, quality of such changes, people's assessment about the quality of their leadership at present and at the beginning of their political career - these are a few of many things people would like to know about the candidates. Most importantly, perhaps these days, people would also like to know the itinerary of the political career of different candidates in a political culture where the turncoats fare quite well in politics. From these, the reporters can shift to a broader view of the general composition of the nominees from different parties to see if there is any pattern or preference and also to see who are representing the party in the elections.

Code of Conduct

People know very little about the code of conduct set for the political parties by the Election Commission (Code of Conduct for the Sixth Parliamentary Elections, Ittefaq, October 26,1995). There can be numerous reports on various aspects of the code of conduct. For

example, There can be a number of interpretive reports on different sections of the code of conduct, their implications, vagueness and clarity of different clauses, practicability, possibility of manipulation and circumvention, mechanisms for monitoring whether the code of conduct is being followed properly, what are the other measures needed to˙be incorporated in the code of conduct and, of course, practical examples of how much of it is being followed.

Besides, reporters can write news stories on the social response, i.e., the voters' attitude toward this code of conduct, the process of producing the code of conduct, legal implications of the code of conduct if there is any etc. Indeed, people will be much better-off in making decisions about the candidates if they know, among other things, how they were expected to behave and how they did.

For example, the code of conduct for the sixth parliamentary elections clearly postulates that the candidates cannot make expensive arches, print multi-color posters, provide transport to the voters on the election day, serve food and drinks to the voters in the election camps. And they cannot spend more than TK. 3,00,000 in the election campaign. But even to a casual observer it will be apparent that the colorful electioneering extravaganza of many of the candidates cannot simply be undertaken with the maximum election expenses stipulated in the code of conduct. Extensive reporting on these aspects of electioneering will hopefully be a deterrent to the unfair practices.

Security

These days, elections and physical violence at the election centers are almost inextricable. Given the present situation in Bangladesh, it is a major concern for almost all the voters whether enough security measures have been taken and whether it is safe for them to go to the election centers. This is more so for the women voters who sometimes for various reasons are accompanied by their minor children to the election centers. Unless proper security measures are taken and people are made aware of them, there is every likelihood that there will be a poor voter turnout as it happened in some areas even in the 1991 elections (Timm and Gain, 1991). This might defeat the whole purpose of the elections.

The reporters can report on the security situations in different constituencies not only to make people aware of the safety precautions already in place but also to point out to the administration as to what

additional measures are needed, especially at the centers which are likely to be violence-prone. The police administration, responsible persons at the Election Commission and people in different constituencies can be interviewed regarding the security situation. Election history of the constituencies can also be considered to make a pre-emptive judgment about the likelihood of violence. Besides, of course, the nature of campaign in the days just before the elections can also be an indicator which should be picked up by the media to make the administration respond to the situation adequately.

Results of Opinion Polls

At the time of the elections, many organizations run opinion polls. Opinion polls are obviously newsworthy. They reflect people's opinion about different candidates and parties. But they may also try to influence the public opinion by conveying the message as to who are likely to win the elections. Therefore, a reporter should take a bit of extra time to know the organizations running the polls and whether such polls are being sponsored by anyone for any political end. Of course, the newspapers can run their own opinion polls with due objectivity and professionalism. Indeed, such opinion polls can have many different dimensions. Party adherence, personalities, particular issues of contention can be some of these dimensions.

Results

A commonplace reporting of the elections results is always there in the newspapers, sometimes followed by analysis of the results. But, mathematically the scope of analyses of the results is enormous. And each analysis is understandably expected to entail an interpretation which might be of interest to the readers. This can be on the patterns of voting in terms of gender, patterns of voting in different constituencies, in regions etc. There can also be analysis to see if there is any commonness in the personalities of the candidates returned. A reporter can also try to see what the most important factors are for the victory of certain candidates. Analyses of the election results from different perspectives will definitely enrich the perception of the readers.

Role of the State Controlled Media

There is always a valid criticism of the role of the government controlled media that it is always lopsided toward the party in power.

There is no doubt that the credibility of the government-controlled media is seriously under interrogation. Still, in a country like ours where illiteracy is a big obstacle to extending the reach of the print media, radio and television should play a significant role in creating a democratic culture. Therefore, it is imperative that we make the electronic media responsive to the propriety of democratic norms. As a step toward that end during the election time, the role of the government-controlled media should be constantly monitored and reported with rigorous analysis of time allocation for the election campaigns of different parties covered and also the contents and nature of coverage. With a certain amount of optimism, one can expect that this might sensitize the government-controlled media about the desired impartiality. Such reports can be published on a daily basis.

Bangladeshis Living Abroad

Although trifling in importance compared to other issues, the reporters should dig into the pros and cons of whether the Bangladeshis living abroad should be allowed to vote and if so, what procedure should be devised to ensure propriety and maximum participation. Bangladeshi citizens, no matter where they live, should be allowed to exercise their voting rights. Given the number of Bangladeshis now living abroad, this is definitely worth pondering. The opinions of the Election Commission and the people concerned can be taken in this regards.

These are only a few examples of the areas that should draw more media attention. Overarching all these, the common element of vigilance of the media would be to monitor if there is any violence of any democratic norm in the election process. The ultimate object is, of course, to create and sustain a democratic political culture which we need badly in the present circumstances.

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Election Features

Q A Tahmina

Many readers just skip through the front and back pages of the newspaper but enjoy reading the feature pages or supplements if they are attractive enough. Strait-jacket election reports can often be quite boring and a reader's attention may easily wander off to some other item. But that doesn't necessarily mean readers have little interest in election news. It is for the newspapers to be sensitive to what might really interest an average reader. The easiest way would of course be to snoop for gossip and scandals and publish these in gory details. Tabloids do thrive on such stories. But a standard newspaper or a periodical could attract a good readership by reporting matters that would have direct or indirect impact on the daily life of the people.

It's important to make readers feel that elections are not some grand, formal national events reflected in vote counts or corruption stories. They consist of stories which have a long lasting impact on our day to day life. Besides, elections are supposed to help people decide their own lots. Elections are essentially for the people, and newspapers should encourage the electorate to vote and thus take part in the decision making process. After all, for the silent majority, voting should be the supreme moment of freedom. By electing their representatives, the people exercise their right to decide who should govern them. To make the best choices, they need to know about the options they have.

The newspaper's duty is to introduce the readers to all the different political parties, characters, trends, options and episodes that constitute the hopefully five yearly event. Journalists also need to

interpret the information so that readers may see things in their proper perspective. Strings of facts that come as news reports may easily baffle readers. Feature pages can accommodate analyses, interpretation, debates and explanations of the issues involved.

It is better to start early in the day. Newspapers should look for stories and events that may have a bearing on the campaign and thus eventually on the contest and try to establish justifiably unbiased links among them. This does not give the reporter freedom to take off and fly on the wings of personal opinions. Everything, and analyses in particular, must be based on facts and information.

Editorials may be a different field altogether. The editors are free to have their views and have the liberty to express them. But to be convincing and useful to the readers, even they need to back up their opinions with solid information. Being balanced does not really mean bland arbitration. It's useful to publish different shades of opinions. Newspapers can invite guest columnists to contribute their personalized articles. These can come as post editorials, guest columns or even as debate pages.

Political bickering, of course, cannot be the mainstay of election coverage. Newspapers are expected to introduce the readers to their could-be representatives. Months ahead of the election, a newspaper can bring out periodical supplements on the constituencies, complete with all relevant information, including profiles of the candidates. Magazines have a better opportunity in this regard. Many of our daily newspapers have a weekly page on women's issues which could concentrate on the women candidates and the existing women parliamentarians. It would be interesting to observe the performance of the women parliamentarians as regards women's causes. A special supplement or an issue could be brought out on our electoral process and the tradition as revealed in the past elections. This issue could include a comparison with the electoral processes in other countries, especially in the South Asian region.

As campaigning begins, reporters must become alert. This is the time for investigative journalism. Feature reporters could visit different constituencies in order to highlight issues that really affect life locally. Localized and personalized stories can sometimes persuade the politicians to face the real issues that interest the voters. Likewise, newspapers need to do tough and objective interviews with the politicians and other candidates, forcing all sides to be transparent

and serious.

For feature pages, election manifestos of different parties could be a gold mine. One can pinpoint the major political agenda, relate those to the needs of the people and finally, give an account of the promises made during the previous election and realization of these later on. In the context of Bangladesh, one must ascertain if the manifestos are at all relevant or realistic.

Quite a few local research groups are carrying out opinion polls and surveys. These could make interesting articles. It may be worthwhile to look at different social and economic issues from the points of view of different interest groups. For example, what do the ready-made garment manufacturers expect from the would-be people's representatives? Accordingly, what role are they playing in the game? On the other end, labor organizations may be another such group.

The registration of voters in 1995 has already given rise to controversies and discontent. Reporters have found and may still find stories worth reporting as regards this issue. Besides, the Election Commission plans to issue voter identity cards for the sixth parliamentary elections. This is a field which needs investigative reporting.

As the election day approaches, election observer groups, both national and international, should be covered thoroughly. This can be the great time for interview stories. The attitudes of the donor countries, organizations, foreign investors, UN agencies as well as the foreign media may be worth quite a few articles.

Feature pages should carry on with hard hitting investigative, interpretative stories and debates even after results are announced. Results may turn out to be the beginning of a new phase in the election story.

A word of caution about the language! As reporters we don't want to churn out drab, dull pieces, but the personalities and issues involved in the election process are very sensitive indeed. One can add color where it is becoming, but not extravagantly. One needs to be very very careful about libel. Reporters may probe about the personalities involved in the election drama, but with respect.

Lastly, one must pay attention to the appearance of these pages also. They should look attractive with lots of photographs. A newspaper may plan a logo for its `election pages.' And of course, one must not forget cartoons. A really good cartoon adds as much to the looks as to the content of the page.

An editor may need to have at least a couple of reporters working closely as a team. Primarily, it would be the team leader's, that is, the editor's responsibility to keep track of what is going on. It always pays to scan other newspapers' election reporting regularly. Reporters themselves need to do that. There really is no end to what a creative editor-reporter team can achieve, facts and objectivity being their limits.

To help illustrate our point, we reprint here three articles, published in different newspapers.

<div align="center">1</div>

The following article, based on a study of the Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC), was published in the Daily Star on August 19, 1995.

30 Women Seats:
True Representation or a Balance of Power?

Nazim Kamran Choudhury

Article 10	:	Steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.
Article 28(2)	:	Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.
Article 28(4)	:	Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favor of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens.
Article 65(3)	:	... there shall be reserved thirty seats exclusively for women members, who shall be elected according to law by the members aforesaid.

The Constitution of Bangladesh

Women have played a remarkable role in the democratic history of South Asia. From the early days of the Indian struggle for freedom, the War of Independence of Bangladesh and the movement for democracy of 1990, women have been in the vanguard of every political move. The fact that women have headed the governments of all the four countries that emerged in this sub-continent, namely India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, is however, a quirk of history rather than a natural evolution of the emancipation of women. In spite of the fact that women constitute half our population, they continue to be an under-privileged section of our society.

The framers of our Constitution recognized this fact, and hence the articles we have quoted above. The Constitution of Bangladesh, as adopted in 1972, had provision for 15 reserved seats in Parliament for women, to be elected by the Members of Parliament. This provision was for a period of 10 years. The 1st Parliament that was formed in 1973 had fifteen women Members of Parliament. The Second Martial Law Proclamation Order IV of 1978 increased the number of reserved women seats in Parliament to 30 and increased the time frame from 10 to 15 years. The 2nd Parliament, which was constituted in April 1979, had 30 women Members of Parliament (in addition to two women who were directly elected). In 1987, reserved seats as a constitutional provision lapsed on the expiry of 15 years, and as such the 4th Parliament did not have any reserved women seats.

In 1990, the 10th Amendment to the Constitution reinserted clause (3) to Article 65 providing for 30 reserved women seats for a further period of 10 years from the first sitting of the next Parliament (i.e. from 5th April 1991, which was the first day of the 5th Parliament). As a result 30 women were elected on March 30, 1991 to the 5th Parliament.

Theory and Practice

The Constitution of the country recognizes all citizens as equal before law and undertakes to give them equal opportunities. However, it is also accepted that in reality all sections of society are not equal and therefore the need for special provisions. These provisions are usually for a specific period in which it is hoped that the disadvantaged sections of the society will come of age. The purpose of the provision

for reserved seats as envisaged in our Constitution was to ensure a minimum representation of women in Parliament, and to ensure a wider participation by them in national politics. The fact that this provision has not succeeded in its objective is apparent by its two extensions, and one of the main reasons for its failure is in the method of election to these reserved seats.

The present provision is that the Members of Parliament will elect candidates to the 30 reserved seats. In practice this means that the winner takes all, i.e. the party that can muster 151 votes can take the 30 additional seats. The majority party nominates thirty women candidates and since election is a foregone conclusion, other parties do not bother with nominating anybody.

The candidates elected do not really represent anyone except the party which has selected them. Though they have a national geographical constituency, they have little link with it. They also cannot be said to represent women in general, as the women of the country have no role in their election. As these women Members of Parliament have not gone through a competitive election process, they are taken less seriously by their directly elected colleagues who actually consider them more as a `vote bank'.

A Vote-bank

The crucial importance of this 30 women's seats in the power equation in Parliament is best illustrated by two situations, one in 1986 and the other in 1991.

1986

In the election to the 3rd Parliament in 1986, the Jatiyo Party of H M Ershad won 153 of the 300 parliamentary seats. The Awami League won 76, the Jamaat-e-Islami 10, the CPB 5, NAP 5, Muslim League 4, JSD(R) 4, JSD (Siraj) 3, Baksal 3, Worker's Party 3, NAP (Muzaffar) 2 and independents 32. The eight-party alliance led by AL had a total of 94 seats. President Ershad desperately needed to bring a constitutional amendment to ratify his illegal usurpation of power from a legally constituted government, and the wrongs and arbitrariness of four years of martial law. To do this he would have needed 200 votes in a normal 300 member Parliament, but even with

independents he would not have been able to achieve this without support from other parties. If one presumed that all 32 independents would be won over, the Jatiyo Party would have been short of 15 votes and given the party positions at that time, it would have been difficult to have achieved the required majority. However, in a 330 member Parliament, the JP, with 151 votes took all 30 women seats taking its total to 183, and with independents to 215, just five short of 220 votes needed for an amendment. As it happened, the 7th Amendment, which ratified the martial law and all actions under it, was introduced in the second session of the 3rd Parliament on 10th November 1986. The session lasted just five hours and the amendment was passed by 223 votes to nil amidst opposition boycott.

President Ershad was so paranoid about winning the 30 women seats that he did not trust even his own party members in voting for the party women candidates. He promulgated a special Ordinance (No XLVII of 1986) which said that if the returning officer receives a nomination paper proposed and seconded by more than half of the eligible voters (MPs), the candidate would be declared automatically elected. In other words 30 candidates nominated and seconded by 151 Members of Parliament would be considered elected without there being an actual election. Thus did President Ershad nominate thirty women to be Members of Parliament.

1991

President Ershad's 10th Amendment to the Constitution was his gift to the future Parliament, the beneficiary being the BNP. This amendment reintroduced 30 reserved women seats in Parliament. The result of the 1991 election gave the BNP 140 seats, AL and allies 100, the JP 35, the JI 18 and others 7. This did not give any party an absolute majority (166). Due to wins by some candidates from multiple constituencies (Begum Khaleda Zia 5, H M Ershad 5, Tofael Ahmed 2 and Abdur Razzak 2) the electoral college for women's reserved seats comprised 290 Members of Parliament of whom 136 belonged to BNP, 98 to AL, 31 to JP, 18 to JI and 7 others. To elect 30 women MPs, a party required 145 votes which the BNP with support from JI was able to manage (136+18= 154). The BNP took 28 women seats and the JI took two. This gave the BNP a total strength of 165 members in a 320-member Parliament (there were 10 vacancies) or just four more

than absolute majority (160) for forming a government. After the by-elections to the 10 vacancies the BNP had 169 out of a House of 330 members or a majority of two.

Had there been no reserved women seats, or had it not been a vote-bank' system, the BNP would have had to have some power sharing agreement with other parties if it were to form a government.

Present System

The present system does not allow for any meaningful method of selecting women candidates. Nominations by the majority party are a gift given to selected women who are not required to go through any election process. The absence of a contest restricts the number of women entering the political arena, and can never lead to achieving the primary objective of the constitutional provision that was framed for this purpose. How then, can these reserved seats become truly representative?

Three Options

Alternative One: Direct Election

Among the various ways of electing representatives, direct elections are considered the most democratic. Clause 3 of the Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order, 1973 says that the Election Commission may "divide the country into thirty zones to be known as women seats". **Table 1** shows the geographical division of the thirty seats along with the corresponding number of general seats in each women constituency. The map on the back page **(chart 1)** gives a visual picture. If we were to follow a system of one person - two ballots, women candidates could be directly elected by the people to the women seats. Each political party would nominate candidates to the women seats as it does in general seats. Each voter would have two ballot papers; one for the candidates to the general seats, and the other for the women seat. He or she would cast one ballot for the general seat and one for the women seat resulting in 330 directly elected Members of Parliament. Administratively or logistically this would not be a major problem if different coloured ballot papers are used.

One argument against this method would be that the constituencies would become too large, and it would be difficult for women candidates to mount an effective campaign. The other argument would be that in practice, only major party candidates could contest. The answer to these arguments are that in any case, 88% of the voters in 1991 voted for the four major parties. General elections are based on party lines and modern democracies are based on the party system. If we take this premise as a base, then women party candidates would be supported by the party organization and the party candidate in the general seats. Whereas a candidate in a general seat would campaign at union and village levels, these women candidates would campaign at thana levels with projection meetings at major centres. The advantage of this method would be that:

i.   all major parties would nominate candidates to the thirty seats and therefore more women would be in the electoral process;

ii.   this would ensure better selection of candidates;

iii.   they would be exposed to an effective electoral campaign;

iv.   general voters would see women on the campaign hustings and would be more amiable to future women candidates in general seats;

v.   the distribution of seats to political parties would not be distorted and would reflect more accurately the popular mandate;

vi.   gradually, more women could enter the general electoral process so that this particular constitutional provision would succeed in its objective.

If we presume that the voters who voted for a particular party candidate in 1991 elections would also have voted for the party's women candidates, then **Table 2** gives the vote patterns in each of the 30 reserved constituencies, and **chart 2** shows the party positions that would have emerged from the election as regards the women seats.

Alternative Two:
Proportional Representation

A second alternative to electing members to the reserved women seats could be through proportional representation. There can be two ways of doing this. One could be based on the total popular votes obtained by political parties in national elections. Each party would

nominate 30 women candidates, and these lists would be published in order of priority. Seats would then be appropriated to the parties based on the votes gathered by them. **Chart 3** shows the possible distribution of seats based on the votes obtained by the political parties in the 1991 elections. The total votes obtained by AL and their allies (contesting with the boat symbol) have been grouped together. In that case, the AL would have got 10 seats, the BNP 9, the JP and JI 4 each and 3 others would have gone to other parties. The top 10, 9 and 4 in the party lists would have been considered elected. But the provision for `other parties' would create a problem. Therefore, there would have to be a provision that a party must get at least 3% of the overall votes cast to qualify for a seat. All unproportionate votes (below 3%) would again be appropriated to the parties in proportion to the votes obtained by them. In that way the total 30 seats would be more equitably distributed among the parties obtaining more than 3% of the popular vote. The advantage of the method is that, as the political parties would have to list their candidates, a larger number of women would be exposed to the political field. The selection process would be prior to the election, and not gifted later. However, since the lists would be on a national basis, there would not be any particular women's constituency, and therefore it would lack geographical representation.

A second method of proportional representation would be to allot seats to parties in relation to their strengths in the Parliament. **Chart 4** shows the probable distribution based on the 1991 elections. In this scenario, a party would have to have at least 10 seats in parliament to qualify for a reserved seat. The total number of seats for parties with less than 10 members would be appropriated to the larger parties in proportion to their representation in Parliament. Here also the members elected would not represent a geographic area and would not really fulfil the purpose for which the constitutional provision has been provided.

However, while the above options are possibilities, the Constitution says that the 30 reserved seats will be elected by the Members of Parliament and hence none of the above are immediately implementable.

Alternative three: Geographical Representation

Election by MP's of the general seats comprising the geographical women constituencies.

The election laws provide for 30 women constituencies with geographical areas. The law also says that a candidate would have to be nominated for a particular women's seat and elections would be seat-wise. In other words, there will be elections to 30 seats by 300 voters. For instance women's seat No 1 comprises Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts. All 300 Members of Parliament would be voting for candidates to this seat. On the other hand, this seat comprises 11 general seats (1 to 11). If the election to women seat No 1 was restricted to Members of Parliament of that women's constituency, then the party positions would be different. In that case the seat would have been won by the Awami League. **Table 3** gives the probable outcome based on the 1991 elections (with an electoral college of 290 members). In twenty-three cases there would be an outright winner, while in seven constituencies (7, 11, 15, 16, 24, 25 & 29) an electoral adjustment would have to have taken place. In case of a tie, the result could be decided by a toss as in the UK.

While this system in not perfect, it gives the member elected a geographical area as a constituency. It also provides for a more equitable distribution of seats, and most important of all, does not require a constitutional amendment to bring it into practice. A change in the election laws would suffice.

Conclusion

Direct elections are the most preferred method of choosing elected representatives. Even then, the system of `first past the post' single constituency democracies have been an inherent weakness. It leads to government of a minority over a majority. This becomes more acute in democracies where there are more than two major parties. For instance, the BNP has formed a government based on the support of 31% of the people who voted, or 17% of the registered voters. To compound this weakness with a `winner take all' method of electing 30 additional voting seats in Parliament, gives a distortion to the concept of democracy.

Elections to the 6th Parliament are due within the next 250 days. The method of electing members to the 30 reserved seats is a question that political parties and the politically conscious citizenry must now ponder upon.

(by **Nazim Kamran Choudhury,** Director, Centre for Analysis and Choice. Research assisted by **Kumkum Akhter.)**

Table – 1
Constituencies of Reserved Seats for Women
(As per Election Commission notification of 9 March 1991)

Women Seat No	Name of Constituencies	General Constituencies Nos	Total No of General Seat
1	Panchagarh, Thakurgaon & Dinajpur	1 - 11	11
2	Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat & Rangpur	12 - 24	13
3	Kurigram & Gaibandha	25 - 33	9
4	Joypurhat & Bogra	34 - 42	9
5	Sirajganj & Pabna	61 - 72	12
6	Nawabganj and Rajshahi	43 - 45 & 52 - 56	8
7	Naogaon & Natore	46 - 51 & 57 - 60	10
8	Kushtia, Meherpur & Chuadanga	73 - 80	8
9	Jhinaidah, Magura & Narail	81 - 84 & 91 - 94	8
10	Jessore & Satkhira	85 - 90 & 105 - 109	11
11	Bagerhat & Khulna	95-104	10
12	Patuakhali, Barguna & Bhola	110 - 120	11
13	Barisal, Pirojpur & Jhalakathi	121-131 & 132	12
14	Tangail	133 - 140	8
15	Jamalpur & Sherpur	141 - 148	8
16	Mymensingh, Mymensingh & Netrokona	149 - 159 & 160	12
17	Netrokona & Kishoreganj	161 - 171	11
18	Manikganj & Dhaka-1, 2, 3, 12 & 13	172-175, 180-182 & 191-192	9
19	Dhaka - 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11	183-190	8
20	Gazipur & Narshingdi	193-201	9
21	Narayanganj & Munshiganj	176-179 & 202-206	9
22	Rajbari & Faridpur	207-213	7
23	Gopalganj, Madaripur & Shariatpur	214-222	9
24	Sunamganj & Sylhet	223-233	11
25	Maulvibazar & Habiganj	234-241	8
26	Brahmanbaria & Comilla-1, 3, 4 & 6	242-248 & 250, 251 & 253	10
27	Comilla & Chandpur	249, 252 & 254-265	14
28	Feni, Noakhali & Lakshmipur	266-278	13
29	Chittagong	279-293	15
30	Cox's Bazar, K'chari, R'mali & Bandarban	294-300	7
	Total		300

Table - 2
Popular Voters Cast in Areas of 30 Women Reserved Seats

Women Seat No	Name of Constituencies	Vote Cast				
		BNP	AL	JP	JI	Others
1	Panchagarh, Thakurgaon & Dinajpur	2,37,678	5,52,328	2,36,090	2,53,509	76,089
2	Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat & Rangpur	99,622	4,56,251	6,17,818	2,34,998	4,14,294
3	Kurigram & Gaibandha	73,064	2,42,295	3,66,847	1,76,447	35,959
4	Joypurhat & Bogra	5,17,638	4,95,634	48,082	2,87,575	2,10,497
5	Sirajganj & Pabna	5,25,811	2,83,632	38,437	3,09,975	70,377
6	Nawabganj & Rajshahi	4,00,032	3,29,545	68,174	2,91,288	69,361
7	Naogaon & Natore	4,85,022	4,76,077	77,033	2,78,694	59,293
8	Kushtia, Meherpur & Chuadanga	3,60,220	2,62,467	70,136	2,02,142	75,950
9	Jhinaidah, Magura & Narail	4,07,424	3,73,045	30,045	1,75,278	1,40,020
10	Jessore & Satkhira	2,93,932	5,04,589	1,16,149	4,03,674	1,22,684
11	Bagerhat & Khulna	2,96,403	4,72,263	94,735	2,21,260	1,14,705
12	Patuakhali, Barguna & Bhola	1,08,750	3,92,012	1,02,952	31,208	89,672
13	Barisal, Pirojpur & Jhalakathi	3,85,776	3,64,813	1,75,658	87,647	1,57,642
14	Tangail	3,76,936	3,83,017	1,25,034	1,515	1,46,655
15	Jamalpur & Sherpur	2,78,855	3,13,316	51,252	57,008	2,13,549
16	Mymensingh, Mymensingh & Netrokona	3,54,908	3,71,023	1,50,978	68,994	1,46,372
17	Netrokona & Kishoreganj	4,94,748	4,63,052	80,061	37,354	1,74,832
18	Manikganj & Dhaka-1, 2, 3, 12 & 13	5,51,118	3,22,779	88,702	19,296	39,291
19	Dhaka - 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11	4,63,123	3,13,115	24,069	30,263	79,057
20	Gazipur & Narshingdi	4,99,850	3,58,488	47,317	38,565	1,65,832
21	Narayanganj & Munshiganj	5,22,117	3,56,401	66,267	24,399	1,36,584
22	Rajbari & Faridpur	1,88,558	3,25,183	72,315	1,23,258	1,52,591
23	Gopalganj, Madaripur & Shariatpur	1,87,993	5,71,574	45,728	62,645	1,43,498
24	Sunamganj & Sylhet	1,71,857	4,06,769	2,23,436	86,655	2,41,165
25	Maulvibazar & Habiganj	1,74,255	3,65,022	2,94,254	22,288	2,06,754
26	Brahmanbaria & Comilla-1, 3, 4 & 6	3,66,542	3,12,167	1,93,147	25,314	69,505
27	Comilla & Chandpur	4,64,509	3,86,948	1,96,195	1,16,677	46,469
28	Feni, Noakhali & Lakshmipur	3,68,708	2,79,888	1,38,626	1,75,201	1,40,950
29	Chittagong	5,93,309	6,06,984	45,070	1,01,546	1,18,185
30	Cox's Bazar, K'chari, R'mati & Bandarban	1,60,375	2,21,084	24,123	1,08,494	1,57,354
	Probable Women seats won	**15**	**13**	**2**	**-**	**-**

Table - 3
General Seats Won by Different Parties
(Within women reserved seats)

Women Seat No	Name of Constituencies	General Constituency Nos	BNP	AL	JP	JI	Other	Total
			BNP	AL	JP	JI	Other	Total
1	Panchagarh, Thakurgaon & Dinajpur	1 - 11	1	9	0	1		11
2	Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat & Rangpur	*12 - 24	0	4	5	0		9
3	Kurigram & Gaibandha	25 - 33	0	1	8	0		9
4	Joypurhat & Bogra	*34 - 42	7	0	0	1		8
5	Sirajganj & Pabna	61 - 72	9	1	0	2		12
6	Nawabganj and Rajshahi	43-45 & 52 - 56	5	1	1	1		8
7	Naogaon & Natore	46- 51 & 57 - 60	4	4	0	2		10
8	Kushtia, Meherpur & Chuadanga	73 - 80	5	2	0	1		8
9	Jhinaidah, Magura & Narail	81 - 84 & 91 - 94	5	3	0	0		8
10	Jessore & Satkhira	85-90 & 105 - 109	0	6	0	5		11
11	Bagerhat & Khulna	95-104	3	5	0	2		10
12	Patuakhali, Barguna & Bhola	*110 - 120	1	7	0	0	IND (2)	10
13	Barisal, Pirojpur & Jhalakathi	121-131 & 132	6	4	1	0	WP (1)	12
14	Tangail	133 - 140	5	1	1	0	JSD (1)	8
15	Jamalpur & Sherpur	141 - 148	3	4	1	0		8
16	Mymensingh, Mymensingh & Netrokona	149 - 160	6	5	1	0		12
17	Netrokona & Kishoreganj	161 - 171	8	3	0	0		11
18	Manikganj & Dhaka-1, 2, 3, 12 & 13	172-175, 180-182 & 191-192	9	0	0	0		9
19	Dhaka- 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10 & 11	*183-190	6	0	0	0		6
20	Gazipur & Narshingdi	193-201	7	2	0	0		9
21	Narayanganj & Munshiganj	176-179 & 202-206	9	0	0	0		9
22	Rajbari & Faridpur	207-213	1	5	0	1		7
23	Gopalganj, Madaripur & Shariatpur	*214-222	0	8	0	0		8
24	Sunamganj & Sylhet	223-233	1	5	4	0	IOJ (1)	11
25	Maulvibazar & Habiganj	234-241	0	4	4	0		8
26	Brahmanbaria & Comilla-1, 3, 4 & 6	242-248 & 250, 251 & 253	7	0	2	0	IND (1)	10
27	Comilla & Chandpur	249, 252 &254-265	10	2	2	0		14
28	Feni, Noakhali & Lakshmipur	266-278	10	2	1	0		13
29	Chittagong	*279-293	7	5	0	1	NDP(1)	14
30	Cox's Bazar, K'chari, R'mati & Bandarban	294-300	1	5	0	1		7
	Total		136	98	31	18	7	290

* 1. Four seats vacated by H M Ershad
* 2. One seat vacated by Begum Khaleda Zia
* 3. One seat vacated by Tofael Ahmed
* 4. Two seats vacated by Begum Khaleda Zia
* 5. One seat vacated by Abdur Razzak
* 6. One seat vacated by Begum Khaleda Zia

Chart - 1

CHART - 1

30 Women's Constituencies based on delimitation as per Election Commission notice of 9 March 1991
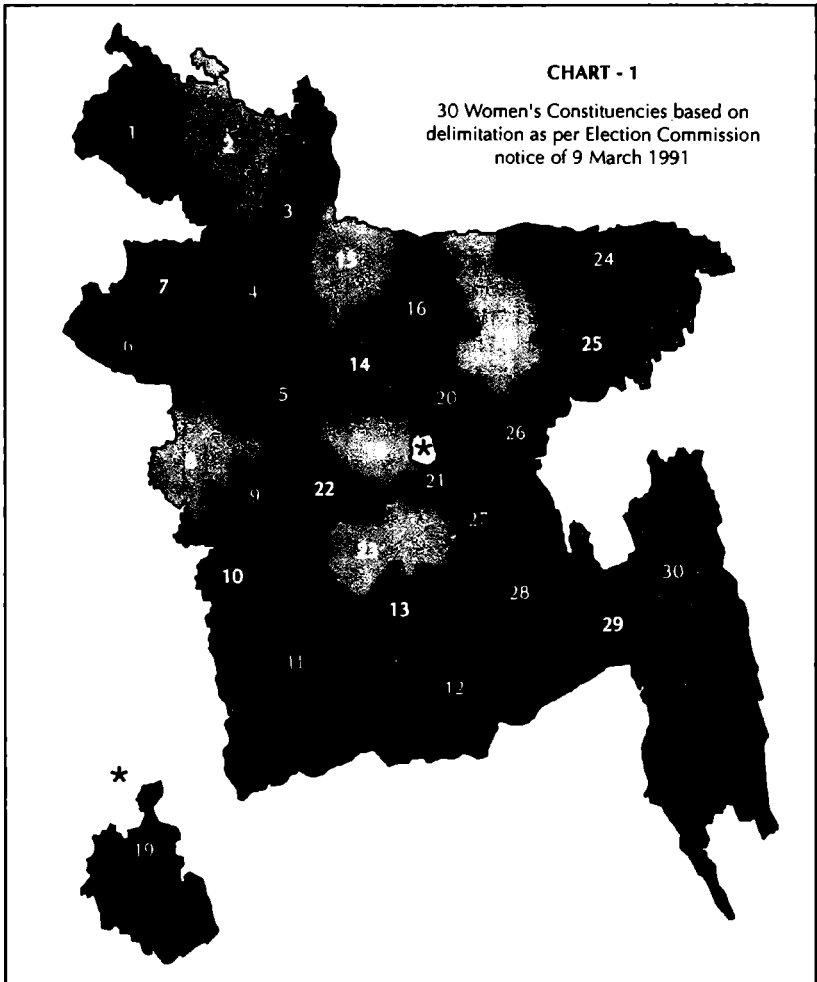
Chart - 2

Probable distributionof women seats
based on popular votes received by different
parties in the 30 Women's Constituencies

Chart–3

Probable 30 Reserved seats based on percentage of Total Popular Votes

Others 11% (3)

BNP 31% (9)

JI 12% (4)

- BNP
- AL
- JP
- JI
- Others

JP 12% (4)

AL 34% (10)

Chart– 4

Probable 30 reserved seats based on percentage of seats in Parliament

JI 6% (2)   Others 2%

BNP 47% (14)

JP 12% (4)

- BNP
- AL
- JP
- JI
- Others

AL 34% (10)
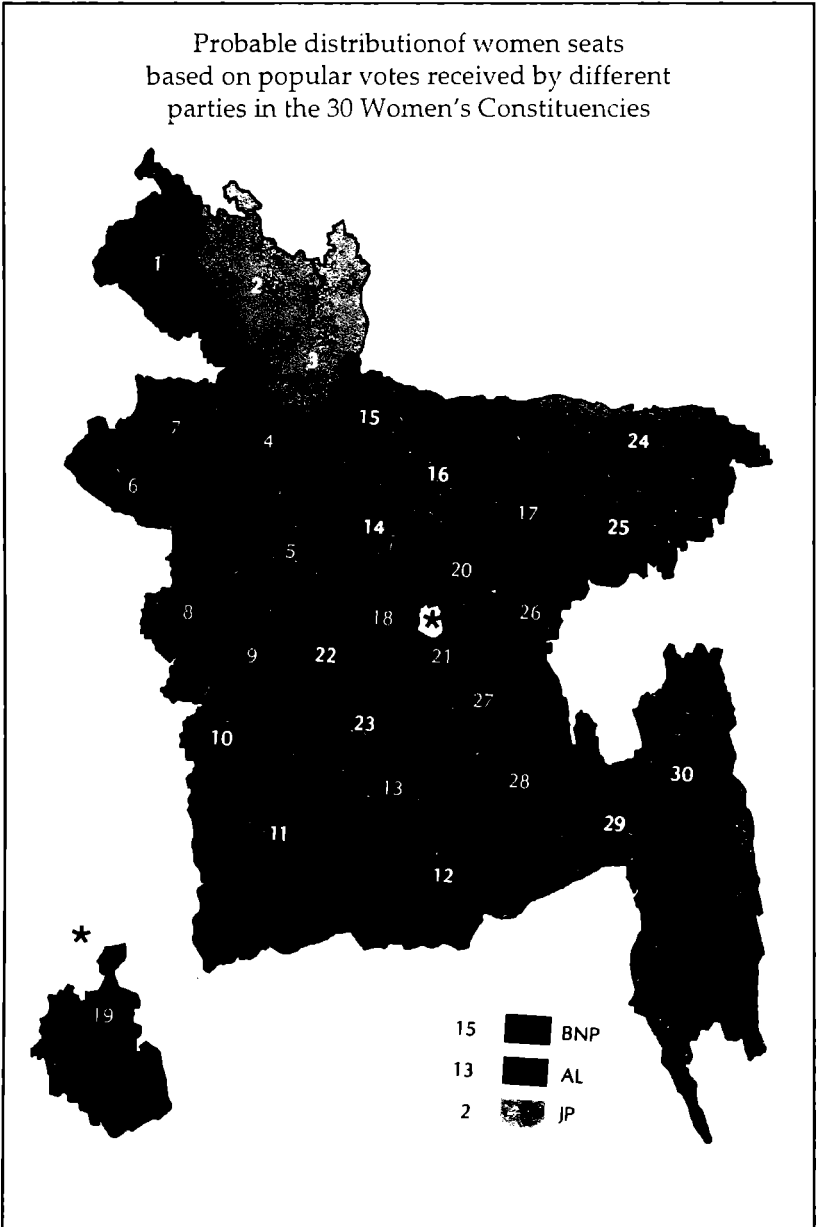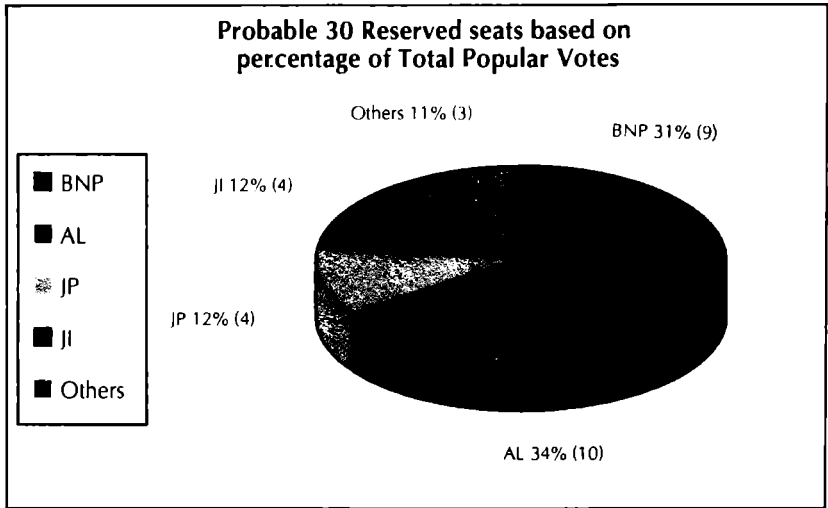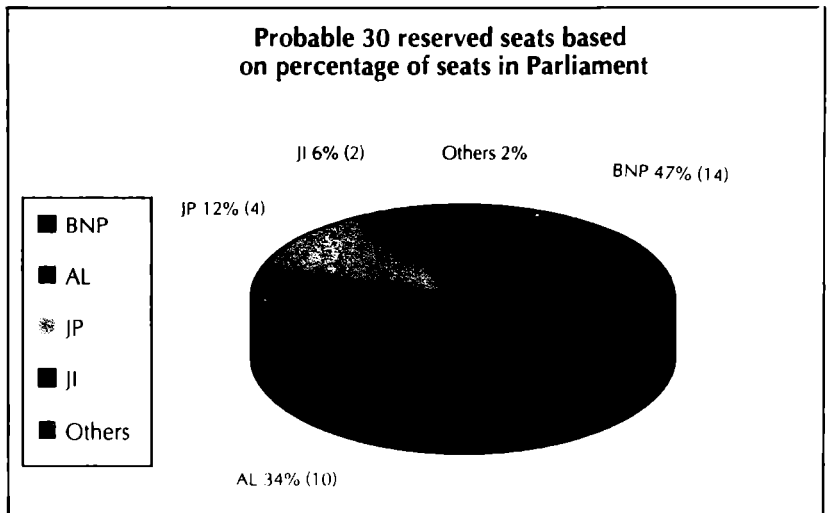
2

The following report, based on a survey of the PPRC done in September, 1994 was published in the weekly Holiday on October 7, 1994.

Pointing Fingers at the Politicians

Ataus Samad

Leaders of the main political parties of Bangladesh are clapping in joy and perhaps they are patting their own backs in appreciation of themselves upon being successfully obstinate enough to require the presence of a foreign mediator or helper in their midst during their dialogue. Maybe, they will be happier still if someone else, preferably a foreigner, does all the thinking on their behalf and produces a conclusion which they can put their signature to.

But the people of Bangladesh will hang their heads in shame because of the fact that their political leaders could not settle a domestic political issue themselves and so they needed foreign mediation. And the pity is greater because they, the people of Bangladesh, during their do-or-die struggle in 1990 to restore democracy had rightly rejected the advice of a number of foreign governments to start talks with military ruler General Ershad giving up their agitation on the street.

To whatever extent democracy lives in Bangladesh, it is because of the people. What has been lost in democratic practices and tradition in Bangladesh is due to the politicians. Such a situation is extremely disquieting. An opinion survey on the present situation carried out by the Power and Participation Research Centre, based in the capital, shows that 448 or 94 per cent of the 475 respondents including 53 visitors to the city believe that a crisis prevails in the country. Most of them perceive that the crisis is political.

The respondents also expressed their anxiety about the present crisis. Indeed, 58 per cent of the respondents said that they were very worried and another 34 per cent said that they were generally worried. Asked as to why were they worried, 21 per cent pointed to negative

impact of hartal, 20 per cent spoke about resultant uncertainty in the country's economy, 18 per cent said it was due to violence and insecurity, and 8 per cent feared the intolerant attitude of the political parties. Seen from any angle, the replies given by the respondents clearly point a finger at the politicians, their followers and their actions.

The largest proportion of respondents, 42 per cent, said that the present crisis had to be resolved through dialogue. Only 14 per cent said that acceptance of the demand for general elections under a neutral caretaker government was the answer, and indeed a very small number, representing just 2 per cent, said that the demand for caretaker government should not be accepted. In other words, the bigger number of people believed that a rational answer to the present crisis could be found if the parties to the dispute discussed the problems with an open and flexible mind.

But sadly enough, the largest group among the respondents, 45 per cent that is, was pessimistic about the resolution of the crisis. A significant number, representing 31 per cent or almost one-third of the respondents, was however optimistic. Which of these groups will be proved correct by the political leaders? For the sake of the country and also in order for themselves earning some genuine respect of the people, let the politicians oblige the optimists. Even better, if the representative of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth finds that he will not have to make an effort to bring about an agreement among the rival politicians and the political parties.

Note: The PPRC survey was carried out at 72 different localities of Dhaka city. The largest number of respondents, 319, were aged between 26 and 45. The respondents, 475 in total, included businessmen, professionals, working people, students, housewives and some unemployed people.

3

The following report, based on a 1991 survey of the BIDS was published in the weekly Dhaka Courier, March 15—21, 1991.

BIDS Undertakes Study on Voting Pattern

Qulsum Begum

Does the victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in the fifth parliamentary polls indicate a durable emerging voting pattern or was it by a fluke, resulting purely from voters' subjective preferences? Three researchers of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS): Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman and Dr. Binayak Sen, will try to answer this question in a paper being prepared from various data on the 27 February, 1991 elections.

The paper, a post-election result survey, will come as a sequel to the Power and Participation Study by BIDS, the first working paper of which was brought out after the 1990 upazila elections. At that time, the focus was on the phenomenon of violence interfering with the political process in Bangladesh. This time, as the election has been relatively free from violence, the focus has been shifted to the aspect of the pattern of people's choice.

The data being used to analyze the voting pattern have been gathered from Election commission sources, newspaper reports and from the BIDS survey conducted before the election. On the basis of preliminary findings Hossain Zillur Rahman said, the results of the 27 February, 1991 polls might indicate certain durable patterns emerging in the voting behavior of the people. With the help of two maps, one showing the positions of the winners and another depicting that of the runners-up, Dr. Rahman explained that BNP dominates the middle belt of Bangladesh while the non-BNP parties cover the northern, southern and north-eastern belts. AL dominates Dinajpur, the southern belt, Sylhet and the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

"We are seeing whether the BNP and the non-BNP strongholds have their own distinct characteristics," said Dr. Rahman. "If we can find identifiable differences between the two sets then we can perhaps

conclude that the voting has followed a definite and deep-rooted pattern. If not, then we can describe the election results as a surface phenomenon." Dr. Rahman was of the opinion that the BNP belt comprised the relatively prosperous areas whereas the AL and the 8-party alliance strongholds were in the relatively depressed areas where economic and social disparities are more pronounced. "This also corresponds to our pre-election survey where we found that people of the lower strata tended to support the 8-party alliance (comprising AL, BKSAL, CPB, NAP among others) more."   .

The BIDS pre-election survey had projected more popular support for AL and the 8-party alliance. Dr. Rahman said, the election results also revealed this in the sense that the 8-party alliance got the biggest share of the total number of votes cast. Also, the runners-up and the winners taken together, AL would easily be leading BNP.

The level of contest between the winner and the runner-up would also help analyze the voting pattern, explained Dr. Rahman: "If the difference between the winner and the runner-up is minimal, we can assume that the deciding swing resulted from less durable subjective preferences. If the margin is wide, then the swing has to be attributed to more deep-rooted reasons." (See Annexure-B)

Dr. Rahman was of the opinion that Jatiyo Party's victory in Rangpur stemmed from purely local reasons. Two significant changes from the 1990 upazila polls can be observed this time. The map of the 1990 polls shows AL having a stronghold in the Mymensingh belt. This time AL is almost overrun in that region by BNP. Mymensingh is one of the agriculturally prosperous districts, pointed out Dr. Rahman. The 1990 map also showed Jamaat-e Islam holding its fort along the western border. This time many of the Jamaat candidates have been outvoted by BNP. And in many places, the Jamaat-BNP contest was rather tough.

On the whole the BIDS survey seems to indicate that BNP and AL are going to create a balance of power with Jamaat being an additional factor in certain regions.

To help the analysis, one could consult the data on the candidates collected during the BIDS pre-election survey. In total 605 candidates of 151 constituencies were surveyed. It was observed that in general, commercial capital, i.e. large and small traders, and professionals dominate the ranks of candidates (82%) while those associated with

productive sectors, i.e. agriculture and industry, constitute a distant second (18%). Little difference was seen in terms of the class-occupational background of candidates amongst AL, BNP and JP. Meanwhile the ranks of Jaamat candidates were dominated by professionals (60%).The ranks of left alliances were evenly divided amongst agriculturists (23%), small traders (21%) and professionals (38%).

Other interesting observations of the survey on candidates are:

1. Candidates were overwhelmingly (76%) from the middle aged group, i.e. 40-50 years of age.

2. Younger candidates (30-40 years of age) were more pronounced in BNP (18%), JP (21%), and left alliances (29%) as distinct from AL and Jamaat (11-12%).

3. 88 per cent of the candidates were graduates and above including an overall high educational status among the candidates. `Below SSC` status applied to only 2 per cent of the candidates.

4. 69 per cent of all candidates were from the higher income group.

5. The incidence of higher income group candidates was relatively more pronounced in AL, BNP and JP (75-85%) as compared to Jamaat and the left alliance (38-41%).

6. An overwhelming urban bias was noted in the residential status of candidates (72%). Only 8 per cent were regular residents of villages and another 20 per cent of upazila (thana) headquarters.

7. AL, BNP and JP candidates were relatively less rural based (18-25%) as compared to Jamaat and the left alliance candidates (31-47%).

8. One fifth of the candidates were alleged to be associated with criminal elements.

9. Nearly one quarter of all candidates (24%) had no active involvement in the development affairs of the constituencies. Like absentee landlordism, this pointed towards a serious problem of absentee politicians.

10. Of the total number of candidates from all parties, only 33 per cent or one third abided by the government stipulated

expenditure ceiling of Tk. 3,00,000.

11. 13 per cent of the candidates appear to exceed an expenditure level of Tk. 10,00,000.

Bangladesh
Electoral Constituency 1991
Victories Party Position

INDEX

■	BNP	140
▨	AL	88

Power and Participation
Research Centre (PPRC)
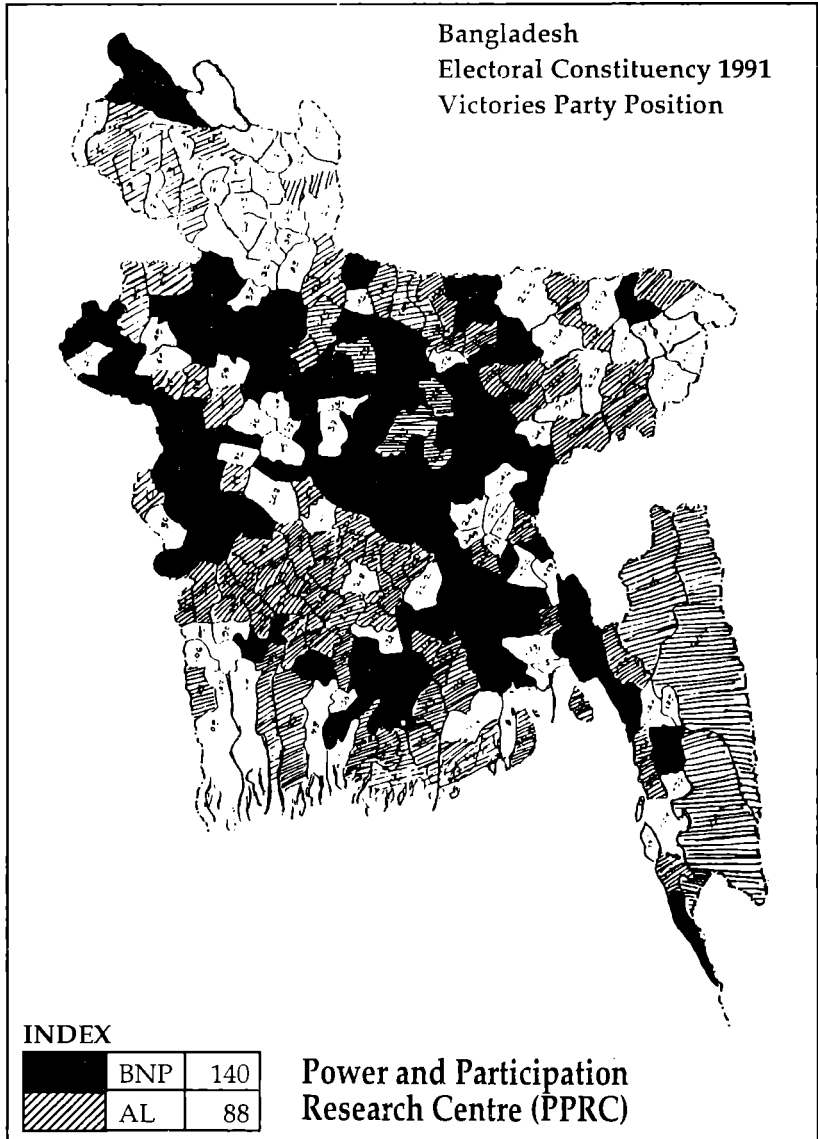
Voters vs Candidates

Moazzem Hossain

The relationship between the voters and the candidates is direct and mutual. The candidates ask for votes and the voters turn out to elect their representatives. The voters also have some expectations from the public representatives which they must strive to fulfill.

The behavior of the candidates and that of the voters are based on this mutual relationship. The candidates are the ones who try to win over or please the voters at the time of election, never mind what they do later.

A reporter is assigned to write profiles of candidates, to report about actions and reactions of the voters and to cover responses of the candidates to the voters' behavior. He should strive to understand both the voters and candidates in order to report their conduct and behavior objectively .

The public representatives, or those who aspire to be so, have to maintain an active relationship with the voters at any given time and need to keep it up. But the voter-candidate relationship, or the behavioral pattern thereof, comes into the main focus after the nomination papers are filed. The candidates begin to expedite their communication with the voters after the scrutiny of the nomination papers and publication of the final list of candidates. The voters then begin to take mental preparation about whom to vote. The candidates' conduct and behavior influence the choices of the voters. For reporting purposes, the behavioral pattern of both the candidates and the voters, which forms an interactive process in a dynamic setting, is very much a relevant field for overall electoral coverage by the media. Here are some areas which merit close attention:

Scenario after Nomination

Submission and withdrawal of nomination papers are an important matter for local politics. The process involves hectic activities and cross-currents that have bearings on the conduct of the candidates and the voters. A reporter might pick up interesting candidates to develop profiles, write on the performance of the sitting candidates and focus on linkages of the candidates with the development activities, law and order situation, etc. Pressures from political parties, local goons, voters or moneyed candidates may compel the most competent candidates to withdraw their candidature. Withdrawal of candidature of genuine candidates for reasons of political polarization and party/individual/business interest affects local politics and the voters. Reporting such events or developments can contribute to a democratic culture.

Direct Interaction between Candidates and Voters

The most direct interactions between the voters and the candidates take place when the election campaign starts. During this phase, the candidates launch their campaigns projecting their cases for voters' support. The voters keep a careful watch on how the candidates approach them, address the issues that are relevant to them (voters) and demonstrate their (candidates') response to the same issues. In this process the voters' behavior and conduct are shaped. Their evaluation about the relative merits of candidates starts. The candidates also make adjustments, whenever necessary, in their strategy.

Party Affiliation

Party affiliation of an individual candidate is an important element in his/her interaction with the voters, because the party programs and stances broadly determine how s/he will act. However, the independent candidates enjoy a fair amount of liberty in this regard.

Family Tradition

A family might be linked with a major political party for generations. A candidate from such a family might thus have acquired popularity

and familiarity in the locality or in the constituency. Candidates representing families with huge landed property and having businesses may be linked with the local elites and the monied class. When a candidate from a political, influential or wealthy family approaches for votes, the voters are likely to get influenced in his/her favor. On the other hand, an individual candidate who does not have enough familial political background and who is not a moneyed person may be turned down by the majority of the voters. His or her individual merits as a candidate and even the influence of the political party supporting his/her candidature may become immaterial.

Money and Muscle Power

Money also controls the behavior pattern of a candidate. The Election Commission sets the election expense at a certain limit [for example, Tk.300,000 in the fifth parliamentary election] for a candidate. A candidate may easily cross the expense limit set by the Election Commission, because the Election Commission cannot take any step to compel the candidates not to exceed the expense limit.

For the past several years the trend in Bangladeshi political culture has been to use muscle power to intimidate the voters to vote or not to vote for a particular candidate. What is said to be black money is used for such practices. "Goons, Guns and Gold" have often largely shaped the behavior of the voters in the autocratic political culture of Bangladesh.

To understand a candidate's behavior, one has therefore, to find out the relationship between the organizations, money and muscle power.

To draw the voters' attention a candidate reacts differently on different issues. A party candidate and an independent candidate react differently on local and national issues. An independent candidate is free of party bindings, but a party candidate has to obey the party mandate which often limits his/her own judgement and choice.

Status and Residence of the Candidates

A candidate's behavior is largely shaped by his/her educational/economic status and permanent residence. In Bangladesh 75 per cent

of the total population is illiterate. Those who get nominated to run in both national and local elections are usually educated persons, falling in the categories of relatively higher income groups.

A survey by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Study (BIDS) shows that 69 per cent of the candidates who ran in the fifth Parliamentary elections came from higher income groups and they were nominated mainly by the large political parties. Of the candidates who contested the fifth Parliamentary elections, only 8 per cent were regular residents in villages and 20 per cent resided in the Upazila headquarters. The rest, 72 per cent, lived in the urban areas (Dhaka and other towns). This clearly indicates the detachment of the voters from the candidates. According to the same survey, 38 per cent of the electorate had no idea about the candidates. This indicates, as the BIDS survey commented: "a serious problem of social distance between candidates and constituency".

Voters' Behavior

It is important for a reporter or anyone writing on elections to know how the voters participate in the electoral process. Voters' behavior is largely shaped by the level of their perception about who rules the country, as well as factors such as participation in political activities, association with the development activities, literacy rate, developmental role of the candidates in constituencies, expectations of fair elections, etc.

To report on such matters, a reporter or his/her newspaper/ network can conduct field investigations, opinion polls, interview different people and take the help of existing reports. For example, reporters can get good background information from the BIDS survey, done in 1991.

The voters have the scope for direct participation in the voting procedure mainly at three stages:
a.   Nomination,
b.   Election campaign, and
c.   Casting of votes.

a. Nomination: The voters are not directly linked with this process. But they can persuade a candidate to run in an election. The voters can also put pressure or can lobby in favor of a particular candidate

to get nomination from a political party. In the same way, they can play an important role at times in influencing the withdrawal of candidature of a party nominee or an independent aspirant.

In the Bangladeshi political culture, the major political parties hardly take the opinions of the public (voters) into consideration in the nomination process. The party politics is controlled from the metropolitan headquarters and all major decisions are taken in the party headquarters, far beyond the reach of the electorates.

b. Election Campaign: All voters do not take part in the election campaigns which at times take on a festive mood, but many who are not eligible voters take part in the campaign. The male voters are more active in taking part in the election campaign than the female voters.

During the campaign period, the candidates directly communicate with voters mainly through: (i) individual or personal meetings; (ii) election rallies and (iii) public meetings.

Besides, a candidate also communicates with the voters through agents and audio-visual materials such as advertisements, manifestos, booklets, posters, leaflets, banners, festoons, graffiti, etc.

c. Casting of Votes: When a voter finally goes to cast his/her vote, s/he takes several factors, including his/her personal information about the candidates, into consideration. Such as:

1. Age, education and occupation of candidates,
2. Economic status of candidates,
3. Party affiliation of candidates,
4. Oratorical ability of candidates,
5. Public relations of candidates,
6. Perceived moral character of candidates,
7. Candidates' involvement in local-level development and other activities,
8. Any political issue or trend, dominant either at national or local level.

This is, by no means, an exhaustive list of factors that influence the voters' final decision at the polling booths. There are several other factors that may influence the voters' final choice.

The influence of the family members on the voters should not be

discounted here. A large number of the young, female and illiterate voters may become influenced by the older members of their families, close relatives, opinion leaders and neighbors. The opinion leaders often control vote banks. They have great influence on the voters.

And of course, election campaigns play a vital role in influencing the voters' choices about whom to vote. Voters' age, gender, religion, marital status, education, occupation, economic status, access to mass media and political affiliations influence their decision making process. These are just some of the factors. There may be other factors too, from the voters' side.

The Swinging Factors

This is the phenomenon of a rapid change in the popularity of a party at the national level, or of a candidate in a particular constituency, as one approaches the day of election. A swing depends on many factors which have an influence on the voters participation. Often some single incident may create a mass emotional upheaval, thus changing the mood of the electorate. The `last minute' swing may be the result of propaganda.

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Rapport for Reporting

Obaidul Huq

Journalists have to keep in constant touch with people who have roles to play in all matters of public interest. These people include politicians, businessmen and personalities of many other professions. They, so to say, have to move round these people, not as satellites, but as full-time watch-dogs of public concerns.

The professional obligation of the journalists require them to develop a human relationship with those who are required to serve public interests. Their chief function is to gather information of all kinds and report everything that is happening - at home or abroad. Their commitment is to present today's world to the readers and to interpret it according to their light. Strained relations with the politicians and other important actors might impair their service to the public. Friendly relations with the politicians, on the other hand, may ensure better understanding and an easier information flow. A reporter is required to develop the understanding that when he is interviewing a politician he is doing so in the interest of the public as well as of the person being interviewed.

The politicians also talk to the journalists in the public interest. The common purpose of both is to serve public interests. The bottom-line is that both the reporters and the politicians must serve the public interest. When this understanding develops among both the parties, there is a lesser chance of conflict.

Now, a politician or a businessman indulging in activities prejudicial to public interest will not trust the journalists either too far or too near. A politician or a businessman will never respond on matters that they fear to disclose.

But the journalists will have to maintain regular contact with the politicians and the businessmen who have information involving public interest. The journalists must talk to the concerned politicians or the businessmen or others in public life on public affairs. A reporter should try to convince the politicians, the businessmen and any other individuals concerned in any way with public interests that he wants to help them by giving full coverage of their version. An honest public figure serving and connected with public interest will gladly respond to the reporter's enquiries and extend full cooperation. He will naturally treat a reporter as a friend. But one who serves his own interest at the expense of public interest is likely to look upon a reporter as an adversary.

We were told on International Press Freedom Day [May 5, 1995] that last year 103 journalists were murdered and over 130 were rotting in jails. This suggests that journalists who dare to exercise press freedom run the risk of losing their limbs and lives. Press freedom is always in conflict with vested interest in a world hostile to democracy.

Professional integrity

Journalists, we repeat, should develop friendly relations with the politicians, businessmen and common people, but never at the cost of professional honesty and integrity. Sacrificing one's professional integrity to earn the confidence of one's information sources is opportunism and never conscientious journalism.

Speech reporting

First, to qualify to be a journalist one has to know the techniques of professional journalism no matter what order s/he comes from. Then, one needs to know the newspaper s/he works for. If it is a political party newspaper, one does not have much choice but to submit to the party interest. Being on the payroll of the party, the editor also has to toe the party line. He has already accepted the party brief. The journalists working for a party newspaper have to faithfully follow the policies that have been laid down and serve the party interest.

While reporting speeches or a mass rally, a reporter with a party paper may be required to sacrifice objectivity to expediency. Here, the writer is a ghost writer writing on the dotted lines. In a privately-owned newspaper, a dignified and qualified journalist can enjoy

freedom of reporting facts only if the owner believes in true journalism.

A qualified journalist is expected to have knowledge of different orders. He must have fair knowledge of humanities, science and many other subjects. More importantly, he must be mentally strong and honest. A qualified and good journalist reports what he knows for certain to be true. When he comes across a fact, he waits for the "sacrament of confirmation".

In case of speech reporting, all speeches made at a function do not get equal treatment in our newspapers. Different newspapers give different treatment to different speeches. It is not infrequently that the question of giving space to the speaker is determined by the man who speaks rather than what he says.

Morally speaking, the journalists should always be on the side of truth. Anything unethical should be unacceptable to them. They should believe that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right. A responsible journalist does not hesitate to apologize for mistakes made. S/he knows that *Homer sometimes nods.*

The journalists should always bear in mind the motto: "Facts are sacred, comment is free." One may not accept an editorial comment which reflects the free opinion of a newspaper. But facts cannot be distorted without hurting a paper's credibility.

A really free press can function and flourish only in a democratic atmosphere. In this respect, the journalists have greater responsibilities than any other professional groups. Napoleon's observation that "Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets," is a frank admission of the great power that the press wields in a democratic set-up.

Rigging and other unfair practices are totally alien to democracy and destroy the democratic foundation of a country. Rigging and use of "black" money, at one time, made a mockery of the system of elections and held democracy in contempt.

At the time of a referendum years ago, a reporter of a London newspaper asked a voter on the street, "Did you go to vote?"

"No" was the reply.

"Why" asked the reporter.

Replied the voter: "There is no need to go to vote. Because, if I say `yes', they will record it `yes'; if I say `no', they will record it `yes' Whether I say `yes' or `no', it is `yes' all the time."

This became election *a la* Bangladesh.

We have to settle the question of democracy first. Without democracy elections will be farcical exercises.

Elections must be free, fair and impartial in the truest sense to prevent democracy from collapsing. It is a shame that we still have to plead and fight for free and fair elections. The creeping fear that *Ram*'s vote may be cast by *Shyam* shows that free and fair voting is still not a guaranteed fact and, therefore, democracy is unsteady.

Close monitoring of the politicians and their performances in the field or constituencies is a popular phenomenon in democratic countries. They represent the people and therefore deserve to be monitored. The journalists with due respect to their privacy, report extensively their performances and level of responsibility.

It is a very difficult job for journalists to monitor the political leaders in a third world country. Monitoring the political leaders, reporting their performance in their constituencies presuppose democratic tolerance and temperament. Here such conditions are conspicuous by their absence. The journalists run a risk while reporting on public figures.

Despite the lapses and risks, journalists must strive to report faithfully and truthfully everything that happens and touches public life. Newspapers will have to be faithful and truthful in the coverage of the political events. Their inviolable obligation is to be aware and make the public aware of the importance of free and fair elections as an indispensable means of setting up a democratic government. When and where possible interest is concerned, they should be fearless crusaders, vox populi, owing allegiance to the ideals of journalism. Only then can they elevate themselves to the status and statue of the fourth estate.

Manifesting Manifestos

Dilara Begum

At this point in time when we are hoping for a free, fair, and meaningful general election, a reflection on election manifestos of different political parties would perhaps benefit all concerned.

It is high time to recognize that election manifestos should not be mere cries to cajole the voters. The few opinion polls that have been carried out recently show the electorate to be mature and aware of the basic issues that they expect their representatives to resolve. The question is, do the political parties comprehend this development and are they capable of keeping pace with the electorate?

While this is a question for the politicians to ponder, newspersons could serve a two-fold purpose by paying adequate and due attention to the issue of the manifestos. An important part of voter education is to inform and explain to readers, listeners and viewers what the political parties pledge to do for the people if elected to the legislature. Secondly, by doing so, journalists can and should, persuade the politicians to be more transparent and down to earth about their intents or aspirations. If there is an alert media vigil, the political parties have to give careful attention to what they say in way of electoral promises. Consequently, a pressure will be there to hold them to their words.

When election fever runs high, it is quite easy to see and show things in accentuated colors. One can complacently play with words, to no one's benefit. Such rigmaroles are not going to pay as voters mature. Journalists should help the electorate get to the heart of the wordy pamphlets which pass as manifestos. The media, on behalf of the masses, could point out some dos and don'ts for the political parties.

Since we take the 1991 elections as a departure from the previous eye-wash practices, it may be worthwhile to look back into the manifestos announced by the major political parties at that time. Unfortunately, even those had some common attributes which the political parties could do without. One could also question the farsightedness or practicality of the election commitments.

Going through the 1991 election manifestos of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Awami League, Jatiyo Party, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, and the Communist Party of Bangladesh, it seems, all of them carefully avoided self evaluations at varying degrees. Interestingly, the left wing parties and the religion based party JI were more clear in their pledges in comparison with the others.

The smaller left-leaning parties usually upheld their ideals and mainly attacked deposed President Ershad. Jamaat-e-Islami played on religious feelings and attacked mainly the AL and its secular ideal. The BNP, AL and JP competed for past glories or 'achievements', obliquely, and sometimes openly, slinging mud at each other.

All three had begun with historical backgrounds of the country with very little objectivity in this regard. Instead of being forward looking, all major parties used the manifestos as chances to glorify their own past and malign the past of the others. While many of them alluded to past 'autocratic' rules, they seemed to be avoiding the word 'military dictatorship.' Ershad's JP, however, claimed that it had brought an end to military rule in the country!

BNP called the Awami League's rule from 1971 to 1975 a "nightmare" for the nation while it said that Ershad's rule was full of conspiracy. It also propagated that AL would oust Islam from the country if voted to power. AL likewise, maligned BNP's rule, saying that BNP would lock democracy in the cantonment. The political parties seemed to be more interested in chanting hollow slogans than in making specific and sincere commitments. It would even appear that they did not take their manifestos seriously, let alone expect the voters to do so. It would be fair to say that each of the above mentioned parties itemized what they wanted to do in different sectors but most of them did not specify how they intended to achieve their goals. Besides, in most cases, even the goals were not clearly spelt out.

In his book *The Shahabuddin Interregnum* (1993) Mohammad A

Hakim noted that the election manifestos of almost all parties pledged corruption-free administration and society; a non-aligned foreign policy; less dependence on foreign aid; guaranteed fundamental rights; and guarantee of food, clothing, education, medicare, and shelter to the people. But none of the parties gave any precise plan to realize these objectives.

According to Hakim, BNP and AL mainly differed on:

i)   "AL was committed to the Westminster-style regime, and so were most of the smaller parties. The BNP manifesto surprisingly avoided the debate over the form of government by making a vague commitment to establish a `multi-party democracy';

ii) "AL stood for secularism as one of the fundamental state principles. This was recognized in the original (unamended) constitution of the country. But BNP stood for 'absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah', as was enshrined in the constitution by an amendment during the Zia regime;

iii) "AL propagated 'Bengali nationalism', but BNP emphasized 'Bangladeshi nationalism'."

Based on the 19-point program of Ziaur Rahman, BNP manifesto promised to establish an 'honest government.' Other pledges that BNP made include: abolition of all black laws (i.e. Special Powers Act), freedom of the press, autonomy to the electronic media, independence of the judiciary, rule of law, corruption free administration and creation of a strong and disciplined army for the protection of the country's independence and sovereignty. BNP gave priority to the agricultural sector, free economy and foreign investment. The manifesto praised the role of BNP's student front JCD. It professed a non-aligned foreign policy on the basis of friendship with all countries, particularly with the Muslim countries and neighbors.

Awami League too made similar pledges as regards independent judiciary, repeal of black laws, on-aligned foreign policy, positive role of the military and corruption free administration. Notably, it vowed to restore the original 1972 constitution and repeal the indemnity ordinance so that the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and four national leaders could be tried. As for economic policy, AL emphasized a market economy encouraging private sector and foreign

investment along with strengthening the existing public sector industries. AL was also against the policy of wholesale denationalization of industries and financial institutions pursued by the government of Zia and Ershad.

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh said it would make the country an Islamic republic as per the tenets of the Quran and Sunnah. It carefully avoided giving any historical account. The JI made prodemocracy pledges and tried to allay people's fear of an Islamic state saying that safety of life/property/human rights/honor would be guaranteed to the citizens irrespective of caste, creed, religion and race. It also said that education and work areas for men and women would be segregated so that there can be no scope of adultery. In addition to the promises to honest political leadership, independence of the judiciary and rule of law, it pledged it self to simplify legal procedures so that courts can dispose of cases quickly and effectively. It said women would be granted rights as per the Quran and Sunnah. Jamaat's other electoral promises included: a society free from bribery/corruption, use of Bangla in government offices, separation of the prosecution and investigation branches of the police, appointment of people in foreign missions, self defence training to women so on and so forth.

The JP too did not go into history but concentrated on its achievements (listed as many as 50 of them). It also tried to justify and portray a noble image of JP's stand on elections. The other promises it made include: free economy, safeguarding cultural and social/ economic rights of ethnic minorities, upholding Bangladeshi culture, establishing a presidential system of government, involving the military in development activities so on and so forth.

The CPB stressed the need to unite all pro-liberation forces and repeal the undemocratic constitutional amendments. It said that the military should be kept neutral of politics. The CPB expressed a strongly anti-communal stand. Its manifesto gave specific economic programs, emphasizing the public sector and involving the interests of the industrial workers, peasantry and land laborers.

Now as the sixth parliamentary polls approach, one has to keep in mind some new polarizations that have already taken place in politics. These changes may subtly affect the electoral stance of different parties. Some areas where developments can be expected include: economy, religious views, attitude towards India and attitude towards

the donor block.

1o help a meaningful electoral process take root in the country, one task for the media would be to persuade politicians to reverse the situation which has been described by Hakim in the following way:

" Election manifestos are not given much importance by the conscious section of voters in Bangladesh. They find them full of big promises but never kept by a party when voted to power. This skepticism is the outcome of deprivation experienced by the voters under the past regimes."

Chart 1

**Ideological Orientation and Programmatic Stand
of Some Major Parties in the 1991 Parliamentary Election**

Bangladesh Nationalist Party:

Bangladeshi nationalism
Islamic principles
Pro-western leanings
Market economy
Presidential form of government

Bangladesh Awami League:

Bengali nationalism
Secularism
Friendly relations with India
Mixed economy
Parliamentary form of government
Trial of Mujib's killers

Jatiyo Party

Bangladeshi nationalism
Islamic principles
Pro-western leanings
Balance between powers of president and parliament

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh

Islamic state based on sovereignty of Allah
Islamic nationalism
Anti-Indianism
Friendly relations with Muslim countries
Islamization of life and society

Communist Party of Bangladesh

Bengali nationalism
Secularism
Pro-Soviet leanings(The USSR was still intact them)
Socialism
Parliamentary form of government

Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League

Bengali nationalism
Secularism
Pro-Soviet leanings
Socialism
Parliamentary form of government
Trial of Mujib's killers

Chart 1 indicates that in terms of ideological orientation and programmatic stand there was not much difference between the BNP and the JP. Three of the major parties - AL, BKSAL and CPB - had some similarities in their ideological and programmatic orientations,. The JI with its emphasis on Islamization of life and society was totally different from the other major parties.

Source: Hakim, 1993

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Meet the Press

Sakhawat Ali Khan

The political parties, Election Commission, different research organizations and election monitoring groups routinely organize press conferences on matters relating to elections, to attract and influence the media on their behalf and to disseminate information they generate for public knowledge and use. Reaching the media with a message is the main objective of a press conference. The political parties and others who work on elections and issues concerning democracy want the media to convey their messages, ideologies and information to the public. A press conference on elections or democratic issues can be organized at any time of the year, but the ones organized during the election campaign deserve greater attention.

A press conference brings to the media some ready-made information. But a responsible media person is very careful about a press conference. A reporter can develop an ordinary story with information s/he gathers from a press conference. But sometimes s/he might get tips in a press conference which leads him/her to go after incidents and characters and dig deep into an issue which might result in big stories. Watergate scandal stories were results of constant investigation by two young journalists who, in their life-time, have become legends in investigative journalism. An ordinary burglary tipped them into an outstanding political scandal.

Preparation for a Press Conference

Some ready-made information: hand-outs, press releases, research reports, books, etc. are usually available in a press conference. Reporters also face there the public figures, candidates, election officials, poll watchers and professionals among others. They get an

opportunity to raise questions and seek clarifications.

With written documents and information that are derived from the question-answer session they can write a story. But those who want to do a good piece must take some preparations before they come to the press conference. For example, before one goes to a press conference during the campaign period, a good understanding and knowledge of the following things among others might be of great help:

a. The electoral history of Bangladesh and its electoral system,

b. Election laws and their loopholes,

c. Behind-the-screen electoral alliances,

d. Strengths and weaknesses of different political parties,

e. Instances of past malpractices in elections,

f. In case the organizer of the press conference is a major political party, the history of the party and profiles of the leaders, the party manifestos and criticisms against the party,

g. In case the organizer of the press conference is a research organization or a poll monitoring group, its published reports, books, past records and credibility of information which it has generated,

h. In case the organizer of the press conference is the Election Commission, who is who in the Election Commission Secretariat; its organogram; power, duties and responsibilities of different election executives and officials; etc. A visit to the public relations officer's desk might be useful.

To develop a good understanding about the whole election affair one needs to collect the available research monographs, reports of the election monitoring groups, books written by scholars, handbooks of election reporting if there is any and publications of the Election Commission. There are several organizations, and of course newspaper morgues, which preserve newspaper clippings which might also provide a good information base.

Ask intelligent questions: Asking intelligent and appropriate questions is a crucial thing in a press conference. The reporter might get good tips for follow-up reporting and investigation in the question-answer session. For asking intelligent questions, one needs to quickly

go through the written documents given in the press conference. Sometimes, the organizers send written documents to the press before the press conference. Those covering the press conference should go through these and frame questions beforehand. Besides, as it proceeds, the press conference may create grounds for fresh questions.

Don't Irritate: It is not wise to ask irrelevant questions that may irritate the speakers or organizers of the press conference. Let them make their points. Ask questions for clarification, but don't show your liking or disliking. Encourage the speakers to talk straight and to-the-point. Good questions may lead the organizers to be more free and frank.

If the answer to a question is vague or unclear a reporter should firmly point it out and may insist on clear answers. But s/he must not become excited or angry. Even if the speaker attacks the press the reporter should remain calm. A reporter, shall under no circumstances, ask an indecent question. But a reporter should certainly be granted the freedom to report the atmosphere of a press conference if required.

Be Equipped and Attentive: Since politicians can be very sensitive during the election period, it may be useful to carry a tape recorder and make full use of it. After all, one needs to be prepared for controversies and denials. Notes or memory could fail one too.

A reporter is required to be attentive during the press conference. S/he must take detailed notes of the responses to the questions asked by other reporters. Election time press conferences deserve special and alert attention. While these may sometimes be repetitive propaganda, quite often they may reveal sudden shifts or new trends. Reporters must also have a clear idea of what they want to learn from the callers of the press conference.

Post-election Press Conference

A press conference may be organized by both winning and losing candidates/parties. Such a press conference can be organized in the evening of the election day or the day after. In the 1991 parliamentary elections, the Awami League organized a press conference in Dhaka on the evening of the election day and accused BNP of engaging in subtle rigging. The press conference was so crowded with local and foreign journalists of both print and electronic media that not every

journalist present could get a place to sit.

To become an active participant in a post-election press conference, one needs to have in hand the election results, partial or full, and all other statistics generated by the political parties, Election Commission, research organizations, poll monitors, etc.

In a post election press conference by the wining party, a reporter may ask questions about how the winners wish to implement their electoral promises. If the party chief is present in the conference, he/s/he may be asked questions regarding formation of the cabinet.

A post-election press conference of the less successful or the defeated candidate or party may be surcharged with emotion. A reporter needs to become more careful while attending such press conferences, especially if the party concerned has had an unexpected set-back or defeat in the election. The party leaders may, of course, be asked about their future role as the opposition political force.

Section

6

General Elections:
British and Pakistan Periods

Sakhawat Ali Khan

Professor David Robertson has opined in the Penguin Dictionary of Politics: "an electoral system is a method used to translate the votes for candidates in an election into an allocation of seats or a decision as to who has won" (p.100). This is a short but intelligent definition of an electoral system.

Three broad types of electoral systems may be distinguished in the contemporary world. These are: (a) Simple Plurality System; (b) Proportional Representation System and (c) Majoritarian System (Robertson 1987:101).

In Bangladesh, the British pattern - the Simple Plurality System - is more or less followed. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins the election and there is no redistribution of votes after the count. In this system, a candidate may be elected with minority of popular votes if s/he simply gets the highest number of votes among all the contesting candidates.

In the Proportional Representation System both the majority and the minority of the people who vote in an election are represented. In this system, large multi-seat constituencies are created and seats are allocated in proportion to voters' expressed preferences. For example, in an election under this system, votes in a big constituency are split among the parties in a ratio 3:2:1 where six seats are to be allocated. The party getting highest number of votes gets 3 seats; the party getting second highest number of votes gets 2 seats and the third party gets 1 seat. In a Simple Plurality System it would have been possible for the party getting the highest number of votes to capture all six seats in case the big constituency was divided into six smaller

ones. In this system, therefore, the constituencies are always large. For instance, in Israel, the whole country is a single constituency. Large constituencies make greater representation of minorities possible. However, in this system, difficulty of allocating seats may require some redistribution of votes and second preferences of voters may then be counted.

One must get majority of popular votes (not simply a plurality of votes) to win elections in a **Majoritarian Electoral System**. If no one gets such a majority of votes in the first count, a second balloting or a second counting takes place in which the votes of the less successful candidates are redistributed according to the second preferences registered by their supporters.

All these systems (and many other mixed systems where details of one may vary considerably from the others) have some merits and demerits. The system followed in our country was perhaps designed to find the most popular candidate in a way which is clear and comprehensive. The British colonial rulers introduced the system in undivided India and the system, with little modifications, is still in practice in our country. The indirect electoral system introduced by the military ruler Ayub Khan in the sixties was abandoned after his fall and the old system was reintroduced in Bangladesh. Apart from the martial law periods in our country, most of the elections were held under the Simple Plurality System.

Under a democratic political structure, as we have in Bangladesh now, the citizens' expectations are that the elections are held freely and fairly. Such elections have been described as 'democratic general elections' by Butler, Penniman and Ranney. As they put it, democratic general elections are those contests that largely or wholly satisfy the following six conditions:

1. Substantially the entire adult population has the right to vote for candidates for office.

2. Elections take place regularly within prescribed time limits.

3. No substantial group in the adult population is denied the opportunity of forming a party and putting up candidates.

4. All the seats in the major legislative chamber can be contested and usually are.

5. Campaigns are conducted with reasonable fairness, in that neither

law nor violence nor intimidation bars the candidates from presenting their views and qualifications or prevents the voters from hearing and discussing them.

6. Votes are cast freely and secretly; they are counted and reported honestly ; and the candidates who receive the proportions required by law are duly installed in office until their terms expire and a new election is held.

(Butler, Penniman and Ranney 1981:3 quoted in Singh and Bose, New Delhi 1984:11)

The above-mentioned yardstick could perhaps be helpful in judging the fairness of elections in Bangladesh.

National Elections since 1937

The Government of India Act of 1935 provided for a bi-cameral legislature for Bengal and also for several other provinces. The upper house consisted of 62 members. Of them, the provincial governor used to nominate five members, the Legislative Assembly had 27 nominees and the rest were elected. The elected seats were distributed as General Urban: 2, General Rural: 8, Muhammadan Urban: 1, Muhammadan Rural: 16, and European: 3.

The lower house, Provincial Legislative Assembly, was more important and held more power. The cabinet was accountable to it. In Bengal this Assembly had 250 members. The distribution was as follows: Muslims: 117, Caste Hindus: 48, Scheduled Caste Hindus: 30 and Special Seats: 55.

Of the Hindu constituencies, 12 were in urban areas and 66 in rural areas. All scheduled caste seats were from rural areas. Six of the Muslim constituencies were in urban areas and 111 in rural areas. The special seats were distributed as follows: Europeans: 11, Anglo-Indians: 4 (including one reserved for women), Indian Christians: 2, Commerce and Industry: 19, Landlords: 5, Labor: 8, University: 2, and Women: 4. All women seats were from urban areas. Of the four women seats, two were reserved for Muslim women and two were to be decided by a general contest.

The qualified right to vote had a heavy property bias. Anybody [man or woman] who used to pay municipal tax or cess (sort of a tax, see Kirkpatrick 1989:206) of at least eight *annas* or *Chaukidari* tax of at

least six *annas* annually were entitled to vote. Literacy was an alternative qualification for both the sexes. In addition, wives and widows of men qualified for voting could also vote (Momen ·1972: 32-33). Separate electorate was retained in the Government of India Act, 1935. The arrangement provided the Muslims of Bengal an apparent privilege. With 117 seats reserved for them, they could gain majority in the lower house and form the government if they could win only 9 out of 55 special seats. Moreover, two women seats and one commerce and industry seat were already earmarked for the Muslims. In fact, the Muslim community needed to be united in only six additional seats towin them to go to power in Bengal. This is why the Muslim leaders became particularly enthusiastic about the 1937 elections. Ultimately, three major parties of Bengal contested the elections. These were: the Muslim League, dominated and run by the Muslim aristocrats and business interests; the Krishak Praja Party (KPP), dominated by the middle class Muslims; and the Congress, dominated mainly by caste Hindus.

The election manifestos of these parties showed that the Congress and the Muslim League pressed more on constitutional reforms and political measures. Both the parties were dissatisfied with the Government of India Act, 1935. Muslim League leader Jinnah had all along opposed it (Karim, 1994). The Muslim League insisted on keeping the system of separate electorate and emphasized on Muslim solidarity and preservation of Muslim culture. The Congress program, as reflected in its manifesto, was rather socialistic while the Muslim League was in favor of private property. On the other hand, the Krishak Praja Party pressed for radical programs of economic reconstruction. The party was against *Zamindari* system and was in favor of compulsory primary education.

In the 1937 elections, there were 642 candidates for 250 seats. Surprisingly, 47 were elected uncontested. Total number of voters was 6,695,483 with Muhammadan constituencies having 3,458,364 voters. Nearly 40 per cent of total voters exercised their right of franchise.

In the Muhammadan constituencies the Muslim League won 39 seats, the Krishak Praja Party 36, and the independent candidates 36 seats. The Muslim League won in all six urban constituencies. An interesting feature of the election was that A.K. Fazlul Huq defeated Khwaja Najimuddin, the Muslim League leader in Patuakhali

constituency which was Nazimuddin's *Zamindari*. While Fazlul Huq got 14,413 votes, Nazimuddin could secure 6,308 votes. The defeat of powerful Khwaja Nazimuddin in his own *Zamindari* area indicated fairness in the elections.

In the general constituencies, the Congress won 47 seats, the independent candidates 27, and other minor parties four. Of the special seats, Muslims won only six. Though Congress had the largest number of seats in the Assembly, its leader Sarat Chandra Bose, on party instruction, declined the governor's offer to form the cabinet. Under these circumstances, A.K. Fazlul Huq succeeded in forming a cabinet in coalition with Muslim League and non-Congress Hindus. His cabinet lasted up to 1941.

The Elections of 1946

In the 1946 provincial elections in Bengal, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League won 114 seats as opposed to 39 in 1937 from the Muslim constituencies. These seats included all the four special seats, all the six urban seats and 104 rural seats out of 111 seats in that category. The Krishak Praja Party (KPP) could win only four seats as opposed to 36 in 1937. The Emarat Party won one seat and two seats went to independents. No other party could win any seat in the Muslim constituencies. The Muslim League got 83.64 per cent of the total votes cast and its rival KPP got only 5.39 per cent. Of course, A. K. Fazlul Huq (Sher-e-Bangla), the KPP leader won in two constituencies. 76.21 per cent of the Muslim League's opponents forfeited their deposits in these elections.

The Muslim League's election campaign was exhaustive. Large numbers of posters and placards of the party were seen particularly in the rural areas. They contained popular slogans like, 'Land Belongs to the Plough', 'Abolish *Zamindari* Without Compensation', 'Down With Vested Interests', 'Laborers Will Be Owners', 'Pakistan For Peasants and Workers' etc. One League supporting newspaper 'Millat' claimed that if Pakistan could be established, which was the demand of the Muslim League, the 'proletariat' would be emancipated and all kinds of vested interests would be destroyed (Harun-or-Rashid 1987: 222). It also claimed that once elected, the Muslim League would go for intensive agricultural reforms, put an end to the food crisis,

regulate jute price, nationalize key and big industries, expand cottage industries, provide electricity to rural areas, introduce free and compulsory primary education, and reform secondary education (Harun-or-Rashid 1987:223).

The League's election funds came mainly from *Adamjees, Ispahanis, Memons, Khojas and Bohras*. The Provincial Muslim Chambers of Commerce and Trader's Associations also made generous contributions to the League election fund. Even poor Muslims donated money to the 'Jinnah Fund'. It was reported that after meeting all election expenses, there remained a surplus of nearly forty lakh rupees with Mr. Jinnah (Harun-or-Rashid 1987:224). There was an extensive fund collection drive before and during the elections. About 20,000 students actively participated in the election campaign. Students were given extensive electioneering training in Calcutta and Dhaka. Speakers addressed large public meetings in addition to distributing pamphlets, posters and leaflets. Religious leaders under the banner of Jamaat-ul-Ullema-i-Islam worked for Muslim League in the elections (Harun-or-Rashid 1987:226). The demand for Pakistan was very popular with Bengali Muslim voters. They voted for the Muslim League in the hope of getting their dreamland - **PAKISTAN**. In the election campaign the Muslim Leaguers were forceful and over-zealous. The League supporting influential daily 'Azad' enthusiastically published news of manhandling of candidates opposed to Muslim League (*Azad*, March 2, 1946). After the election victory, the Muslim League cabinet was formed under the leadership of H. S. Suhrawardy on 23 April, 1946.

The Elections of 1954

Pakistan inherited the electoral system of undivided British India, provided in the Government of India Act of 1935. It was a system of adult franchise and separate electorate. The Muslim League was practically routed in East Bengal elections of 1954. For various political, social, economic, cultural and linguistic reasons, the Muslim League lost the faith of the voters. After the elections the party position in Muslim seats was:

Party	No. of Seats
United Front	223
Muslim League	10
Khilafat-e-Rabbani	1
Independents	3
Total	**237**

Party position in minority seats:

Party	No. of Seats
Pakistan National Congress	24
Scheduled Caste's Federation	27
Minority United Front	10
Communist Party	4
Ganatantri Dal	3
Buddhists	2
Christians	1
Independents	1
Total	**72**

Source: Huq 1966:80,81.

The United Front, the election alliance of four parties - Awami League, Krishak Sramik Party, Nizam-i-Islam and Ganatantri Dal-indirectly supported by the communists, achieved the so-called 'ballot revolution' under three charismatic leaders: A.K. Fazlul Huq, H.S. Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhasani. The United Front's 21-point election manifesto included demands such as recognition of Bangla as one of the state languages, full provincial autonomy, abolition of *Zamindari* without compensation, distribution of the land to peasants, and nationalization of jute trade. The Muslim League had practically no election manifesto. The party promised to enact an "Islamic Constitution" for Pakistan if elected and insisted that they be voted to power because, otherwise, with the emergence of political opposition in the country, both Islam and Pakistan would be in danger. The Muslim league leaders lavishly used aircrafts, trains and steamers in their election campaign. Their campaign was actively supported by ·two prominent dailies, *The Azad* (Bangla) and *The Morning News* (English) published from Dhaka. The Muslim League claimed that Indian money was being used by the opposition in their

election campaign.

The United Front was supported by large number of student activists in their election campaign. The chief Minister, Nurul Amin, was defeated by a large margin by a student leader Khaleque Newaz. Large number of Muslim League candidates lost their security deposits as they failed to secure one-eighth of total votes cast in their constituencies.

For the 228 Muslim seats, 986 candidates contested. Thirty seven candidates contested for the 9 reserved seats for women. All women seats were won by the United Front candidates. There was no complaint about violence or cheating in the voting process during or after elections. In Bakerganj district, some irregularities in the voter list were detected and rectified and actions were taken against those involved in causing the defects in the voter list. An ordinance about electoral crime and the use of indelible ink applied on the finger of the voters was a deterrent to unlawful activities during the election. The Election Commission was constituted with one High Court Judge and two retired District Judges. Only in five constituencies, the election of the relevant candidates were challenged and in one of the constituencies the results of the election was canceled. In the Muslim constituencies 37.60 per cent voters cast their votes. Most of the elected members of the House were comparatively young and little experienced in politics. On 25 March, 1954 A. K. Fazlul Huq formed the United Front cabinet but it was a very short-lived one.

The opposition alliance was opposed tooth and nail by the Government in power and the government-supported political party. But because the elections were free and fair the United Front had a landslide victory. -

Elections under 'Basic Democracy'

General Mohammad Ayub Khan (who later declared himself a Field Marshal) seized power in October, 1958 through a military coup. He ruled Pakistan under martial law till 1962 when he promulgated a new constitution. It introduced the presidential system of government and indirect elections of the president and members of the assemblies. He also introduced the system of joint electorates in elections.

Ayub argued that the British type parliamentary system prevailing

in Pakistan before he seized power, was not suitable for the country. He, therefore, in October 27, 1959, by a presidential order introduced a new system which was known as 'Basic Democracy'. The 'Basic Democracies' were originally conceived as local-government bodies but later in the Constitution of 1962, which Ayub imposed on the people of Pakistan, they were included as the electoral college for the election of the president of the country as well as the members of provincial and central assemblies. The existing electoral system of electing local bodies was used to elect the so-called Basic Democrats. It is worth mentioning that local bodies including the union committees (Boards) were elected under the joint electorate system before and after the partition of India in the areas included in Pakistan.

Under the new system 80,000 members (called Basic Democrats) were elected to 8126 institutions known as union councils in rural areas, town committees in smaller towns, and union committees in municipal areas in December 1959. Each council or committee represented, on an average, a population of ten thousand people of whom approximately every one thousand elected one representative on the basis of joint electorate and adult franchise. The councils or committees elected their own chairmen. The chairmen and the members of these councils/committees were included in different proportions in higher level *thana/tahsil* councils, district councils, divisional councils and provincial (development advisory) councils. The heads of all councils from *thana* to previncial levels were non-elected government functionaries. All these councils were engaged mainly in development activities. These councils, from union to divisional level, were considered to be four tiers of basic democracy system. The apex body in the province chaired by provincial governor existed until the Constitution of 1962 re-introduced provincial assembly.

The Basic Democracies Order, 1959, provided that for the purpose of election to a union council or town/union committee, each union or town would be divided into several wards. For each ward there would be a register in which the names of "all persons" qualifying to vote would be entered. To qualify to vote, a citizen of Pakistan was not to be less than twenty-one years of age and had to be a resident in an area for a period of not less than six months.

In a referendum in February, 1960, the elected 80,000 basic democrats overwhelmingly (95%) expressed confidence in Ayub Khan.

There was no rival candidate and the basic democrats were simply asked to cast 'yes' or 'no' vote. The elections to the assemblies were held in 1962. The basic democrats elected in 1959 voted in the elections. The National Assembly consisted of 156 members, 75 men and three women drawn from each of the two provinces. The provincial assemblies had 155 members each, including five women. In the East Pakistan Assembly, out of 155 members only four were elected from the minority community. Of the 40,000 elected basic democrats in East Pakistan 4965 were Hindus.

In early 1965 the presidential election was held under the basic democracy system and nearly all 80,000 basic democrats from both wings of Pakistan voted in the election. Combined Opposition Parties consisting of the Awami League, the National Awami party, the Council Muslim League, the Nezame Islam and the Jamaat-i-Islam, nominated Miss Fatema Jinnah, sister of Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah, as a presidential candidate against the incumbent Ayub Khan; but the loyal basic democrats elected Ayub Khan with a comfortable margin. The combined opposition could earlier whip up much public enthusiasm and support for their candidate, particularly in East Pakistan, but the results of the election showed that opposition campaign had very little or no effect on the voters.

The General Election of 1970

Held after an unprecedented mass upsurge and under a military regime which later proved to be one of the most despotic and cruel in the world history, the general elections held in Pakistan in 1970 were remarkably free and fair. The military, after the unceremonious fall of their ex-leader Ayub Khan, was much restrained and did not interfere with the elections. But after the results were announced the military was perhaps taken aback by the success of the Awami League. In collaboration with the then West Pakistan politicians led by Zulfiqur Ali Bhutto, the military tried to nullify the results of the election.

The Awami League's election manifesto contained the historic six-point demands. The people of East Pakistan overwhelmingly supported the six-point demands of the Awami League. The party led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won 160 out of 162 seats allotted to East Pakistan in central legislature. In provincial elections Awami

League won 288 out of 300 seats (Majid 1993:10). Other parties could will only 12 seats.

The 160 seats won by Awami League made it the absolute majority party in the Pakistan National Assembly of 300 seats; but its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not allowed to form the government. The most illogical, conspiratorial and brutal military crackdown on the people of Bangladesh made them fight back heroically to achieve independence. The liberation war of Bangladesh was thus a culmination of the ballot victory of the people of this country in the 1970 historic elections.

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General Elections
in Bangladesh

Philip Gain

The Independence War was fought in 1971 in the spirit of achieving democracy, self-rule and economic emancipation. It seems, Bangladesh still has a long way to go for institutionalizing democracy and alleviating poverty.

In the sub-continent, among the former three British colonies, Bangladesh has been subjected to authoritarian rule for the longest period. What is now Bangladesh remained under the military rule of General Ayub and Yahya Khan for 13 years between 1947 and 1971. After independence in 1971, the Bangladeshi politics continued to be under strong military influence and was controlled by the military for fifteen years — six years under General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) and nine years under General H. M. Ershad (1982-1990).

Such authoritarian rule for so long a period has deeply damaged the democratic institution. The current political climate suggests that the country must still struggle hard to come out of the authoritarian influence.

An imperial authoritarian system introduced by the British destroyed whatever rudimentary democratic forms might have existed, such as village panchayats (Blair, Choudhury, Gastil and Richter 1992:2). The fact that the people of East Bengal remained politically marginalized throughout the British period, led them to support the movement for Pakistan.

However, independence from the colonial rule in 1947 did not bring the country the much-coveted democracy. Bangladesh, East

Pakistan up to 1971, went through nightmarish experiences under the West Pakistani rulers. The rulers remained insensitive to the democratic elections. The Pakistani Constitution was adopted in 1956; but martial law was imposed in 1958, before democratic national elections could be held. Then came the era of indirect, pseudo-democracy, i.e. "Basic Democracy" of Ayub Khan, a military dictator.

Pakistan's first open elections were held in 1970 and the East Pakistan-based Awami League won the election. To Awami League's utter disappointment, West Pakistan did not accept the election result. Had Awami League had an opportunity to form the government, the political power would have shifted from the Western Wing to the Eastern Wing. Under the unprecedentedly bold and popular leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, East Pakistan declared independence. West Pakistani occupation forces ravaged the land and committed one of the worst genocides in contemporary history. With Indian intervention and help Bangladesh became independent in 1971.

Pakistan experiences are said to have left many psychological and political scars. Healthy political institutions are yet to be founded. As a result, "Political parties and groups developed skills of opposition but not of governing" (Blair and others, 1992).

The pattern of bureaucratic and military rule that became firmly established in Pakistan influenced the later developments in Bangladesh. Military leaders time and again portrayed themselves as saviors of the nation in times of "peril" and they were supported by the bureaucracy. The absence of frequent elections and recurrence of fraudulent elections alienated the mass people from the political process.

The Awami League formed the country's first government on the grounds that it had won the 1970 elections. The new government adopted a new parliamentary democratic Constitution in 1972, which was said to be the most liberal in the history of the subcontinent. But subsequently, the Constitution underwent many unwanted changes and the country went through widespread corruption, assassinations, coups, counter-coups, rigged elections, periods of martial law, and enactment of repressive laws. In short, Bangladesh has known no peace and all the tension and instability have generated a mass frustration.

During the Mujib rule, Bangladesh had been governed by a parliamentary system for three years. In June, 1975, Awami League amended the Constitution to a presidential system dominated by one party.

With the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, Bangladesh has gone through events which have put the country in a precarious condition. Khondokar Mustaq Ahmed, one of Mujib's former cabinet officials took over a civilian government for a brief period. Brigadier Khaled Mosahrraf, who overthrew Mostaque a few months later in November 1975, was toppled four days later by another coup.

The military now held the real power. The then Lt. General Ziaur Rahman emerged as the strongest of the military chiefs. He assumed full power as the Chief Martial Law Administrator in November, 1976 and as president in April 1977. Ziaur Rahman postponed the parliamentary elections that the interim government had promised.

Ziaur Rahman amended the Constitution to reintroduce a multiparty system; presidential elections were held in 1978 and parliamentary elections conducted in 1979. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headed by Zia won two-thirds of the parliamentary seats.

Ziaur Rahman was assassinated in a military coup in 1981. Although Vice-President Sattar won the elections to the presidency, the military still remained politically active and powerful. Sattar made an effort to reassert civilian control. This time strong military intervention came under General Hossain Muhammad Ershad. He took over in a bloodless coup on March 24, 1982, dismissed the Parliament, and put a Supreme Court justice in the presidency. Ershad himself became the President in December, 1983.

Ershad held a plebiscite in March 1985 in an effort to give credibility to his regime. Upazila (sub-district) elections followed the plebiscite. He formally withdrew martial law in 1986 and organized parliamentary elections and a presidential election in which he won.

Public protest against the autocratic regime of Ershad began to grow since the 1988 elections and the political parties gained ever-widening public support in the latter part of 1990. Ershad's attempts to divide the unity of the students' movement, provoked the students

to take to street (Timm, 1991). But the movement that dislodged the unpopular and undemocratic government of President Ershad in December in 1990 has been basically non-violent. People's power had been the main force of the movement.

All political parties and other professional groups including the cultural groups shared the credit in the downfall of the Ershad regime. On popular consensus an interim government headed by Supreme Court Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed was formed which was to run the show, hold the next parliamentary elections (February, 1991) and assure a free and fair poll.

Except for some brief periods and until the fall of the Ershad regime, Bangladesh has constantly passed through a situation of legitimacy crisis (Hakim, 1991). Many have questioned the legitimacy of even the pre-1973 rule by the Awami League which formed the government in the post-liberation Bangladesh on the basis of the overwhelming mandate that the party had received in the 1970 national assembly and provincial assembly elections.

Electoral History Since Independence

Since independence till 1991 five parliamentary elections, three presidential elections and three referendums have been held. And now the country awaits a crucial test of democracy: the sixth parliamentary elections which are to be held early 1996.

But it is, indeed, a matter of great regret that most elections were abusive and fraudulent. In many elections people did not have the right to choose their rulers/government. "Vote piracy", "vote hijacking", "media coup" (media manipulation of election results) became part of Bangladesh's election culture.

Elections, at times, took place to provide credibility to governments as well as to confirm constitutional changes, rather than to institutionalize the democratic process. Elections were also used to legitimize the civil military bureaucracy.

However, general electoral abuses were minimal in the fifth parliamentary elections which were held under a caretaker government.

First Parliamentary Elections and the Mujib Rule

The first parliamentary elections in independent Bangladesh were held on March 7, 1973. The opponents of the Awami League held that the country should be governed by representatives elected in independent Bangladesh. This gave impetus to the Awami League to renew its mandate through elections after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1972. A total of 1091 candidates of 14 parties contested the elections. Of the 3,52,05,642 voters 1,93,29,683 (55.61%) turned out to vote. The Awami League won 282 out of 289 seats and had 73 per cent of popular votes in its favor. The Awami League, however, won the elections uncontested in another 11 constituencies which are not shown in the official results below.

Table 1. - Official Results of 1973 Parliamentary Elections

Party/Independent	Candidates	Seats Won	Vote (%)
Awami League	289	282	1,37,93,717 (73.20)
Jatiyo Samaj-tantrik Dal	237	1	12,29,110 (6.52)
Jatiyo League	8	1	62,354 (0.33)
Independents	120	5	9,89,884 (5.25)

Source: *Subhan. 1991. A Report on Elections to the Fifth National Parliament 27 February, 1991.* The Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon.

The trend of rigging was set in the first parliamentary elections in 1973. The Awami League, a party which no other party could politically challenge at the time of the first parliamentary elections was alleged to be indulging in electoral malpractices. It was reported that in at least 15 constituencies, the AL had resorted to violence, hijacking of agents, stuffing ballot boxes etc. (Subhan, 1991).

Such a trend intensified in the second and third parliamentary elections in 1979 and 1986 and the rigging and abuses the voter witnessed in the fourth parliamentary election in 1988 under the Ershad regime was termed unprecedented in the history of electoral fraud.

The Constitution which was given an effect on December 16, 1972

was grossly amended by the same regime which formulated it. Such amendments (four of them) changed the basic features of the Constitution. "A basically democratic constitution took a totalitarian shape" (Hakim 1993:3). The second amendment passed by the Parliament on September 22, 1973 provided for the declaration of a state of emergency and suspension of fundamental rights. The fourth amendment passed by the Parliament on January 25, 1975 replaced the parliamentary system with presidential system, curbed the independence of judiciary and introduced a one-party totalitarian system. These constitutional changes in the Mujib regime is said to have had long-term implications in Bangladesh politics. Major constitutional changes were made by the subsequent regimes which have totally changed the democratic look of the Constitution.

Referendum and Second Parliamentary Elections

By several proclamations between 1975 and 1978 the military government of Ziaur Rahman replaced "secularism", a fundamental state principle of the constitution, with "absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah"; redefined "socialism", another state principle, as "economic and social justice"; changed citizenship identity to "Bangladeshi" from "Bengali" and reversed to multi-party system from single party totalitarianism introduced by the Mujib regime. These amendments were later ratified by the second parliament elected in 1979.

In the referendum on the rule of Lieutenant General Ziaur Rahman in 1977 the turnout was announced [on the government media] to be as high as 88.5 per cent. The referendum was organized to legitimize the military rule of Ziaur Rahman.

In 1978 presidential election to validate the transition from a martial law administration to constitutional presidency, Zia defeated retired General Osmani. The turnout was reported to be 54 per cent and Zia was declared elected with 77 per cent of the votes cast.

In the second parliamentary elections in 1979, Bangladesh National Party (which was formed by Zia while in power) won 207 of 300 seats. A total of 2,125 candidates of 29 political parties contested elections. Of the 3,83,63,858 voters 1,96,76,128 (50.24%) turned out to vote.

Table 2. **Official results of 1979 Parliamentary Elections**

Party/Independent	Candidates	Seats won	Vote (%)
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	298	207	79,34,236 (41.16)
Awami League (Malek)	295	39	47,34,277 (24.50)
Awami League (Mizan)	184	2	5,35,826 (00.36)
Muslim League and Islamic Democratic League (Rahim)	266	20	19,41,394 (10.08)
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal	240	8	9,31,851 (04.84)
NAP (Muzaffar)	—	1	4,32,514 (02.24)
Ganafront	—	2	1,15,662 (0.60)
Shammyabadi Dal	—	1	74,771 (0.39)
Jatiyo League	—	2	69,319 (0.36)
Democratic Movement	—	1	34,259 (0.18)
Jatiyo Ekota party	—	1	44,459 (0.23)
Independents	422	16	19,63,345 (10.10)

Source: Subhan, 1991 and Hakim, 1993.

Election in between Zia and Ershad

After the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman on May 30, 1981 in a coup by a handful of army officers, Vice-President Justice Abdus Sattar took over as acting president. Sattar won a landslide victory in the 1981 presidential elections. He got 65.5 per cent of votes out of a 55.47 per cent turnout. Sattar defeated the Awami League candidate Dr. Kamal Hossain. On the one hand, by wining the presidential election, Sattar helped BNP to absorb the trauma caused by assassination of the party's founding chairman (Hakim, 1993:11) and the Awami League campaigned for a return to power and parliamentary system (Subhan, 1991:16) on the other.

Irregularities were complained about in the elections; but a petition filed to the Election Commission could not be pursued because of the military takeover of power by the chief of army staff, Lieutenant General Hussain Mohammed Ershad through a bloodless coup on March 24, 1982.

Elections under the Ershad Regime

The military government of Hussain Mohammad Ershad which

promised "a democratic system as soon as possible" suspended the Constitution, dissolved the BNP-dominated Parliament and Cabinet, and imposed a ban on the activities of political parties (Hakim, 1993:12).

Ershad assumed the presidency in December 1983. He militarized the administration and government by putting the military officers in responsible and strategic civilian institutions. He made it clear that the military should have a defined role in politics and made his plan public to institutionalize the role of the military in the country's decision-making and administrative process.

Ershad planned for parliamentary elections on April 6, 1985 which he canceled in the face of boycott by the major political parties. He then sought political legitimization through a referendum on March 21, 1985 in which the Election Commission claimed a 72.14 per cent voter turnout. According to the Election Commission, 94.14 per cent of the turnout confirmed Ershad's continuation as President of the country. However, independent local and foreign observers believed that the voter turnout was not more than 15 to 20 per cent. Those supporting the Ershad regime termed the referendum an "important milestone" but to opponents it was nothing more than a "futile exercise" (Hakim 1993:23). *The Times*, published from London mentioned a two per cent voter turnout in its editorial 'Learning to Live with a Lie', and termed the referendum as a 'fraud' (Subhan, 1991).

Third Parliamentary Elections

After a "successful referendum" Ershad was encouraged to attempt to legitimize his military rule. He allowed what is phrased as "indoor politics". Restrictions on "outdoor politics" was withdrawn on the first day of 1986 resulting in renewed agitation against the Ershad regime. In the face of intense opposition, the government felt that parliamentary elections were unavoidable.

The Awami League and the BNP both were leading two political alliances by that time. They demanded parliamentary elections under a civilian caretaker government. The Ershad regime offered some concessions and scheduled the elections for April 26, 1986 which was ultimately rescheduled on May 7, 1986. The Awami League and some parties of AL-led alliance contested the parliamentary elections under

the Ershad Regime. The BNP-led 7-party alliance and the leftist 5-party alliance did not contest the 1986 parliamentary elections. This perhaps decided some crucial developments in politics later.

Table 3. Official results of 1986 Parliamentary Elections

Party/Independent	Candidates	Seats Won	Vote (%)
Jatiyo Party	300	153	1,20,79,259(42.34)
Awami League	256	76	74,62,157(26.15)
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh	76	10	13,14,057 (04.60)
Communist Party of Bangladesh	9	5	2,59,728 (00.91)
National Awami Party (Muzaffar)	10	2	3,68,979 (01.29)
National Awami Party	—	5	3,68,979 (01.29)
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League	6	3	1,91,107 (00.67)
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Rab)	—	4	7,25,303 (2.54)
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj)	14	3	2,48,705 (00.87)
Bangladesh Muslim League	—	4	4,12,765 (01.45)
Bangladesh Workers Party	—	3	1,51,828 (00.53)
Others	—	—	4,90,389 (01.73)
Independents	453	32	46,19,025 (16.19)

Source: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Election Commission, *Report: Jatiyo Sangsad Elections, 1986* (Dhaka:1988) in Hakim, 1993; and Subhan, 1991.

Large scale intimidation, violence, and total lawlessness were reported in the third parliamentary elections. At least 15 people were murdered and 750 injured on the election day (Hakim, 1993:26). Ershad's Jatiyo Party, which he had formed after usurping the power, was reported to have backed musclemen to capture and terrorize the voters. The law enforcing authorities were rendered inactive in resisting the thugs. Phrases like electoral fraud, vote piracy, vote rigging, vote

dacoity, media coup, etc. got their proper connotation during this period. The elections were declared a "tragedy for democracy" and a "cynically frustrated" exercise (Hakim 1993:27).

Presidential Election: Terrorism, violence and fraud seen in the third parliamentary elections made people and the political parties believe that elections in the true sense were unthinkable under the Ershad regime. Experiences in the parliamentary elections recharged the anti-Ershad movement which began years back.

All major political parties boycotted the presidential election scheduled for October 15, 1986 which Ershad arranged to "earn at least a veneer of legitimacy." The political parties not only opposed the presidential elections, they also made all efforts to resist the election. The government claimed a voter turnout of 54.23 per cent and 83.57 per cent of the turnout in Ershad's favor. But observers believed that the turnout did not exceed 15 per cent.

Fourth Parliamentary Elections

Hussain Mohammed Ershad failed in all his efforts to legitimize himself and his regime through the parliamentary elections. By 1987 the political mainline alliances got united and called for Ershad's resignation. The month of November witnessed extreme volatility and uncertainty. Massive strikes, sporadic *hartals*, protest meetings, mass rallies, demonstrations, boycotts and resignation from the Parliament made the Ershad regime intern the two main opposition leaders - Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina at their houses. A state of emergency was imposed on November 27, 1987 and the Parliament was dissolved on December 6, 1987. As a last resort former President Ershad announced the fourth parliamentary elections to be held on March 3, 1988.

All major political parties - BNP, Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami boycotted the 1988 parliamentary elections. People had already lost their confidence in the electoral system. The fourth parliamentary elections, in fact, failed to generate any enthusiasm. The lowest number of political parties and candidates in the country's electoral history contested in the March 1988 elections. Two hundred and fourteen independent candidates and 977 candidates of eight political parties contested in the elections.

The opposition ridiculed the voter turnout of 54.93 per cent as claimed by the Election Commission and claimed that the actual turnout was not more than one per cent. The Jatiyo Party, of course, won 251 seats while the weak and loyal Combined Opposition Party (COP) - an election alliance of 76 politically unknown parties - won only 19 seats (Hakim, 1993).

Table 4.   March 1988 Parliamentary Election Results

Party/ Independent	Candidates	Seats Won	Vote (%)
Jatiyo Party	299	251	1,76,80,133(68.44)
Combined Opposition Party	269	19	32,63,340(12.63)
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj)	25	3	3,09,666(01.20)
Freedom Party	112	2	8,50,284(03.29)
Others	—	—	2,42,571(00.94)
Independents	214	25	34,87,457(13.50)

Source: Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Press Information Department, *A Background Paper on Bangladesh Fifth Parliament (Jatiyo Sangsad) Elections,* handout No. 429, February 20, 1991, p.25 (Hakin, 1993:31)

Rigging in the fourth elections was unprecedented. The major political parties which boycotted the elections called a general strike which kept many vehicles and people off the roads and turned the election almost voterless. False balloting and fictitious counting marked the fourth parliamentary elections. With the major political parties out of the election race, "the JP-hired bandits had no problem in establishing their absolute domination over the polling stations" (Hakim, 1993:31).

Upazila and Local Elections under Ershad

Use of armed gangs, violence and other electoral abuses recorded in the upazila elections in 1985 and 1990 and union council elections in 1988 also led the voters to believe that the election institution in Bangladesh had been destroyed.

Some general abuses reported in local and national elections in Bangladesh are:

- Government officials/ministers giving relief goods or issuing threats before election,
- Stuffing of ballots by party supporters inside the centers,
- Exclusion of traditional election officers in favor of party members,
- Threats and use of violence by party mastaans, especially before elections,
- No signatures or thumb impressions on ballot stubs,
- Eligible voters not on voter lists,
- Registration of voters in more than one place,
- Polling center officials stamping ballots illegally,
- Purchase of votes,
- Ballot papers found missing,
- Ballot papers stamped in advance,
- Centers closed down early,
- Hijacking of ballot boxes,
- Terrorizing the genuine voters,
- Capturing polling stations,
- Manipulation of election results.

Downfall of Ershad

The fourth parliament was termed most unrepresentative. The Eighth Constitution Amendment Bill attempting to destroy "the unitary character of the High Court" and proposing Islam as the state religion was introduced to the fourth parliament on June 1, 1988. The bill which triggered uproar outside the Parliament was passed by the Parliament on June 7, 1988 with 254 votes in favor. However, while the Ershad regime ignored political protests and agitations, the first provision of the eighth amendment was challenged and was declared invalid by the Supreme Court.

The Eighth Constitution Amendment Bill was strongly opposed for being politically motivated, constitutionally dividing the nation into majority and minority and having a bad impact on the communal

harmony in the country. Above all, the opposition called the Parliament illegal and said it did not have the moral right to amend the Constitution.

By October, 1990 the movement of the opposition got back its momentum. The opposition political activists confronted the security forces on the street. During a massive demonstration five persons were killed and hundreds were injured. This led 22 major students organizations to form the All Party Students Unity (APSU). The APSU vowed to rescue the country "from the clutches of autocratic Ershad and his regime" (Hakim 1993:32). The BNP-led seven-party alliance, AL-led eight-party alliance and the leftist five-party alliance signed a joint declaration on November 19, 1990 spelling out a formula for transition to democratic polity. The four-point *modus operandi* of the joint declaration in brief were (Hakim, 1993):

1. **Opposition parties and alliances would not only boycott but also resist all elections under Ershad;**

2. **Ershad must resign and hand over power to a caretaker government;**

3. **The caretaker government would restore the credibility of the election system and ensure franchise right to all citizens; and**

4. **The interim government would hand over power to a "sovereign parliament" elected through free and fair elections.**

This joint declaration set a milestone in the anti-Ershad movement and in the restoration of democracy. As a last resort Ershad imposed a state of emergency and resorted to repressive measures which did not work.

Proclamation of the state of emergency on November 27, 1990 sparked off protest from all quarters. Newspapers stopped publishing throughout the country and the anti-Ershad movement reached its climax with the support of the students and that of professionals such as journalists, doctors, university teachers, lawyers and many others. Ultimately, under the pressure of the popular movement Ershad resigned on December 6, 1990 and handed over power to a caretaker government headed by the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. Transfer of power from an "autocratic regime" through non-military means generated great aspiration in the public mind.

Fifth Parliamentary Elections: Return to Democracy

The fifth parliamentary elections were held in a unique atmosphere.

The damages caused to the electoral institution of Bangladesh under the autocratic rule of deposed President H. M. Ershad was unprecedented. Now with the former President confined, the solitary goal before the nation was holding of free and fair elections under a caretaker government in the office.

The fifth parliamentary elections were held on February 27, 1991. A new Election Commission with three justices was appointed to run the elections impartially. The mechanism of election was carried out smoothly and all target dates were observed strictly. The Jatiyo Party which was held responsible for introducing the worst kinds of electoral frauds were allowed to run and Ershad was returned from five constituencies.

Unique Features of the Fifth Parliamentary Elections

1. Political parties and the public alike showed great enthusiasm for the election and there was an almost universal concern to see that the elections were managed in a democratic manner. It was widely expressed that this election was Bangladesh's best chance to democracy. The opposition parties were all anxious to follow strictly democratic procedures, so that accusations could not be made later (as they were against Ershad) that his successor had also come into power illegally.

2. The Election Commission, which had lost its image of impartiality and the confidence of the people, was given a new shape by the interim government. The Election Commission constituted by the interim government was stated to be the most powerful of all the Election Commissions in Bangladesh.

3. On top of the impartiality of the interim government, the other measures taken to make sure free and fair elections were the promulgation of ordinances to maintain impartiality of election officials, amendment of election laws, making punishment for election offenses more severe, maintenance of strict security measures, etc.

4. It was the first time in the history of Bangladesh that parliamentary elections were held under a neutral caretaker government and were participated by a record number of political parties.

5. Violence, which had become a part of the political culture in Bangladesh, was largely absent during this election. The major

political parties showed remarkable tolerance at the final stage of campaigning.

6. The two major parties, the BNP and AL, in a predominantly Muslim conservative society, contested the elections under the leadership of two women. The BNP fought the election under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, widow of late President Ziaur Rahman and the AL contested the election under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujib.

Source: Timm and Gain. 1991. Bangladesh: State of Human Rights; Hakim, 1993:42.

Because of all these, turnout of voters, especially female voters, was satisfactory and spontaneous. After many years, the voters voted without intimidation. The elections held on February 27, 1991 had been undoubtedly free and fair and unprecedented in the history of Bangladesh. It was unique in many respects compared to the previous elections. The observer groups, both foreign and local, observed that it was a model election for the countries which are on the road to democracy.

The Candidates

In the fifth parliamentary elections 76 political parties fielded 2,350 candidates in the election race for the 300-seat unicameral Jatiyo Sangsad (Timm and Gain 1991:87). In addition 424 independent candidates contested. Besides, 30 seats were reserved for women who were to be elected by 300 directly elected members of the Parliament.

In the fifth parliamentary elections the number of contesting political parties and candidates was the highest. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party fielded candidates in all electoral districts; the Awami League which was said to have the strength to give candidates in all constituencies set 264 candidates (Hakim, 1993) to provide support to its allies in the 8-party alliance. The Jatiyo Party which was overthrown through a mass movement was allowed to run in the election with some of its leaders still in hiding. The JP contested in 272 seats.

Forty seven women candidates including Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed contested the elections. The Bangladesh election rules allow a candidate to contest from five constituencies. Begum Khaleda Zia and the former President Ershad returned from all five

constituencies they contested from. A candidate winning from more than one seat is required to deliver to the Chief Election Commissioner a signed declaration within thirty days after his/her last election specifying the constituency which s/he wishes to represent. The other seat(s) for which s/he has won thereupon fall vacant to be filled in through by-elections.

A striking feature about the candidates found in a survey conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) is that 88 per cent of the candidates who contested in the fifth parliamentary elections are at least college graduates. This obviously indicated an overall high educational status of the candidates in a country where literacy rate is below 30 per cent. The same survey revealed that 82 per cent of the candidates were large and small traders and professionals.

Table 5: Number of Seats Contested by Political Parties/ Independents in the 1991 Parliamentary Election

Party/ Independents	No. of Seats Contested
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	300
Jatiyo Party (JP)	272
Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	264
Zaker Party (ZP)	251
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JI)	222
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rab)	161
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL)	68
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu)	68
Freedom Party (FP)	65
Bangladesh Muslim League (Qader)	62
Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ)	59
Bangladesh Janata Dal (BJD)	50
Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)	49
Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan (BKA)	43
Other Parties*	429
Independents	424
Total	**2,787**

*61 parties each of which nominated less than 40 candidates.

Source: Election Commission as quoted in Hakim 1993:47. *Bangladesh Politics: The Shahabuddin Interregnum.* The University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Table 6: Number of Seats Won by Different Parties/Independents in the 1991 Parliamentary Elections

Party/Independents	No. of Seats Contested
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	140
Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	88
Jatiyo Party (JP)	35
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JI)	18
Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)	5
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL)	5
National Awami Party (NAP-Muzaffar)	1
Ganatantri Party (GP)	1
Workers Party (WP)	1
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Siraj)	1
Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ)	1
National Democratic Party (NDP)	1
Independents	3
Total	**300**

Source: Election Commission as quoted in Hakim 1993:54. *Bangladesh Politics: The Shahabuddin Interregnum.* The University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Table 7:   Percentage of Votes and Seats Obtained by Political Parties/Independents in the 1991 Parliamentary Elections

(1) Party/Independents	(2) % of Total Votes Received	(3) % of Valid Votes Received	(4) % of Seats Won	(5) Difference between Column 3 and 4
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	16.87	30.81	46.66	15.85+
Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	16.47	30.08	29.33	0.75-
Jatiyo Party (JP)	6.52	11.92	11.66	0.26-
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JI)	6.64	12.13	6.00	6.13-
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL)	0.99	1.81	1.66	0.15-
Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)	0.65	1.19	1.66	0.47-
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Siraj)	0.13	2.25	0.33	0.08+
Workers Party (WP)	0.10	0.19	0.33	0.14+
National Democratic Party (NDP)	0.19	0.36	0.33	0.03-
Ganatantri Party (GP)	0.24	0.45	0.33	0.12-
National Awami Party (Muzaffar)	0.14	0.76	0.33	0.43-
Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ)	0.43	0.79	0.33	0.46-
Other Parties	2.67	4.78	0.00	4.47-
Independents	2.40	4.39	1.00	3.39-

Source: Compiled by Hakim using Election commission Source in Hakin 1993:57.

Table 8: **Number of Votes Received and the Number of Average Votes of Political Parties/Independents in the 1991 Parliamentary Elections**

Party/Independents*	Number of Valid Votes Received	Number of average votes
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	1,05,07,549	35,025.16
Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	1,02,59,866	38,863.12
Jatiyo Party (JP)	40,63,537	14,937.47
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JI)	41,36,661	18,633.61
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL)	6,16,014	9,059.02
Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)	4,07,515	8,316.63
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Siraj)	84,276	2,718.56
Workers Party (WP)	63,434	1,812.40
National Democratic Party (NDP)	1,21,918	6,095.90
Ganatantri Party (GP)	1,52,592	9,537.00
National Awami Party (NAP-Muzaffar)	2,59,978	8,386.38
Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ)	2,69,434	4,566.68
Other Parties	16,63,597	1,670.27
Independents	14,97,369	3,531.59
Number of valid votes	3,41,03,777	
Number of invalid votes	3,74,026	
Number of votes cast	3,44,77,803	
Total Number of voters	6,22,89,506	
% of votes cast	55.35	

* For number of candidates nominated by different parties and independents see table 5

Source: Election Commission. Compiled by Hakim, 1993:59 *Bangladesh Politics: The Shahabuddin Interregnum.* **The University Press Limited, Dhaka.** "No. of average votes" is calculated on the basis of number of candidates nominated and the number of votes received.

By-elections: BNP Loses Credibility

Following the parliamentary election on February 27, 1991, 23 seats fell vacant at different times where by-elections took place. The voters expected that the by-elections would be conducted in the same manner as they were on February 27, 1991. But in the first by-elections in 11 constituencies held on September 11, 1991, the voters were shocked to see quite intense violence taking place. Such violence was absent in the elections on 27 February. Defects in the voter lists and other irregularities which were reported in the 27 February elections also remained overwhelmingly present in those by-elections.

The local poll monitors observed that the level of terrorism and intimidation of voters, especially of the minority voters, on September 11 in some constituencies was alarming (Timm and Gain, 1991). Hundreds of thousands of eligible voters who were excluded from the voter list during the Ershad regime continued to remain excluded from the voter lists even in the by-elections and the referendum. The BNP government was alleged to have biased the administration and law enforcing in favor of its candidates.

Of the by-elections which were held later, the Magura one was marked for being most abusive. The opposition brought allegations against the BNP government of rigging the Magura by-election. Newspaper reports also showed this election to be grossly unfair and marked by widespread violence. Many ministers were present during the polling and the local administration totally served the ruling party. The opposition political parties hold that after what BNP has done in Magura by-election, no election under the BNP government can be free and fair. They demand that the sixth parliamentary elections be held under a caretaker government to which the BNP government must hand over power 90 days before the elections.

In fact, following the Magura by-election, the BNP government started losing its credibility of being neutral during elections. The opposition boycotted the subsequent six by-elections. Turn-out of voters was very poor in each of these elections and the atmosphere in general was passive. In one such election, BNP ran uncontested as not even one independent candidate stood for the seat. Besides, the by-elections, as well as local government elections, were marked by widespread violence.

Parliamentary By-elections Held Under the BNP Government

Sl. No.	Date of elections	Constituency	Name of Elected candidate	Political Affiliation
1.	September 11, 1991	19 Rangpur-1	Mr. Md.Al-Haj Karim Uddin Bhorasha	Jatiyo Party
2.	do	20 Rangpur-2	Mr. Sri Paritosh Chakrabarti	Jatiyo Party
3.	do	23 Rangpur-5	Mr. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury	Jatiyo Party
4.	do	24 Rangpur-6	Mr. Shah Moazzam Hossain	Jatiyo Party
5.	do	42 Bogra-7	Mr. Md. Helaluzzaman Talukdar Lalu	B.N.P.
6.	do	198 Bhola-2	Mosaraf Hossain Sajahan	B.N.P.
7.	do	184 Dhaka-5	Major (Retd.) Md. Kamrul Islam	B.N.P.
8.	do	188 Dhaka-9	Barrister Jamir Uddin Sirkar	B.N.P.
9.	do	217 Madaripur-1	Mr. Nur-E-Alam Chowdhury (Liton)	Awami League
10.	do	218 Madaripur-2	Mr. Shahjahan Khan	Awami League
11.	do	286 Chittagong-8	Mr. Amir Khosru	B.N.P.
12.	December 21, 1991	125 Bakergonj-5	Mr. Majibur Rahman Sarwar	B.N.P.
13.	October 12, 1992	207 Rajbari-1	Mr. Keramat Ali	Awami League
14.	October 15, 1992	151 Mymensingh-3	Mrs. Rawshanara Begum	Awami League
15.	December 2, 1992	120 Bhola-4	Mr. Md. Jafar Ullah Chowdhury	Awami League
16.	May 3, 1993	190 Dhaka-11	Mr. Syed Md. Mohsin	B.N.P.
17.	March 20, 1994	92 Magura-2	Mr. Kazi Salimul Haque	B.N.P.
18.	July 7, 1994	39 Bogra-4	Mr. Ziaul Haque Mollah	B.N.P.
19.	Uncontested	87 Jessore-3	Mr. Tariqul Islam	B.N.P.
20.	January 25, 1995	59 Natore-3	Mr. Kazi Golum Morshed	B.N.P.
21.	do	126 Bakergonj-6	Principal Md. Abdur Rashid Khan	B.N.P.
22.	do	148 Sherpur-3	Mr. Md. Mahmudul Haque	Independent
23.	do	247 Brahman-baria-6	Mr. Shahjahan Miah	B.N.P.

Total Constituencies	23
BNP Candidates won	13
Awami League Candidates won	05
Jatiyo Party Candidates won	04
Independent Candidates won	01

Source: Election Commission

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Fifth Parliament at a Glance

Ajit Sarker and Dilara Begum

The Fifth Parliament came into being on April 5, 1991 and ended its last session on November 18, 1995. The Parliament was dissolved on November 25, 1995. This Parliament had 22 sessions and 400 working days bringing two amendments to the Constitution and passing 172 bills. However, of the 72 bills put forth by the opposition parties and independent MPs only one was passed by the House. The unresolved bills included constitutional amendment bills for independence of the judiciary and repeal of indemnity ordinance in order to try the killers of Sheikh Mujib and four other AL leaders. The Fifth Parliament had 52 parliamentary committees of which 16 submitted 40 reports while the rest 36 committees did not submit any report at all. Because the opposition boycotted the Parliament for a long period, some bills were passed by the ruling party MPs alone.

As the 1991 elections were free and fair, people's expectations of this Parliament raged high. Although it was an eventful Parliament, it started disappointing people soon after it was born. Many crucial issues remained unresolved and after frequent walk-outs and boycotts, the opposition stayed away from the parliament from March, 1994 onwards. Initially no party gained an absolute majority in the Parliament (BNP -140, AL & its allies - 100, JP - 35, JI - 18, and others 7) for which a party needed to have 166 votes. BNP, however, could manage the required number of seats by using the reserved women seats as a vote bank (in an understanding with Jamaat-e-Islami). For more on this, see the CAC study on women seats, attached with the article on Election Features.

Abdur Rahman Biswas and Sheikh Razzak Ali became the president and the speaker respectively. The opposition, particularly

AL and JP, openly protested AR Biswas's nomination to presidency on the ground of his alleged anti-liberation role in 1971.

Parliamentary System Returns

The most significant occurrence in the Fifth Parliament was the return to the parliamentary form of government through the 12th Constitutional Amendment Bill which was passed on August 6, 1991. In fact, this was the first issue of debate between the opposition and the ruling party. The opposition, especially the AL put pressure on the BNP government to go back to the parliamentary form of governance soon after the government was sworn in. The BNP and the prime minister, however, preferred the presidential form of government. No decision was taken for several months. Then came the constitutional amendment bills proposed by AL and BNP separately which where then resolved in a parliamentary select committee. The 11th amendment was to legitimize the actions of the Acting President and to allow him to resign, while the 12th amendment was to adopt the parliamentary system.

The Parliament passed the 12th Amendment Bill on August 6 (earlier the 11th Amendment Bill was also passed). A national referendum held on September 15, 1991 endorsed the bill. Thus the parliamentary democracy was restored and the government was made responsible to the Parliament.

Black Laws Stay on

One would be dismayed to find that legislators did not do enough to remove the restrictions on fundamental rights imposed in the past. The Constitution Second Amendment Act of 1973 had, in effect, curtailed fundamental rights by making these subject to any constitutional amendment passed by the Parliament, and creating an opportunity for the government to detain citizens, no matter if such detention violated the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution or not. With Special Powers Act (SPA) of 1974 still in existence there came a similarly repressive anti-terrorism law. The Anti-terrorism Act of 1992 (now invalid) was an addition to the repressive laws: the Special Powers Act and the Vested Property Act. This act defined a number of "terrorist offenses" and provided a minimum punishment of five years in jail and a maximum

punishment of death sentence. A general impression developed over this act that the law was to be selectively used against political opponents just like the Special Powers Act. It could also be used against a particular community, as the Vested Property Act has been.

While not much has been done in the Fifth Parliament to do away with the repressive laws, the Parliament has enacted a law omitting Sections 16, 17 and 18 of the Special Powers Act relating to newspapers. Section 16 of the SPA gave the government the power to punish journalists for "prejudicial acts" and had provided that: "...The author, editor, printer and publisher of...any prejudicial report and any person who distributes or sells any report of that nature, knowing it to be of that nature, shall be deemed to have contravened the provision of this section."

Section 17 and 18 of the SPA heavily curtailed press freedom and allowed the government to impose censorship on any newspaper. However, certain provisions regarding newspapers, which were removed from the SPA, have been included in the Penal Code.

No Confidence Motion
Against the Government

On August 4, 1992 seven of the 10 opposition parties in Parliament submitted identical but separate notices of a No Confidence Motion against the Cabinet of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. These parties were Awami League, Jatiyo Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party, Ganotantri Party, National Awami Party (NAP) and Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj).

The No Confidence Motion against the Cabinet of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was defeated in the Parliament on August 12, 1992 in a vote (168-122).

Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury of National Democratic Party (NDP), Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ) member Maulana Obaidul Huq, two other independent members, five members of AL, four members of JP and the Jamaat-e-Islami with its 20 members were absent during the voting. Besides, two seats were vacant due to death of two AL MPs. A BNP MP was abroad and BNP's Sheikh Razzaque Ali, being the speaker, could not vote.

The No Confidence Motion was based on what the opposition termed as the deteriorating law and order situation and BNP's failure to curb terrorism. This was the first no confidence motion against the government in the parliamentary history of Bangladesh.

The opposition parties also reminded the government that the 1990 joint declaration of the three alliances had not been implemented and the government did not uphold the spirit of the 4-point agreement reached on June 30, 1992 following a deadlock over the issue of Golam Azam's being elected the chief of Jamaat.

Resignation of 147 Opposition MPs

In total 147 opposition MPs of Awami League, Jatiyo Party, Jamaat and National Democratic Party tendered their resignation from the Parliament on December 28, 1994. The opposition parties had long been demanding that the next three elections including the sixth parliamentary elections be held under a caretaker government. In fact, the last phase of opposition boycott which had begun on March 1, 1994, continued centering on a number of issues.

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali rejected the resignation letters of 144 of the 147 MPs on February 23, 1995 saying that he could not receive the en masse resignation letters as per the Article 67(2) of the Constitution and Rule 177 of the Rules of Procedures of the Parliament. He, however, received the resignation letters of the Jatiyo Party chief H. M. Ershad, National Democratic Party leader Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury and Awami League member Dabirul Islam on the ground that they submitted their resignation letters properly. The matter was ultimately settled in the court and the resignation of the opposition MPs were announced valid and their seats in the Parliament fell vacant.

The pressure of the opposition political parties to dissolve the Parliament and hold elections under a caretaker government continued. The Parliament was dissolved on November 25, 1995 but the dispute about the caretaker government remained unresolved.

Profile: Jatyio Sangsad

Bangladesh has a unicameral national parliament, called "Jatiyo Sangsad", comprising 330 members. Three hundred of the MPs are directly elected every five years. The rest 30 seats are reserved for

women who are elected by the 300 MPs. The Parliament acts as the legislature and approves the budget. It can amend the Constitution with support of at least two-thirds of its members. A simple majority is necessary to approve laws and pass the annual national budget. The government remains accountable to the Parliament. Various parliamentary committees consisting of members from all parties act as watchdogs over the government. The prime minister who represents the majority in the House is responsible to the Parliament.

As is the practice, the Rules of Procedures of Bangladesh Parliament also have provisions such as: questions, calling attention notices, resolutions, private members' bills and statements of ministers etc. These rules are to ensure accountability and transparency of the executive to the legislature.

In the Parliament, all money bills require presidential recommendation before they can be introduced for debate in the Parliament. Bills passed by the Parliament are sent to the president for approval. If the president does not return a Bill to the Parliament within fifteen days, it automatically becomes a law.

A Presidential Governance

The Constitution of Bangladesh, first adopted in 1972, provided for a parliamentary system of government. The First Parliament was constituted on April 7, 1973. The fourth constitutional amendment done during the Mujib rule changed the form of government to a presidential one and introduced a one-party system.

In 1978 Ziaur Rahman introduced a multi-party presidential system of governance. During martial law, all legislation were made by proclamations which were later legalized by the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. The Second Parliament, constituted on April 2, 1979, lasted till March 24, 1982. A total of 27 ordinances were promulgated by this Parliament.

The third and the fourth parliamentary elections were held under the Ershad regime. The Third Parliament lasted less than one and a half years. Beginning on April 25, 1988, the Fourth Parliament was dissolved on December 6, 1990 when the political parties and the people rejected Ershad's rule and forced him to resign.

Essential Election Laws and Their Loopholes

Mohiuddin Farooque and S. Rizwana Hasan

The provisions of the Bangladesh Constitution, Representation of the People Order, 1972 (Presidential Order ("P.O" 155 of 72), Representation of the People (Seats for Women) Order, 1973 (P.O. 17 of 73), Electoral Rolls Order, 1972 (P.O. 104 of 72), Election Commission Order, 1972 (P.O. 25 of 72), Election Officer (Special Law) Act, 1991 and their subsequent amendments made at different times are the sources that an election reporter, writer, monitor, or commentator has to consult and consider. Such a person must have fair knowledge of these legislations and their scopes and loopholes that relate to the conduct of the elections.

This chapter deals with constitutional provisions, laws, orders and ordinances which define and describe the rights of the voters, determine the conduct of elections, formation of the Election Commission, electoral rolls and areas or constituencies, functions of the Election Commission, duties and functions of returning officers and presiding officers, nomination, casting and counting of votes, declaration of results, corrupt practices, electoral offenses and disputes, and other relevant legal matters.

Right of Voting in the Constitution

The Constitution of Bangladesh established the republic a democracy, declaring the same as a principle of fundamental state policies. The basis of governance through representative local government is a crucial process for the country. It guarantees the right of the people to elect their representatives who take charge of the state-craft in

running and deciding the affairs. This important right of the people is ensured by the two main branches of the government, namely, the executive and the legislature. The whole legislative power of the republic is vested with the legislators elected through direct voting. At the local governance level, the right of voting has been recognized in Part IV [Chapter III] of Article 59 which states: "Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law." All the elections, whether national or local, shall be held on the basis of adult franchise."

Bangladesh Penal Code, 1860

According to section 171B of the Bangladesh Penel Code, "electoral right" means the right of a person to stand or not to stand as, or to withdraw from being, a candidate or to vote or refrain from voting at an election.

Parliamentary Elections

After the introduction of parliamentary democracy in the Fifth Parliament by introducing an amendment, the Constitution vests the legislative powers of the republic with the Jatyio Sangsad (JS) or the national parliament with its leader as head of the government. The JS is composed of 330 members, of which the voters elect 300 by direct voting from 300 territorial constituencies within Bangladesh. The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1990 extended the provision for 30 reserve seats exclusively for women members: "...for a period of ten years commencing from the date of first meeting of the Parliament next after the Parliament in existence at the time of commencement of the Constitution (Tenth Amendment) Act, 1990 ..." (Art. 65) to be elected through votes of these 300 elected members. All 330 members are designated as memebers of the Parliament.

Members of the Parliament (MP)

The Constitution provides that any citizen of Bangladesh who has attained the age of 25, qualifies to become an MP (article 66). Of course, a person who has been declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind, undischarged insolvent, has acquired the citizenship

of, or affirms or acknowledges allegiance to a foreign country, has been on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release, holds any office of profit in the service of the republic other than an office which is declared by law not to disqualify its holders, or has been disqualified for such election by or under any law, disqualifies for an election or for becoming a member of Parliament. Section 12 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 also includes some disqualifications.

Local Government Elections

As a constitutional requirement [under Article 59] the local administrative bodies of the government are to be comprised of elected members. Currently, the lowest administrative unit of the local government is the union council or Union Parishad (UP) in rural areas. The UP had been created under the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance of 1983. In the urban areas, the administration of local government institutions vest with the City Corporations and the Paurashavas which are elected by direct voting. The four major cities - Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi are governed by the elected City Corporations. The other urban areas have elected Paurashavas, an institution created under the Paurashava Ordinance, 1977.

Election Commission

The Election Commission conducts all elections, local and national, as its constitutional duty. According to Article 118(1) of the Constitution: "There shall be an Election Commission for Bangladesh consisting of a Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time direct, and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (if any) shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf, be made by the President."

Accordingly, the Election Commission was constituted through P.O. No. 25 of 1972. Article 119 of the Constitution and Article 5 of the P.O. describe the functions of the Election Commission which include the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation

of the electoral rolls and the conduct of the election to the Parliament. Although the text of Article 119 entrusts the Election Commission with the duty to hold election to the offices of the president and of the MPs only, the Election Commission, in fact, is responsible for conducting the election of the local government bodies as well under the respective local government laws.

Electoral Area

The Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 defines the electoral area. Electoral area, in relation to a local body election, means a village in the case of a rural area and a mohalla or a street in the case of an urban area (Section 3b). Local bodies are UPs (union councils), Paurashavas and City Corporations (3c). In parliamentary elections, an electoral area is a constituency delimited mainly to ensure more or less equal number of voters from each area and to maintain territorial contiguity of the [300] constituencies (3aa).

Elector and Electoral Roll

The Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 [Section 3, clause (aaaa)] defines an elector as: "..a person registered as voter and enrolled in the final electoral rolls prepared and published under this Ordinance."

Utmost attention has been given to ensure the preparation of electoral rolls and this matter has been dealt with by a separate law. Detailed procedures regarding electoral roll was first laid down in the Bangladesh Electoral Rolls Order, 1972 (P.O. No. 104 of 1972) which, in the preamble, states that it was enacted to: "provide for preparation of electoral rolls for the purpose of election of representatives of the people to elective bodies". The Order has undergone several amendments up to 1994. One of the most significant amendments, made in 1982 [Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982] has, in fact, substituted the 1972 Order to: "provide for the preparation of electoral rolls for the purpose of election to different elective bodies and offices." However, the most recent amendment made in 1994 has affected many of the provisions of the 1982 Ordinance. Thus Section 5 of The Electoral Rolls (Amendment) Act, 1994 states that for the election to elected bodies (local body or the Parliament), electoral rolls shall be prepared for each electoral area or constituency, as the case may be, upon registration of voters. The preparation of such

rolls shall vest with the registration officer to be appointed by the Election Commission. The electoral rolls for each electoral area shall include the name of every person who is a citizen of Bangladesh, is or is deemed to be a resident in that area, is not less than eighteen years of age and does not stand by a competent court to be of unsound mind.

Several provisions have been incorporated further to control all sorts of irregularities that might interfere with the preparation of a correct voter list. Section 9 of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982, states that no person shall be entitled to be enrolled on the electoral rolls for any electoral area for more than once, or for more than one electoral area.

The Election Commission can adopt several measures for the preparation of a correct voter list. The final voter list is prepared after the draft is published to draw attention of the voters. This is also for making corrections of the mistakes made in the draft voter list, if any. To prevent false or multiple voting by a voter the recent amendment of 1994 proposes to issue identity cards to the voters. The laminated identity card would contain a photograph of the voter, his/her name, signature or thumb expression, serial number in the electoral roll, the signature of the authorized officer and the seal of the Election Commission. According to section 12 of the 1982 Ordinance, the registration officer shall have access to any register of birth and death maintained under law and may collect such information and take such extracts as may be necessary for the preparation of electoral rolls.

Section 15 of the Electoral Rolls (Amend) Act, 1994 also empowers the Election Commission to include or delete any name in the electoral roll and to correct it at any time.

Other Preparatory Functions of the Election Commission

The functions of the Election Commission regarding the conduct of elections to different institutions have been laid down in different legislations.

The Representation of the People Order, 1972 provides the rules to be complied with in conducting the parliamentary elections. The election of the union councils and the municipal bodies are regulated

by the respective laws or the rules made under the enabling law creating such local bodies. Some salient features of the 1972 Order dealing with the conduct of election may be summarized as below:

a. Returning Officer, Presiding Officer, etc:
(Articles 7, 8, 9, 12, 20)

When the delimitation of the constituencies is completed, preparation for elections at the constituency level begins with the appointment of a returning officer for one or more constituency. The returning officer prepares a list of polling stations for the constituency under him; appoints the presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and polling officers; collects and scrutinizes the nomination papers; prepares a list of candidates; allocates symbols etc.

To ensure that the elections are held free, fair and not influenced by any candidate in his/her favour the returning officer guarantees that no polling station is in any such premise which belongs to, or are under the control of, any candidate. Nor shall any person be appointed as presiding officer, assistant presiding officer or polling officer if s/he is or has been in the employment of any candidate although the right to object against such location or appointment has not been recognized.

The Presiding Officer conducts the elections at the polling stations. S/he can seek assistance from the returning officer for efficient conduct of the polls.

b. Nomination (Articles 12, 13, 13A, 14, 15 and 16)

After the Election Commission publishes the notification for nomination with date(s) for submission, scrutiny and withdrawal of nomination papers and the date(s) of election, the returning officer circulates a public notice inviting nominations. The notice mentions time and place of submitting nomination papers. The candidate himself, his/her proposer, or seconder can submit the nomination papers to the returning officer. Nomination papers include a receipt of TK. 5,000 [security money] deposited by the candidate or anyone on his/her behalf. This security money is returned to a losing candidate only if s/he has received at least one-eighth of the total votes cast. The scrutiny of the nomination papers by the returning officer takes place in the presence of the candidates or their representatives. The

returning officer, after recording his/her decision on the nomination papers, publishes a list of candidates. Anyone rejected by the returning officer as not being eligible to be a nominee may appeal to the Election Commission. If the Election Commission's response is positive in favor of a nominee then the list of candidates is corrected with his/her/their names included. A notice of withdrawal may be submitted by a validly nominated candidate on or before the withdrawal day but such a notice shall, in no circumstances, be open to recall or cancellation. The returning officer prepares a final list of candidates the day after the withdrawal day.

An amendment in 1986 (Article 13A, Ord No. XVIII of 1986) provides that a person can become a candidate from maximum five constituencies.

c. Casting of Votes (Articles 24, 25, 27, 30)

On the election day, casting of votes continues unless stopped by the presiding officer. The returning officer fixes the voting hours. When polling at a station is stopped by the presiding officer either because it is interrupted by reasons beyond his control or any ballot box is unlawfully taken out of his custody, a fresh order for polling at such a station is to be given by the Election Commission.

Those in the public service and are out of their polling station, and the prisoners are offered a chance of casting their votes by post. The returning officer sends a ballot to such a public servant or a prisoner. The presiding officer is responsible for maintaining order at the station.

d. Counting of Votes (Articles 32, 33, 34 and 36)

Counting of votes must take place in the presence of the contesting candidates, election agents and polling agents soon after the casting of votes is stopped by the presiding officer. In the course of voting, the presiding officer may be required to maintain three other separate packets for tendered, challenged or spoilt ballot papers, other than ballot papers stamped and inserted in the ballot boxes by the electors.

i)   **Tendered Vote:** A tendered vote is a vote cast by a person representing himself/herself to be an elector when another person has already voted representing himself/herself to be that elector.

ii) **Challenged Vote:** A vote is challenged when the agent of a can-

didate, on undertaking to prove the charge in a court of law, deposits a prescribed sum with the presiding officer and declares to him/her that the person casting the vote has already voted at that or at another polling centre or that s/he is not the person against whose name s/he is seeking to vote.

iii) **Spoilt Ballot paper:** When a ballot paper is returned to the presiding officer by an elector because s/he has inadvertently spoilt it, the Presiding Officer shall place it in a packet labelled as the Spoilt Ballot Papers.

The presiding officer shall count only the ballot papers taken out from the ballot boxes and from the packet labelled "challenged ballot papers". The valid ballot papers cast in favor of each candidate shall be placed in separate packets containing the number of papers in the packet. The ballot papers which have been stamped incorrectly or in a way that no candidate can claim the vote as being cast in his/her favor are put in a separate packet and are not counted.

The presiding officer sends all these packets to the returning officer with detail description of counts. The returning officer compiles all results coming from different polling stations and declares the final results of a constituency.

e. Declaration of Result (Articles 19, 38, 39, 66)

The result of an election may be declared even without votes cast or at an early stage. For example, Article 19 says, if it is found that after the scrutiny of the nomination papers only one person remains as a validly nominated candidate, the returning officer declares such a candidate to be elected uncontested to the Parliament from that constituency.

In exceptional circumstances, the result of an election may also be decided through a lottery. For example, when two or more candidates share the highest and equal votes, a lottery may decide the result. In case of lottery, the returning officer draws a lot and the name in his/her hand wins the election.

Where it appears on trial before the Election Tribunal that there is an equality of votes between two or more contesting candidates, and the addition of one vote for one such candidate would entitle him/her to be declared elected, the tribunal shall so inform the Election Commission. In the event that no appeal is filed against the decision

of the tribunal, the Election Commission shall, after expiry of the period specified for the filing of an appeal, direct a fresh poll to be taken in respect of the said candidates, and fix a date for such poll, but otherwise, it shall await the result of the appeal and shall act as above only if the decision of the tribunal is upheld in appeal on all points.

However, the usual mode for declaring results is that after obtaining   results from all polling stations in a constituency, the returning officer declares by a public notification the candidate who has got the highest number of votes to be elected.

f. Election Expenses (Articles 44A and 44B)

According to Article 44A of the 1972 Order: "election expenses means, any expenditure incurred or payment made, whether by way of gift, loan, advance, deposit or otherwise, for the arrangement, conduct or benefit of, or in connection with, or incidental to, the election of a candidate, including the expenditure on account of issuing circular or publications or otherwise presenting to the electors the candidate or his views, aims or object ...."

Several provisions were subsequently enacted through an amendment in 1991 regulating the modes as to how this money should be used. Clause (3A) of Article 44B of the amendment instructs that the election expense or any portion thereof shall not be utilized for any of the following purposes:

a.   printing a poster in more than one color,

b.   using imported paper for printing of posters or leaflets,

c.   erecting any gate or arch,

d.   setting up an awning covering an area of more then four hundred square feet,

e.   making a banner of any cloth,

f.   employing or using more than three microphones or loudspeakers at a time in a constituency,

g.   commencing election publicity in any manner at any time three weeks prior to the date fixed for the poll,

h.   setting up more than twenty election camps or offices in a constituency,

I.   using any vehicle or vessel such as, truck, bus, car, taxi, motor-cycle and speed-boat for taking out any procession,

j.   illuminating with electricity in any form,

k.   using symbol or portrait of a candidate in more than one color,

l.   displaying a symbol exceeding the size prescribed by the commission, and

m.   writing in ink or paint or in any manner whatsoever as means of advertisement for propagating election campaign."

g. Election Offenses [defined in the 1972 Order and the BPC]

The 1972 Order contains a list of punishable election offenses, many of which are also defined in the Bangladesh Penal Code 1860 as criminal offenses. The electors, candidates or their agents as well as the authorities who conduct the election could commit these offenses.

Provisions have been incorporated in other laws of the country to ensure that the election procedures and practices, in other words "electoral rights" do not interfere with the civic or other rights of the people.

h. Corrupt Practices (Article 73)

A person may be guilty of corrupt practices punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a maximum period of seven years and minimum of two and also with fine. The corrupt practices as defined by laws include:

- contravention of provisions of Article 44B regarding election expenses;

- Bribery, personation or undue influence;

- Making or publishing a false statement concerning the personal character of a candidate or any of his/her relations intended to adversely affect the election of such candidate or for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of another candidate unless s/he proves that s/he had reasonable grounds for believing and did believe, the statement to be true;

- Letting, lending, employing, hiring, borrowing or using any

vehicle or vessel in support of a candidate for transporting voters to and from the polling stations. This excludes the person himself/herself or members of his/ her immediate family.

i.   Illegal Practices (Article 74)

Illegal practices punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a maximum term of seven years and minimum of two and also with fine include:

- Obtaining or procuring, the assistance of any person in the service of Bangladesh to further or hinder the election of a candidate;

- Voting or applying for a ballot paper to vote more than once in the same polling station;

- voting or applying for a ballot paper to vote in more than one polling station for the same election.

j.   Bribery (Article 75)

According to both the 1972 Order and the Bangladesh Penal Code, any attempt to influence the election procedure with bribery is an offense. The section 17E and BPC provides a punishment of up to one year imprisonment or fine or both.

k. Personation (Article 76)

A person is guilty of personation, if s/he votes, or applies for a ballot paper for voting for another person who is alive or dead, or fictitious. A person guilty of personation also includes one who has already voted in an election in his/her name and has applied for a voting paper the second time. The offense of personation has been dealt with in Section 171D of the Bangladesh Penal Code. Anyone guilty of personation may be punished with imprisonment for a maximum period of one year or fine or with both.

l. Undue Influence (Article 77)

Section 171C of the BPC defines undue influence as voluntary interferences or attempts of interferences with the free exercise of any electoral right by an individual or office. The use of any official influence or governmental patronage by a person to induce or compel any person to vote or refrain from voting, or to offer himself as a candidate, or to withdraw his candidature, at an election, would be treated as unlawful interference with the electoral right and hence

may be punished with imprisonment of up to one year or fined, or both fined and imprisoned.

m. Offenses Regarding Canvassing (Article 79)

A person is guilty of an offense punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall not be less than six months, and also with fine, if s/he, within a radius of four hundred yards of the polling station, on the polling day -

- canvasses for votes;
- solicits the vote of any elector;
- persuades any elector not to vote at the election or for a particular candidate; or
- exhibits, except with the permission of the returning officer and at a place reserved for the candidate or his/her election agent beyond the radius of one hundred yards of the polling station, any notice, sign, banner or flag designed to encourage the electors to vote, or discourage the electors from voting, for any contesting candidate.

Any person who convenes, holds or attends any public meeting or joins in any procession within the electoral area during a period of forty-eight hour ending at midnight on the conclusion of the poll shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years and shall not be less than two years, and also with fine.

n. Public Servant Misusing Official Position (Article 86)

A person in the service of Bangladesh is guilty of an offense punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and shall not be less than one year, and also with fine if s/he, misuses his/her official position in a manner calculated to influence the result of the election.

o. Election Disputes (Articles 49, 51, 53, 62 and 63)

The 1972 Order lays down procedure for filing and disposal of election dispute. No election shall be called in question except by an election petition made by a candidate for obtaining or procuring or attempting to obtain that election. The petition shall contain amongst others, full

particulars of any corrupt or illegal practice or other illegal acts alleged to have been committed. The trial of an election petition shall be conducted before an election tribunal consisting of a person who is or has been a district and session judge or an additional district and session judge who was not appointed as a returning officer. An order of the tribunal is appealable to a bench of two judges of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

The tribunal can declare the election of the returned candidate to be void if it is satisfied that:

a. the nomination of the returned candidate was invalid; or

b. the returned candidate was not, on the nomination day, qualified for, or was qualified from, being elected as a member; or

c. the election of the returned candidate has been procured or induced by any corrupt or illegal practice; or

d. a corrupt or illegal practice has been committed by the returned candidate or his/her election agent or by any other person with the connivance of the candidate or his election agent; or

e. the returned candidate has spent more money than what is allowed under Article 44B(3).

Election Offenses under Local Government Laws

Local government laws declare a number of activities usually viewed as part of election canvassing. They are the City Corporation Laws of the Four major cities of 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1987 of Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi respectively. These laws declare the following acts as offenses:

● encroaching on any public road, public street or public place without the sanction of the City Corporation;

● defacing or disturbing any municipal direction-post, lamp-post or lamp;

● fixing any bill, notice, placard or other paper or means or advertisement against or upon any building or place other than the places fixed for the purpose by the City Corporation.

Election Offenses under the Metropolitan Police Laws

In addition, the Metropolitan Police Laws contain a list of offensive acts which interfere with various constitutional rights of the people, such as the right to life, property etc. These are:

- playing music, beating of drums or other noisy instruments in or near public places which creates obstruction, inconvenience or annoyance to the residents or passengers in the vicinity;

- holding assembly or procession in a route or at a time not pre-scribed by the police commissioner;

- hanging or placing any cord pole across a street which obstructs traffic or the free access of light and air;

- using loudspeaker in or near any public place or in any place of public entertainment;

- illuminating streets or public places without license from the police commissioner.

Election Officers (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

A special law called the Election Officers (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 was enacted to provide for the regulation and discipline of the election officers for ensuring free, fair and impartial elections. Some salient features of the Act are:

Section 2 : Clause(d) -- "Election Officer" (EO) means any person engaged in the performance of any duty or act regarding election and shall also include any person responsible for maintaining discipline at the polling station.

Section 4 : (1) No person appointed as an EO shall refuse to accept or perform his duties except on grounds reasonable to the Election Commission or, in appropriate cases, to the returning officer.

(2) The appointing authority of any person appointed as an EO shall not obstruct or restrain him from performing his duties.

Section 5: (1) If any EO wilfully fails or refuses to carry out any direction or order of the Election Commission or in appropriate cases the Returning officer or violates any provision of any law relating

election, or commits any offense under that law, shall be deemed to have committed a misconduct punishable in accordance with his service rules.

(2) If an EO commits any offense under sub-section (1), his/her appointing authority may remove or terminate him from service or give him compulsory retirement or cause demotion or suspend his promition or salary increase up to two years:

Provided that no such punishment shall bar or affect any legal proceeding which may be initiated under any other law for such failure, refusal, violation or offense as mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) If any EO commits any misconduct under sub-section (1), the Election Commissio or the returning officer may, on initiation of proceeding according to his/her service rule, order for his/her temporary suspension from service upto two months and such order of suspension shall be deemed to have been given by his appointing authority in accordance with his/her service rule and shall be effective accordingly.

(4) If the Election Commission or returning officer requests the appointing authority of an EO to initiate disciplinary proceeding against him for any offence commited under sub-section (1), the authority shall initiate such proceeding within one month from the date of receiving such request and shall inform the Election Commission of its action.

Section 6 : (1) Any person violating the provisions of section 4(1) and 4(2) shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend upto one year or with fine which may extend upto five thousand taka or with both.

(2) Any person disregarding any direction under section 5(3) or violating any provision of section 5(4) shall be punishable with imprisonment which may exend up to six months or with fine which may extend up to two thousand taka or with both.

Some Remarks

Men's capacity to do justice makes democracy possible while their capacity to do injustice makes democracy necessary. The concept of justice evolved with values and forms of governance. For ensuring

people-oriented and participatory decision-making, it is essential to institutionalize the system so that the aspirations of the people can yield positive results for common welfare.

The whole process of institutionalization of democracy perhaps begins with the process of having representatives at various levels of governance. Being under military rule for almost one-third of the period since the independence of the country, when the Constitution was either suspended or parts of it remained in abeyance, the people of Bangladesh hardly had the opportunity to exercise democratic rights and practice freedom. Moreover, many of the political leaders served under military regimes or non-Bangladeshis and they are the same people now trying to establish a democratic system with hardly any experience of its practice. Given such realities, one may be quite skeptical about expectations from these people. The compatibility in claims and demands are absent among the leaders, their followers and the common people. Such inconsistency have adversely affected the confidence of the people in the system which is neither very well-grounded nor fruitful enough. The move to institutionalize democracy as the system of governance "of the people, by the people, for the people" should therefore start taking into consideration the confidence of the people in the system which would eventually ensure their effective participation as claimed by representative governance and not as a kind of "election day" democracy.

The laws existing in our country regarding adult franchise, if properly implemented with some necessary amendments, can have a positive impact on the candidates as well as on the electorate. Irregularities frustrate the people right from being enlisted in the voter list down to the casting of votes and declaration of results. The laws require that to be a voter, one has to be resident of a particular area that must be recorded. As a result, the floating populace like the slum dwellers do not get enrolled as voters and cannot exercise their rights to franchise. This creates wide injustice to a large number of disadvantaged and economically poor populace. The opposition parties term such exclusion as a conspiracy of the ruling party to defeat them in elections claiming that these voters were their suppoters.

In a country where the majority of the people remain under poverty level, how many of them can be expected to have permanent residences? Therefore, it may be suggested that there be no such

requirement in the laws which excludes the floating population and that the Election Commission should be developed as an impartial body which can listen to and mitigate such agonies.

According to Section 8(1) of the Electoral Roll Ordinance, 1982: "a person shall be deemed to be resident in an electoral area if s/he ordinarily resides in that electoral area." This provision needs clear interpretation in the context of the expectation of the voters. A person might be interested in voting in the area of his origin and not where he resides which may change quite often. The recent decision of the Election Commission that a person shall be included in the voter list in respect to his present address as shown in the form provided for registration of voters has been severely criticized because professional and economic reasons compel the voters to change their addresses. The sense of being a resident of an area of a voter, at least for voting purposes, has more parochial and emotional attachment which would definitely influence the decision of voting. Hence, it may be suggested that the voters should be given the option of choosing between the constituency of residence and of origin or permanent address.

Secondly, the electoral rolls, once prepared and finalized, should be maintained and followed strictly as the crucial document in the electoral process. It should be the prime duty of the personnel conducting the elections to check and regulate false votes and voters. This has been the gray area where wide corruptions are reported during most of the elections. The number of voters present at a polling station for voting is often out-numbered by the votes cast and counted. People with genuine voter number and name are reportedly sent back from the polling stations on the ground that their votes had already been cast.

The existing law allows the casting and counting of challenged votes without enumerating how it would affect the result of the election if the court declares that the votes were false. Again, the tendered votes are excluded from counting perhaps to ensure that no vote is cast twice. But the fact is that such exclusion not only discards the false vote but also a genuine voter is deprived. The latter might be the original voter who has voted for a different candidate but is not being counted. Such provisions are the roots of gross anomaly and discouragement which require procedural clarity.

Exemplary punishment provided by law should be imposed upon

the violators who undermine the rights of others and all actors and their stooges of the dirty trick should be denied their right of voting for a certain period. Furthermore, the fate of the challenged votes are not clearly mentioned in the laws.

The Election Commission in each election prescribes a maximum amount of money that can be spent by each candidate as election expenditure (Art. 44B (3) of the Representation of People Order, 1972). Every candidate is required under law to submit a return of his/her election expenses within fifteen days upon announcement of election results, the violation of which is punishable. Perhaps it is the absence of such mandatory provision binding the Election Commission to actually review and determine the validity of such statements which is rendering these provisions meaningless. In Bangladesh, there is hardly any known instance of one being punished for violating the election expense limit.

Although the Election Commission is legally responsible for conducting the election, there is nothing in the laws called the "election period". Apparently, the authority of the Election Commission regarding the conduct of election commences with the declaration for submission of candidature and as such, it apparently has no control over the electoral behaviour of the political parties until their representatives come before it for submitting candidatures. Specific legal provisions may be incorporated to check the money game in the name of election expenditure on various pretexts. The Election Commission needs to enquire the election accounts of the candidates without delay and must have the power to take into account any unfair practices regarding nomination of the political parties. A candidate who invests in having a party nomination and during the election campaign might reap the benefit of the harvest on being elected or at least if the candidate's party goes to power.

The supporters and workers of political parties violate the election laws by getting involved in unlawful activities due to lack of awareness and absence of enforcement of relevant legislations. Such unlawful activities lead to situations which result in the postponement of legally recognized civic rights. Such activities include wall-writing, unregulated postering, bannering, procession, incessant use of loud speakers withoutthe required permission, footpath and street encroachment, etc.

In addition to the election laws, the Metropolitan Police Laws and the Municipal Laws discourage such activities in expressed terms which the political parties or their supports often do not care for. For example, the City Corporation laws and the Police Laws prescribe punishment for writing on walls without the owners' permission. It is interesting to note that during the last City Corporation elections candidates contesting for various offices of the City Corporation were themselves violating the City Corporation laws! Their supporters, in the name of election propaganda, were painting the walls of others ignoring the Election Commission's repeated appeal to refrain from such actions.

The Election Commission could not make best use of the constitutional provision (Art. 126) which requires all executive authorities of the country to render assistance to the Election Commission in discharge of its duties. There is a lack of effective request from the Election Commission to the police for specifying routes for procession or places for assembly. Often loud-speakers are used without the necessary permission and routes and places for holding processions and public meetings or rallies are not specified.

Under the existing legal framework, one person can contest from a maximum of five constituencies but can keep just one seat as a member of the parliament. When one is elected from more than one electoral area, s/he can retain only one seat. For the other seats, by-elections are held within ninety days from the date the seat falls vacant (Article 123(4) of the Constitution). The reason for enacting such a provision was perhaps to ensure that a candidate who is not confident of being elected from one seat is not denied the chance from elsewhere.

It is, somewhat evident that the dissatisfaction over the electoral process is mainly due to lack of implementation of the existing laws. The Election Commission has powers under the existing laws to regulate many of the irregularities, but with little implementation and ineffective authority in the exercise of such powers many of the objectives and functions remain meaningless.

List of laws relating to elections

Laws containing specific provisions on different aspects of elections:

1.   The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,

2.   The Bangladesh Penal Code,

3.   Local Government Laws: Laws relating to the City Corporations, Union Parishad and Paurashava Laws and

4.   Police Laws

Laws enacted for the purpose of election only

1.   **Representation of the People Order, 1972 (P.O. 155 of 72)**

1.1.   Representation of the People (Supplementary) Order, 1973 (P.O.8 of 73)

1.2.   Representation of the People Supp. (Amend) Act, 1973

1.3.   Representation of the People (Amend) Ordinance, 1978

1.4.   Representation of the People (Second Amend) Ordinance, 1978

1.5.   Representation of the People (Third Amend) Ordinance, 1978.

1.6.   Representation of the People (Amend) Ordinance, 1984

1.7.   Representation of the People (Amend) Ordinance, 1985

1.8.   Representation of the People (Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.9.   Representation of the People (Second Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.10. Representation of the People (Third Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.11. Representation of the People (Fourth Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.12. Representation of the People (Fifth Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.13. Representation of the People (Sixth Amend) Ordinance, 1986

1.14. Representation of the People (Amend) Act, 1991

1.15. Representation of the People's (Amend) Act, 1994

2.   **Reresentation of the People (Seats for Women) Order, 197 3 (P.O. 17 of 73)**

2.1.   Representation of the People (Supplementary) (Amend) Ordinance, 1973

2.2.   Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order(Amend)Ordinance, 1979

2.3.   Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order (Second Amend) Ordinance, 1979

2.4.   Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order (Amend) Ordinance, 1986

2.5.   Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order(Second Amend) Ordinance, 1986

2.6.   Representation of the People (Seat for Women Members) (Amend) Act, 1991

2.7.   Representation of the People (Seats for Women Members) Order (Amend) Ordinance, 1991

3.   Electoral Rolls Order, 1972 (P.O. 104 of 72)

3.1.   Electoral Rolls (Amend) Ordinance, 1984

3.2.   Electoral Rolls (Amend) Act, 1994

4.   Election Commission Order, 1972 (P.O. 25 of 72)

5.   Election Officer (Special Law) Act,1991

6.   Rules

6.1.   Electoral College Rules 1964

6.1.1. Electoral College (Amend) Rules 1964

6.2.   Electoral College Rules 1965

6.2.1. Electoral College (Amend) 1965

6.2.2. Electoral College (Amend) Act 1965

6.2.3. Electoral College (Second Amend) Act 1957

A Penny for People's Thoughts

Hossain Zillur Rahman

A general aspiration of the citizens of Bangladesh is institutionalization of democracy and wider participation at all levels of political process. There are many instruments and institutions which can help in materializing this aspiration. Parliament, local government, civil society forums are well known institutions in this regard. In addition, opinion polls and surveys have emerged as powerful instruments in this process of wider participation and democratization on a much more direct and continuous basis. Indeed, opinion surveys can rightly be seen as an instrument of direct democracy. The concept of direct democracy is a supplement to the concept of representative democracy and it points towards a more active role of citizenry in the political process of a nation. Opinion poll is an instrument by which citizens' opinions come into play on a more active and regular basis.

Status of Opinion Polls in Bangladesh

In Bangladeshi political culture, opinion polls or surveys are not yet popular. The print media are not used to the concept of opinion polls. One explanation for this is the autocratic culture which has been a hallmark of political life till very recently. An autocratic culture is averse to the concept of listening to the people and such an attitude used to pervade most major sectors including the newspapers. However, with the resumption of the democratic process, opinion polls are beginning to appear in many institutional practices. Whatever little we see these days, it is a reflection of the realization that we should start direct communication with the people.

Opinion polls or surveys should not, however, be seen in any absolute terms meaning that without them democracy cannot exist. Opinion polls are not the number one criteria for democracy. We have to put its usage in a context. Many elements make up a democratic culture. Opinion polling has the potential to be one important element in such a culture. But we must not attach any absolute value to this.

In our society the attitude of the government and the state has not been one to listen to the people. Even the major political parties suffer from such an attitude. Our culture is an authoritarian one in which listening to the people is **not** a major priority. Rather, people are to be dictated to. The opinion polls or surveys are attempts to reverse this. But this cannot happen overnight. It will take time to reverse deep-rooted cultural practices. Meanwhile, it's important that the instrument of opinion polls or surveys is applied in a judicious and meaningful way. Just because opinion polls are widely used in western democracies, we should not uncritically apply it here. Our society is culturally, technologically and politically different. We have to understand the nature of the instrument of opinion polling. It is not an instrument to transplant; rather it is to be judiciously and creatively used. We need to know what are the important means for opinion polls. We should also be aware that as an instrument, it can be subject to great abuse.

However, with all precautions, it should be emphasized that opinion polls or surveys can be very useful tools. We should try to advance this instrument as a force for democracy, to institutionalize democratic culture and practice. We should not allow it to be used for personal aggrandizement or for wrong political ends when in the name of people one can manipulate the results and manufacture consents. In some dictatorial regimes, opinion polls have been manipulated to show 99 per cent popular support. Opinion polls should not be used to manufacture these kinds of result.

Opinion polling in the Bangladeshi context, of course, is very new. Social acceptance of opinion polling is still not widespread. Professionalism has still not been achieved much; there are also biased approaches. But initial hurdles should not discourage those who are using this critical tool.

Opinion polls can, of course, be used in a variety of contexts. Here

we are talking about opinion polling in the context of elections. In 1991, we carried out an opinion polling from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. That experience has convinced us that opinion polling can be a very useful tool in election reporting. But we must learn from our mistakes also.

Three Major Objectives of Opinion Polling

One simple objective of opinion surveys is to yield some predicted results.

The second objective is a critically important one, namely, to make peoples' opinions a useful force towards the formulation of the political agenda around which elections are held. Opinion surveys should serve as a strong instrument to uphold and communicate the requirements and voices of the people. Political leaders should not enjoy the monopoly of shaping the political agenda. First and foremost, political agenda relates to the lives of the people so the people must also contribute to the formulation of these agenda.

The third objective is to anticipate and prevent unwelcome events and developments which may occur. For example, if violence is anticipated in certain areas it can be prevented provided an alert map is drawn. The Power and Participation Research Center (PPRC), for example, is trying to identify through survey and mapping the areas around the country which will potentially become prone to violence in the coming election. With the alert-map in hand, the Election Commission can perhaps take extra precautionary measures in the violence-prone areas to prevent violence. Anticipation of unwanted developments and publishing warnings so that they can be prevented is an important aspect of opinion polling.

Critical Aspects of Opinion Polling

To have any meaningful impact, opinion polls must feature two critical aspects. These are:

a. Credibility - the polls should be unbiased.

b. Professionalism - an element which is necessary for attaining credibility.

One has to be credible and professional to get useful and sound

results out of opinion polls. For professional fitness, the conductors of opinion polls should be trained.

Opinion polls actually mean listening to the people. That is the angle which we want to press forth. The misuse of opinion polls usually takes place when the polls are not meant to probe into and register what people think. Rather a concept or a hypothesis is formulated and the conductors of opinion polls just want the people to validate or endorse it.

Institutional efforts such as those of the Power and Participation Research Center focuses mainly on this aspect of the issue since this is also the most neglected area. This is the area where we can really contribute to improving or deepening the democratic process. The main goal of opinion polling should not be to have people to endorse or reject a certain viewpoint; but a genuine attempt should be made to listen to what people say.

Opinion Mapping

We have coined the term opinion mapping in contrast to the more familiar terms opinion polling or survey as a more relevant approach for the Bangladeshi context. The difference between opinion mapping and opinion polling is that opinion polling tends mainly to demand a *yes/no* answer. But in opinion mapping, the focus is not primarily a *yes/no* answer. Recently, when we used this instrument of opinion mapping rather than opinion polling, we did not seek yes or no answers around the political crisis. We asked more open-ended questions so that people may try to weigh the elements involved, and prioritize them.

In opinion mapping, instead of asking for a single answer, multiple answers are sought and out of that one can construct a **priority index**. For a predominant and clear-cut issue people might give just a single answer. But on broad and complex issues, respondents might not be interested in giving just one answer. From the multitude of answers, we can then assess people's perception of the importance of the issues that the pollsters are concerned with. If the respondents do not talk of many different/divergent issues, we can then conclude that their concern is focused on one overwhelming issue. But if the responses comprise several issues, one can get a sense of how important a particular issue is within the overall opinion map of the respondents.

Since opinion mapping aims at open-ended answers which give freedom to a respondent, this might help find the particular response that one is seeking within the overall perspective of the person. So opinion mapping is an important instrument that we can utilize in a context such as ours.

We, therefore, have two options regarding opinion survey - opinion polling and opinion mapping. For clear-cut and decisive issues, we can have opinion polling and on more debateable and critical issues we can have opinion mapping. There are, of course, a number of ways to use opinion polling and mapping. The researcher or the surveyor must decide which of the two instruments best suits his/her purpose.

Other Issues: In organizing opinion polls in our context, or even in the western context, equal emphasis should be given on two major aspects. One is the survey itself [the technical side] and the other, the more critical aspect, is the formulation of the questions. Determining the issues and accordingly framing the questions to ask is very important. For formulating a good questionnaire, researchers may seek suggestions from different professional groups and media persons. The survey itself must be done professionally.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

It is important to know what not to do in the preparation and conduct of the opinion surveys. Bangladesh has a polarized political culture. A society like ours has not had a democratic culture in its political history. This factor must be kept in mind. It is not very useful in this context to formulate complex questions and then seek yes/no answers. One may get an answer but the value of that may be little. On clear-cut and easily understood issues direct questions can be asked. But on issues which are complex, the approach should be indirect.

Mistakes Made in Quick Surveys: There is nothing wrong with quick surveys but sloppiness can have no excuse. If well prepared, a one-day survey can be a professional one. The important thing about the quick survey is that it should not be unprofessional.

The overall objective of introducing opinion polls/surveys in our country is to strengthen the democratic culture; we have to listen to the people; we have to understand their situation so that the listening process is established. If we are not careful, we can in fact end up in

reintroducing, in a very indirect way, the authoritarian culture. Within the opinion polls, we might dictate people which may not be of great interest to them at all. We must know whether the issues we are interested in are important to them. So we must not reintroduce the authoritarian process, rather we should work for the introduction of a democratic process. Above all, we must be professional and the opinion poll/survey findings should be reported in an unbiased way.

Sampling and Poll Preparation

The issue of sampling is critical for the professional outcome of opinion surveys. The sampling should be representative of the total population of a geographic area surveyed. We need to ask whether or not this will bring us some unbiased results. The issue of sampling is an issue of giving a proper representation. The size of the sampling is not the crucial factor. One might sample 20,000 respondents. But if the sampling is not properly done, major mistakes may take place in collecting reasonable and correct opinions. We can cite the example of a PPRC survey (1994) where we surveyed a sample of 450 respondents of Dhaka city which is now a city of 7/8 millions, yet the findings were very reasonable and their validity has been amply established by subsequent events. The results were disseminated through seminars and the press picked up these findings.

In sampling, we must not take a purely technocratic attitude that everyone must read statistical books. However, for sampling the following elements are important.

a. **Prior Knowledge of the Population:** The more prior knowledge of the population one has [for example, if one knows that in Dhaka city there are three major categories of people - professionals, business people and working people], the less time one needs to invest in sampling. Prior knowledge and the maximum use of that knowledge, cuts down time and cost. We should use our prior knowledge as much as possible, but must clearly outline our basis for the sampling.

a. **Common Sense:** One must not disregard one's common sense while sampling and framing the questionnaire.

c. **Notions of Sampling Theories:** Some notions of the sampling theories may be useful.

d. Low-cost Methodology and Quickness: To be meaningful, opinion polls must be planned, conducted and their results made available in a short period of time. Especially in the context of election monitoring, one does not follow the long research procedure. You have to do it within a few days, a week or a month. These are the time-frames which are meaningful in the context of elections. At times, a one-day survey might generate good information. Time-frame for opinion polling or survey in the election reporting and monitoring is quite different from that of a thorough, large research. As far as possible we should use low-cost methodology. This is very suitable for the journalists too.

A Caution: Telephone survey may be misleading. Only selected categories of people can be reached on telephone surveys. Besides, in our culture, responses over telephone may not be natural, spontaneous or adequate. Here listening to people is not an idea which is well established. So when a decision is taken about conducting an opinion poll we must keep this in mind. We just cannot follow the US style where there is a literate population and 200 years of democratic political culture; paying attention to what the people say is part of their tradition. But we possess a different political history and culture. In this context we think the preferable idea is to design the opinion survey and opinion mapping in a way that we do listen to the people. The questions should be easy and questions demanding yes/no answers should be avoided. When one approaches with a question to get a yes/no answer, the respondent might give any answer just to get rid of the interviewer.

Dissemination

Newspapers are not yet really enthusiastic about going after the interesting stories which are potentially available here. We, researchers also need to interact more with the journalists to communicate our reports. We are ready to make our reports available to the journalists and organize seminars and press briefing etc.

Organizations to contact for reports and information on opinion polling/mapping

1. **Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)**
   House 26, Road 9A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka
   Contact: Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman
   Tel: 819207

2. **Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre (MARC)**
   House 24, Road 5, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205
   Contact: Dr. Monwar Hossain
   Tel: 861903, 501030
   Fax:883542, 863633

3. **The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)**
   E-17, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka
   Tel: 815146, 325041-42

4. **Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC)**
   House-65, Road-6A, Dhanmondi R/A
   Dhaka - 1205
   Contact: Executive Director
   Tel: 815919, 311026, 319919

3. **Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)**
   41/Ka, Road-4A, Dhanmondi R/A
   P.O. Box-5007 (New Market)
   Contact: Executive Director
   Tel: 508097, 505669   Fax: 880-2-867021

4. **The Centre for Sustainable Development (CFSD)**
   House 62/1, Road 8A,
   Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
   Tel: 319126, 316037

5. **Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS)**
   House 620, Road 10/A
   Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
   Tell: 815829, 313682, 319823

6. **University Research Corporation**
   House 102, Road 9/A (New)
   Dhanmondi
   Tel: 323403

Some private firms involved in commissioned opinion polling

1. **Mitra & Associates**
    2/17 Iqbal Road
    Mohammadpur
    Dhaka
    Tell: 315503, 311900
    N.B. Mitra and Associates has a track record in large-scale national demographic surveys.

2. **Direct Marketing Limited**
    35 Topkhana Road, Dhaka-1000
    Tel: 240096, 240097-9
    Fax: 880-2-865584

3. **Social Marketing Company**
    12/14 North Circle
    Gulshan-2, Dhaka
    Tell: 871475
    N.B. Social Marketing Company has a small in-house capacity for opinion polling.

4. **Asiatic Marketing Communications Ltd**
    4 Nooratan Colony
    New Baily Road
    Dhaka
    Tell: 400125,400126,407368

5. **SOMRA Ltd.;**
    Tell: 814985

6. **MRC-MODE**
    4 Nooratan Colony
    New Baily Road
    Dhaka
    Tell: 400125,400126,407368

7. **Quest Survey Research**
    113/A Monipuripara, Tejgaon, Dhaka
    Tell: 819358

Political Crisis and Democratic Graduation:
Findings from an opinion Survey of Dhaka City, November, 1995

The survey was carried out by the Power and Participation Research Center on a total of 1195 voting-age adults in Dhaka city between 7 and 21 October, 1995. The sample comprised laboring classes (30%); professional classes (27%); business classes (23%); and others i.e. students, housewives, unemployed etc. (20%). Of the total sample, 80 per cent was male and the rest 20 per cent was female.

The overreaching theme which informed the survey was democratic graduation. Specifically, the survey covered the following questions:

How does the popular concerns relate to the political crisis?

What are popular priorities as regards the solution of the crisis?

What is the level of voter anticipation of a general election?

What are the barriers to fair elections as prioritized by general voters?

How does available list of candidates correspond to people's preferences?

What are the revealed patterns of voter choice as regards political parties?

Lastly, what is the level of voter optimism on prospects of the future?

As the issues involved are complex, multi-dimensional and evoke diverse opinions, the survey could not be based on a simple `Yes/No' response framework. It rather sought to establish whether popular choices are fragmented or clustered and also the depth of priority people accord to any individual choice.

Five politically significant facts could be summarized from the findings:

1. A relative absence of political polarization among the general electorate -- about 70 percent of the respondents were undecided about whom to vote for. At the moment, majority of the people want the government and opposition to compromise so that the ongoing crisis can be resolved. A significant number of them also thought that a caretaker government during the election period

would be crucial for ensuring free and fair polls.

2. A strong concern on the economic consequence of the political crisis.

3. An across-the-board desire to ensure fair elections. People were concerned that overt or covert use of force, illegal arms and money would severely hamper fair polling and majority thought deployment of the army and BDR, under the Election Commission, would be necessary to ensure fair polling.

4. Strong voter enthusiasm for election participation.

5. Net optimism about the future of the electorate.

Do these facts weave into a central story? Do they indicate an agenda for the future? Certainly, the facts bespeak of a mature electorate whose enthusiasm underpins the democratic process and whose `conscious normalcy' has served to contain the on-going political confrontation from descending into political anarchy. To conclude on the larger story, it is important to distinguish between two key meanings of democratic graduation which is indicated in the above facts.

The first issue is that of fair elections. This can refer to the unhindered right of voter choice as well as a transparent electoral process. Equally importantly, however, democratic graduation includes the issue of the durability of the political order in which the major democratic forces within society are effective participants. The democratic quest in today's Bangladesh cannot advance without addressing both of these issues.

The second phase of the same study, surveying a representative sample covering the whole country, has already been undertaken.

Election Monitoring in Bangladesh

Philip Gain and Shishir Moral

Election monitoring is a new phenomenon in Bangladeshi election culture. The USA has been one of the main promoters of such activity in Bangladesh and in a few other Asian countries that have gone through political turbulence.

In Bangladesh, the first election monitoring took place in 1986. Convened by Justice K.M. Subhan, the `People's Commission for Free Elections' which included three Britishers - Lord Ennals [Labor Party MP of House of Lords], Brandon-Bravo [Conservative Party MP of House of Commons] and BBC correspondent David Leigh, who did some monitoring of the third parliamentary elections (Subhan 1991:20). They addressed a press conference after the elections and reported "wide scale intimidation, calculated use of violence, strong arm tactics which denied the people their right to exercise their vote."

On 19 September, 1989, a team of human rights activists and journalists was sponsored by the Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights to monitor a parliamentary by-election in Narshjngdi constituency which fell vacant after a Jatiyo Party member of the parliament died.

The first organized election monitoring in Bangladesh took place in 1990 through observance of the upazila elections on the brink of the Ershad regime.

The main local body to observe the 1990 Upazila elections was the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh(CCHRB), a

coalition of human rights groups dominated by non-government organizations. The CCHRB fielded around 800 observers from 10 NGOs and elections were monitored in 67 centers.

Election monitoring by local groups was intended to check whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' call for "genuine elections" and "free and fair voting procedure" (subsection 3 of Article 21) were being observed. The monitoring took place also because of the national and international interest in free and fair elections in Bangladesh (Timm and Gain, 1990).

Other bodies that monitored the same elections were the US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a Shri Lanka-based South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation team and a US Embassy team.

While the CCHRB published a report based on its findings, other bodies did not publish any reports worth mentioning. The foreign teams expressed that they were here to gather some experiences which might be used for the preparation of organized election monitoring in future. In fact, the NDI team was a technical team which came to observe the upazila elections and to develop follow-up programs that would encourage agreement between the government and the opposition on the conditions necessary for national elections.

Sponsored by the International Center for Ethnic Studies based in Shri Lanka, the SAARC team comprised four members from Nepal, Shri Lanka, Pakistan and India.

5th Parliamentary Elections:
Election Monitoring Draws Attention

As the fifth parliamentary elections were scheduled, several organizations, local and foreign, expressed their interest in poll watching. Two main local coalitions to monitor elections were the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon (BAMNA or Bangladesh Free Election Movement). The latter had active support from the Association for Development Agencies in Bangladesh which is a coalition of development NGOs. In addition, a few smaller groups such as Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights and Ganatantrik Udyog did some monitoring. The local coalitions and groups jointly fielded thousands of

observers and attracted great media attention.

A number of international groups also took interest in poll watching and forming field teams during the 1991 general elections. These groups included the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Commonwealth Observer Group, SAARC team, Japanese and British Parliamentary Observers' groups. In addition, many foreign embassies organized their teams to watch polls. All these groups published their reports. The foreign groups that undertook field reporting comprised around one hundred observers.

The local groups and NDI provided some training to the core groups of the local observers.

Legality of Local Monitors

The local election monitors were never well accepted by either the government, the Election Commission or the ruling party. In 1990 upazila elections, during the first worth-mentioning poll watching, the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh sought government approval for poll watching. The then Home Minister who was first approached to endorse poll watching stated that he was in charge only to maintain the law and order situation. The CCHRB team was directed to the Chief Election Commissioner for permission.

Request for a "no objection certificate" by the observer groups to the Chief Election Commissioner was not responded to until a few hours before the elections. The response letter that came to the CCHRB referred to the provision of Rule 28 of the Upazila Parishad (Election of Chairman) Ordinance, 1983, which empowers the Presiding Officers to permit any one to go inside polling centers other than voters, election agents, and polling agents. The Chief Election Commissioner's office advised the poll watchers to take the opportunity of this provision and procure permission from the Presiding Officers to get inside the polling centers. Many major NGOs did not take part in election monitoring because they did not get *no objection certificate* for their monitors!

The former President H.M. Ershad, who was later ousted and put into jail, invited 25,000 foreign observers to monitor the elections. But when the local election monitoring groups sought permission, his government did not help much.

The foreign observers, indeed, got much more attention and cordial hospitality from the government during the fifth parliamentary elections.

In a circular to the additional divisional commissioners and the returning officers, the Election Commission urged them to extend necessary assistance to the foreign observers (Timm and Gain, 1991:20). The foreign observers were provided with identity cards and stickers for their vehicles. On the other hand, thousands of local observers were denied official recognition on the grounds that the election laws did not permit election monitoring.

Despite the Election Commissions's inhospitable treatment of local election monitors, they continued to press for official recognition from the government. After the fifth parliamentary elections in 1991 the election monitoring groups decided to unitedly observe the City Corporation elections in 1994. They convened under the banner of the National Steering Committee for observing City Corporation Elections, 1994. The Election Commission which publicly announced to give permission and identity cards to the observers of this national steering committee, ultimately refused to do so the day before the election following a protest from a BNP leader that the joint convenors of the steering committee were linked with certain political parties.

The Election Commission issued only 22 cards to foreign missions and a few small organizations. It refused to provide cards to 450 observers of the National Election Observation Committee, an assemblage of Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon and a few other local groups.

However, allegation has it that the few locals who were provided with election observation cards were linked with the political pals of the incumbency.

The Election Commission wanted to give only five election observation cards to the CCHRB which the organization refused to take. The CCHRB had fielded 4000 observers in the 1991 parliamentary elections. It claimed to have developed the capacity to field a few thousands observers at any given election. The offer of five cards by the Election Commission was seen as a dampener. If elections were to be observed by the locals, then thousands of watchdogs would have to be employed for effective observation. In such a situation a mere couple of cards wouldn't have done any good to election observation.

An independent opinion poll conducted in 1991 by the CCHRB revealed that most people favored election monitoring by the local and neutral observers to prevent fraudulent practices in the elections. They

also felt that election observation should be legalized. In fact, in some countries citizens' monitoring groups such as NAMFREL in the Philippines has legal recognition since 1984 to monitor elections (Timm and Gain, 1991:20).

Some General Tasks of Poll Watchers:

1. Monitoring the work of the Election Commission to see what efforts they make to have free and fair elections and to give publicity about elections and control of the use of violence.

2. Checking the voter lists against the actual voters to see whether any abuses occurred in the preparation of the lists.

3. Analyzing the election laws to see what shortcomings or loopholes there may be and to make recommendations for improving the legal framework of elections.

4. Documenting the opinions of various categories of people such as lawyers, teachers, intellectuals, students, professionals, workers, regarding election laws; campaigning; the voting institution; the possibility of free and fair elections; through surveys, opinion polls and interpersonal communication.

5. Monitoring the behavior of the candidates both before and during elections, and that of the voters on election day.

6. Monitoring the campaign, candidates' election expenses, frauds, etc.

7. Providing some education to voters about how to control violence and abuses in the polling station.

Local and International Poll Watchers

A number of local and international election monitoring groups have been taking interest in Bangladeshi elections and democratic issues since 1990 through election monitoring and providing training to the politicians, parliamentarians and citizens' groups. Election monitoring groups, both local and foreign, are preparing for monitoring the 6th parliamentary elections. These groups generate such information which might be of interest to the reporters and writers who cover elections. Basic information about these organizations will assist the journalists and the poll watchers in covering the elections.

Major Local Poll Watchers

Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB)

The Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh is the leading local coalition to monitor elections. It had more impacts on the election process than any other election monitoring group during the 1990 upazila elections and perhaps during the fifth parliamentary elections in 1991. Subsequently, its work on elections was somewhat jeopardized.

The organization has been preparing for monitoring the sixth parliamentary elections. It has organized a 11-member national committee and a panel of nine advisors under its election monitoring wing. Three coordinators will coordinate the election monitoring functions from the central office.

It plans to field 10,000 monitors in 100 constituencies in all six divisions. Ten observers will be coordinated by one team leader. These observers will be drawn from 76 CCHRB member organizations and 96 organizations with observer status. Constituencies for monitoring will be selected after the nomination of candidates are finalized. Individuals will also be chosen as observers in places where member organizations will fail to provide volunteers.

The organization has not changed its style of election monitoring from what it did in the past. Its election monitoring will be backed by some voter education materials such as posters, leaflets, TV commercials, billboards, mass gatherings, rallies, etc.

It also plans pre and post election surveys.

Some CCHRB Publications are:

a. Report on Upazila Election 1990 Observation.

b. Election Observation Report (both in English and Bangla) on Election to the 5th Parliament, 1991

c. Nirbachan Parjabekhhan Manual (Election Observation Manual) in Bangla.

d. Several mimeographs on by-elections and City Corporation elections.

Contact:
A.N.M. Aminul Islam/Uttam Kumar Roy
CCHRB
House No.5/4 (1st floor)
Block-F, Lalmatia
Dhaka-1207

Tell: 817211
Fax: 880-2-819527

Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA)

Initiated by the Study and Research Group, a research wing of Manobik Shahajya Sangstha, Fair Election Monitoring Alliance was formally launched on July 24, 1995, through a press conference. It is a national coalition of leading Bangladeshi NGOs, citizens' groups, professional bodies, different clubs and individuals. FEMA has been informally functioning since January, 1995.

The mission of FEMA is to encourage informed balloting and to conduct election monitoring to help ensure free, fair and meaningful elections in Bangladesh.

FEMA informs that it is mobilizing volunteers to monitor elections in 30,000 polling centers on the sixth parliamentary election day. They are also undertaking voter education and civic awareness campaigns during the election period.

FEMA had organized a two-day national election monitoring training for 30 participants from 10 regions of the country. The training was facilitated by resource persons from the Washington based National Democratic Institute and the Manila based National Movement for Free Elections, and EC officials, Bangladesh. It may be mentioned, the NDI had been assisting FEMA to get organized since its inception.

FEMA formed its regional committees in seven regions till early November, 1995. It has divided the country into ten regions for election monitoring purposes.

Contact:
Fakhruddin Ahmed/Feroz Hassan/Tarikul Ghani
11/16,Iqbal Road,Mohammadpur,Dhaka-1207

Tel: 324276,323889 Fax:323889.

The Study and Research Group (SRG)

Established in 1991, as a study wing of Manobik Shahajya Sangstha, a Dhaka-based NGO, the SRG commits to help strengthen socio-political institutions such as the electoral process, parliament and judiciary. Under its ELECTION WATCH project, SRG aims to raise confidence of the people in the electoral process and report irregularities in the elections.

SRG has materials for training election observers and organizers. Since 1991 parliamentary election, SRG has monitored several by-elections to the Parliament and local body elections including the model elections in Dapunia and Tongi. FEMA, a national coalition for poll watching was initiated by SRG.

Contact:
Feroz Hassan/Tarikul Ghani
11/16, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207

Tel: 324276, 323889. Fax: 323889.

Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon (BAMNA)

Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon (BAMNA) or Bangladesh Free Election Movement was formed in 1990 to monitor the 1991 parliamentary elections. It drew upon representatives from NGOs, cultural organizations, various professions and individuals who are concerned about establishment of democratic culture in Bangladesh.

BAMNA monitored the 1991 parliamentary elections with the aid of 12,000 observers (Subhan 1991: 11) in 100 constituencies in all four divisions (in 1991 the country had four divisions; now it has six divisions). In 25 constituencies BAMNA volunteers gave what it termed blanket coverage and in 75 constituencies covered 25 percent polling stations. In addition, several teams monitored Dhaka city polling centers. In monitoring elections it used an elaborate questionnaire.

BAMNA provided two-tier training to its volunteers; one for trainers in Dhaka and then a series of constituency-level training for volunteers.

While the BAMNA key individuals are very concerned about democracy in Bangladesh, until October, 1995 they have not planned any monitoring activities from any platform. It gives the impression that BAMNA was a temporary platform.

Contact:
Justice K. M. Subhan
Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon
23/1 Purana Pultan Line
Dhaka-1000.

Tel: 416849

Useful document available at BAMNA:

1. The Bangladesh Mukto Nibarchan Andolon. July 1991. **A Report on Elections to the Fifth National Parliament 27 February, 1991.**

Nagorik Udyog (NU)

Nagorik Uddyog, registered under the Joint Stock Companies Act in 1995, is a non-profit and voluntary organization. Its main objectives are to help build a participatory and responsible electoral system through creating awareness among the citizens and highlight the women's rights especially those of poorer sections.

It has undertaken programs on voters' education, especially for the female voters in some rural areas; has monitored the Tongi Model election and voter registration; pressed for inclusion of the slum voters in the voter list; and has developed a training module.

Contact:
Mirza M. Hassan
Coordinator
Nagorik Udyog
74 Tejkunipara, Tejgaon
Dhaka-1215

Tel: 815868

International Poll Watching Groups

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs financed by the US Government, was established in 1983 "to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new democracies, societies in

conflict and non-democratic countries with strong democratic movements." (NDI, 1995).

With its Headquarters in Washington D.C. the NDI has offices in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Former Soviet Union, Latin America and the Middle East. It has conducted seminars, workshops, consultations and provided technical assistance in more than 70 countries with an objective to support the development of democratic institutions.

The NDI was first associated with Bangladesh in 1987 when it included Bangladeshis in an NDI election observation delegation to the Philippines. In 1990, NDI organized a multinational team to observe the Upazila elections in Bangladesh and issued a report.

The NDI presence was quite visible during the 5th parliamentary elections in 1991. It sent a multinational team to assess the electoral process and organized some training for the domestic election monitors. It brought Filipino monitoring experts to Bangladesh and an NDI team assessed the 1991 general elections. In its post-election report, it raised concerns and made recommendations about the voters' lists, campaign finances, a parallel vote count, the independence of the Election Commission, and international and domestic observers.

Since the 1991 elections, it has visited Bangladesh several times and has actively monitored the developments in politics. It has also organized a number of programs for the election monitoring groups, parliamentarians and political party leaders.

The NDI has explicitly worked to assist a coalition of Bangladeshi NGOs "to organize an effective system of election monitoring". The NDI senior Advisor Glenn Cown, conducted a workshop for 23 representatives from ten organizations and coalitions on January 9, 1995, with an intent to form a coalition to monitor the upcoming general [6th parliamentary] elections. The coalition is now known as the Free Election Monitoring Alliance. The key issue for discussion in the workshop was independent vote tabulation (IVT), a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, NDI has its base with the Study and Research Group of Manobik Shahajjya Sangstha.

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
Fifth floor, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue,
N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel: (202)328-3136
Fax: (202)939-3166

Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretariat sent a 12-member observer group to monitor the fifth Parliamentary elections in 1991 in Bangladesh at the invitation of the acting president of the Interim Government, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. This was the first Commonwealth Election Observer Group to observe elections in Bangladesh. The Commonwealth group was led by its Chairman, Dato K. Pathmanaban, a former Deputy Minister in the Government of Malaysia.

The Commonwealth Observer group was constituted with representatives from Britain, Shri Lanka, Solomon Island, Papua New Guinea, Jamaica, Barbados, Canada, Mauritius and the Gambia. A number of the members of the group had experience in observing elections in other countries; some had responsibility for the organization and conduct of elections in their own countries and some had experiences as participants in parliamentary elections.

The intent and functions of the Commonwealth Group involved observing every relevant aspect of the organization and conduct of the elections in accordance with the law of Bangladesh relating to elections and to ascertain whether, in its impartial judgement and in the context of that law, the elections have been free and fair (Commonwealth report 1991: 36).

The Commonwealth group consulted widely with political parties, different interest groups, government officials workers and ordinary people in coming to its judgement that : "the election process as a whole was palpably free and fair. The turnout, and significantly the large participation of women voters, is clear evidence of the success of the Administration and the Election Commission in rehabilitating a national election process which, in the eyes of most, had been wholly discredited." (Commonwealth Assessment report, 1991).

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
UK

Tel: 863391, 861191
Fax: 832915

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Team

The Colombo-based International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) set up in 1988 sent a team of four persons drawn from SAARC countries to primarily ascertain the views of all shades of political opinion on the electoral system in Bangladesh. The team visited Bangladesh from March 11 to 17 during the Upazila Parishad elections and produced a report on the Bangladesh electoral system. The Upazila Parishad elections were held in March 14-25, 1990.

The ICES also sent a group of about 30 members to observe the fifth parliamentary elections in 1991.

International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES)
8, Kynsey Terrace
Colombo 8
Sri Lanka

Tel: 698048, 685085, 694664
Fax: 549875, 595602, 598315

Reference

1. Commonwealth Observer Group. 1991. *Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh.* Commonwealth Secretariat: London.

2. International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Colombo, 1990. *The Electoral System in Bangladesh.*

3. NDI. 1995. Release on Institute and its involvement in Bangladesh.

4. Timm, R. W. and Gain, Philip. 1990. U*pazila Election 1990 Observation.*

5. Timm, R.W. and Gain, Philip. 1991. *Election Observation Report.*

6. Subhan. K. M. (Editor). The Bangladesh Mukto Nibarchan Andolon. July 1991. *A Report on Elections to the Fifth National Parliament 27 February, 1991.*

Election Observation after 1991

(Extracted from Dhaka Courier, February 4, 1994)

Official Recognition denied

The local groups that observed the 1990 and 1991 elections continued their efforts to watch the bye-elections, City Corporation elections, Dapunia and Tongi model elections and a few other local elections. These groups also published some reports based on their findings.

There was a major election observation initiative that brought the election observer groups in confrontation with the Election Commission at the time of City Corporation Elections in 1994. A National Steering Committee was formed to observe City Corporation Elections of 1994. The Election Commission which announced that it would give observation cards to the poll watchers of the National Committee ultimately did not issue the cards on the allegation that the joint-convenors were biased towards certain political parties. In an appeal, Harish Chowdhury on behalf of BNP objected to election observation by the national Steering Committee. He filed a complaint that the National Steering Committee was biased towards a particular political interest.

However, the Election Commission issued 22 cards to foreign missions and a few other small organizations. But 450 observers of the National Election Observation Committee, a blend of Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon and a few other groups, were told to watch the polls without any official permission from the Election Commission.

Was the incumbency fair?

The local groups, optimistic about getting large-scale recognition from the Election Commission, were disappointed. On the other hand, allegations abounded that a few local organizations which got election observation cards were linked with the ruling party.

The Election Commission wanted to give five election observation cards to CCHRB which the organization refused to accept. CCHRB fielded 4000 observers in 1991 parliamentary elections. It claims to have developed capacity to field thousands of observers in any given election. The offer of five cards by the Election Commission was seen as a dampener. If elections were to be observed by the locals, then thousands of watchdogs would have to be employed for effective observation. In such a situation a mere couple of cards wouldn't have done any good to election observation, CCHRB felt.

Radio Bangladesh and BTV:
Elections on Air

Abdur Razzaque Khan

"The mass media, including the radio and television, will have to be made into independent and autonomous bodies so that they become completely neutral and it has to be ensured that all parties participating in elections will get unhindered scope for publicity." We quote from the November 1990 joint declaration of the three political alliances who were then fighting Ershad's autocratic rule. Five years have gone by and the National Broadcasting Authority, comprising Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television, still remains in state control.

Although face saving attempts have been made to give radio/TV an independent look, the opposition parties have little access to the electronic media as these are totally controlled by the ruling party. No guidelines have been prepared or no ethics are followed in this regard. It was expected that the present democratic government which came to power through a free and fair election, would bring a change in the broadcasting strategy where both the ruling party and opposition would get a fair treatment. But the hope remains a far cry. On the contrary, the ruling party tries to use the national broadcasting system for its own propaganda. The proportion of this propaganda goes up before any election when all the so-called successes and development initiatives of the government are highlighted in a designed way.

The electronic media can, and should, take up the role of informing the people on elections in general. Programs on voters' rights, voting procedure, importance of voting and its implications for the

democratic polity should be frequently broadcast before the elections. Besides, the Election Commission could produce some programs on elections to be broadcast regularly in order to create a tempo among the voters.

Generally, before the elections, major political parties have always been allowed to announce their election manifestos through radio and television. The media could go one step further and give some analyses on the election pledges of the major parties. Besides, during the 1991 elections under the caretaker government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, all political parties, except for the Jatiyo Party of ex-president Ershad, were given impartial coverage on TV news. It is likely that the same may happen the next time. Reporters and producers in these media should therefore have some preparations and plans so that they are not caught unawares.

Programs such as, direct debates among the candidates of major political parties, discussions, dialogues and exchange of opinions with the people on elections can be launched. The spokespersons or leaders of the political parties could be invited to face a panel of people from different professions who would question them about their election manifestos, programs etc. Politicians could thus be persuaded to be more transparent and practical in their promises and comments because of the very nature of the media.

Electioneering of different parties in different places can be covered by radio and television. The newspersons of these media must accompany the political parties and report the events accordingly. Besides, radio and TV can call on the political parties to send their election news directly to the studios.

While electioneering through TV and radio, a political party can reach electorates in different parts of the country with the same message at the same time. If it is granted a liberal policy, NBA could exploit this dimension of electronic media by selling their broadcasting hour to the political parties. Interested parties could disseminate their election news through TV and radio.

The role of the electronic media becomes crucial when the counting of votes begins. Although the credibility of the state run radio/TV is frequently questioned, people do depend on these media for speedy announcement of election results. Radio/TV do broadcast special

bulletins on election results hourly. Counting on their freedom to be objective, the radio/TV should also include news of violence, abuse or any instant development. To make the bulletins more attractive, profiles of the winners/runners-up/unexpected losers could be added. There should be enough visuals too. Live interviews with political activists and people from different walks of life could also be arranged.

At present, reporters working for radio or TV can't do much independent of the government policy. But if one is aware of the need to overcome this constraint, one can make the maximum use of whatever token freedom the government has to grant the electronic media. They can at least free themselves of self censorship and devise ways and means of balancing electoral news. Ideally, the coverage of such news should solely depend on their news value. In a state controlled media, the reporter must stick to this principle as closely as possible.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) may remember the pledge of the 1990 joint declaration, since it led one of the three signatory alliances. Now that the sixth parliamentary election is approaching, Awami League, the major opposition party and another signatory to the declaration, may ask itself whether it has done enough to persuade BNP to fulfill this promise.

Constraints on Media Monitoring

According to the Washington based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs: "Media monitoring should begin with an analysis of government actions, or its failures, to ensure the media's right to gather and impart information. This analysis should focus upon the media's ability to criticize activities or inaction of the government and governing party, to investigate corruption and to operate independently of political pressures. ...The analysis should also consider truly significant developments affecting press freedom in the country's recent history. This is necessary where such developments are likely to be reflected in the media's approach to election campaign reporting."

The NDI emphasizes the need to identify and document the following restrictive factors while monitoring elections:

Direct government censorship and intervention, legal or otherwise;

indirect forms of censorship; intimidation and attacks on the news media aimed at preventing them from fulfilling their legitimate role in the electoral process; failure of the government to provide adequate protection for journalists against intimidation and attacks by supporters of political parties or candidates and/or from political extremists, as well as failure to investigate such acts and to prosecute vigorously those responsible for such acts; and self-censorship by news media.

Monitoring State Controlled Radio and Television

While monitoring the state controlled electronic media, one needs to be especially careful because of their natural bias towards the party in power. The NDI guidelines may need to be supplemented with observations required by specific situations. According to the NDI: There should be an adequate number of monitors to cover all relevant factors; the number of hours of relevant programming at different broadcasting times etc. More than one person should evaluate each program to identify and eliminate monitor bias.

As for the programs to be monitored, one must include among others: direct access programs allowing the political parties and candidates to air campaign messages through free time slots and/or paid advertisements; news coverage; special information programs such as debates, candidate interviews and panel discussions; voter education messages developed by the government or nonpartisan citizens' organizations. Entertainment or other general programs may be reviewed for subtle forms of manipulation, such as using candidates or party representatives, symbols, slogans and/or songs and jingles. In the context of Bangladesh, manipulation can take the form of maligning or abusing certain political ideology, personalities or even attempting to distort history.

Considerations for Program Monitoring

● Is the direct access program live? Are all candidates enjoying the same format? Do they have an equal opportunity to present quality productions?

- Do they have an equal (or proportionate to their status) share of broadcast time in terms of both quality and duration? Are they allowed sufficient time to present their cases meaningfully?

- Are the criteria for allocating time to different candidates fair and impartial?

- Does any candidate enjoy any favor as regards the price for the time?

- Is there a balance in the coverage of news about different parties/candidates? One may need to record the time devoted to each candidate/party literally by seconds.

- Are some candidates favored with lively visuals or special treatment while others are neglected?

- Is there any manipulation in presenting the news (by camera tricks; editing techniques; even by airing unsubstantiated reports with the intention of damaging or enhancing the image of one or another candidate/party)? Is there any deliberate coverage of some opinion polls that unfairly favor or disfavor one or the other candidate/party?

- Does the reporting fail to distinguish between coverage of government officials conducting newsworthy government actions and such officials conducting election campaign activities?

- Is there an interviewer or moderator bias toward certain parties or candidates in interview/debate/discussion programs?

- Are there enough and well planned voter education programs? Can an average voter really benefit from these programs?

- Does any of the programs try to discriminate against a particular community?

1991 Elections: Monitoring Radio/TV

The Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh, a platform of human rights organization in the country, made an attempt to monitor Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television during the fifth parliamentary elections in 1991.

According to their study, the electronic media tried to project all parties concerned in an impartial way. But the TV was too cautious

to strike an exact balance between the news about Khaleda Zia of BNP and Sheikh Hasina of Awami League. This somewhat bored the audience.

Out of the 76 political parties which took part in the elections, only 18 could address the voters via television. Bangladesh Television could not, for good reasons, allow leaders of all contesting political parties and the independent candidates to speak through television. Ex- president Ershad's Jatiyo Party, however, did not have any access to TV. The JP later emerged as the third major political party.

The television was fairly independent in setting its programs; as a result, the telecast hours devoted to election affairs included special programs (e.g. dramas, documentary films) which was a new phenomenon.

Table 1 shows the time allocation for 'election programs on television from February 9 to March 1, 1995. The period was taken into consideration because the political parties were given time from February 9 to speak over television.

Table 1:
Time allocation of total telecast hours
from February 9 to 1 March, 1991

Programs	Duration			
	Hours	Minutes	Seconds	% of total telecast time
Total telecast time	182	11	08	100%
Total time devoted to election programs	19	49	33	10.88%
Total time devoted to announcement of election results	14	01	40	07.70%
Total time devoted to regular/general programs	119	58	54	65.86%
Total time devoted to newscasts	28	21	01	15.56%

Table 2: Time allocation of election Programs

Programs	Duration			
	Hours	Minutes	Seconds	% of time devoted to election programs
Total time devoted to speeches of leaders of the political parties and of the Acting President and the Chief Election Commissioner	09	55	45	50.08%
Total time devoted to documentary films on election	02	57	30	14.92%
Total time devoted to dramas on election	01	21	00	06.81%
Total time devoted to announcements on election rules, regulations, voting slogans and duties of the election officials	01	37	53	08.23%
Time devoted to advertisements, slogans, tell-offs on election	02	12	10	11.11%
Total time devoted to discussions on election	01	45	15	08.85%

Tables 1 and 2 are self explanatory. What should be mentioned here is that the time allocation for speeches by each political party was 45 minutes. Sheikh Hasina of AL exceeded the time by 5 minutes. All other parties remained within the time limit. The minimum time was taken by the National Awami Party (Muzaffar) which was only 15 minutes.

The time (19 hours 49 minutes and 33 seconds) devoted to election programs was 10.88 % of the total telecast hours. Newscast hours and the result announcement hours were not considered since those were routine programs of the television.

Besides, BTV devoted some time to observer groups (local and international) in its news bulletins and special programs. BTV, however, rejected a voter-education film produced by Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights.

It goes without saying that the BTV, during the 1991 election period, could be independent in making the various programs which contributed significantly to free and fair elections.

References

1. Merloe, Patrick. 1994. *Monitoring Media Fairness in Election Campaigns: An Introduction to Basic Issues.* National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Washington, USA.

2. Timm R.W. and Gain, Philip. CCHRB, 1991. *Election Observation Report, Election to the 5th Parliament, 1991.*

The Election Researchers

Philip Gain and Shishir Moral

A few local research organizations have done some substantial work on democracy and election issues. These organizations are keen to provide sound information on democracy and election issues to the journalists and election monitors.

Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre (MARC)

The Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre (MARC), an organization which combines the characteristics of a research institute and consultancy firm, became involved in election affairs through initiating a study on voter behaviour and the electoral process in 1990. The collapse of the Ershad regime and announcement of general parliamentary elections under a neutral caretaker government expanded the scope of the MARC study on voter behaviour.

Convinced that the demonstration of money, muscle power, arms, parochialism and cheap slogans by those aspiring to be future public representatives is a manifestation of undemocratic culture, the MARC has devoted its time and resources to educating the voters with a broader goal to help bring about change at the heart of problem. The MARC believes that, because the general voters are not always aware of their true rights and obligations as citizens as well as those of public representatives, they cannot make informed and educated choices.

In this situation a small group of people having power and money, or those who are placed in a better position in the society can easily

influence the entire electoral process through different means, both legal and extra-legal.

Voter Education

This situation has led the MARC to design its research work and voter education program. The MARC has been working since 1991 to raise the political education of the voters so that they can act as conscious citizens and thereby help develop a truly democratic political system.

With the sixth parliamentary elections just a few months ahead, the MARC has concentrated its voter education program initially in three areas: Tongi Municipality, Jessore, and Ullapara *Thana* in Sirajganj. In Jessore, the educational programme will be female-focused and be carried out in collaboration with *Banchte Shekha*, a local NGO, which covers 22,000 women members in nine thanas of the district.

Institutional Arrangements

In each of these three MARC working areas a voter education centre has been opened. The voters have an opportunity to regularly consult a small team of voter education staff and use facilities for reading, viewing or listening to educational materials. They will have an opportunity to participate in informal group discussions. The MARC headquarters in Dhaka directs the programs.

An Advisory Council, in Dhaka with representatives from academic, government, the Election Commission, NGOs and major political parties and committees at appropriate levels, advises on the dissemination method and on how to ensure a non-partisan stance on all activities.

The main voter education activities

● A survey has been carried out to keep record of the political-education, attitude and practices of the community. This is needed to evaluate the impact of the voter education activities in future.

● Information bases on the Constitution and the Laws; voters' rights and obligations; public representatives' duties and obligations; the Election Commission's authority, duties and obligations; and

techniques to deal with hostile situations in the electoral process have been offered to the voters. Besides, through its voter education program, the MARC has offered to the voters sources of information on candidates and parties, methods of analysing the election manifestoes, pamphlets and various publicly stated promises, identifying self interest of people at different levels of aggregation and the differentiation between self interest and enlightened self-interest. The voter educators are also making an effort to help the voters make informed choices in electing their candidates.

● Booklets, leaflets, posters, scripts for different forms of folk media [*Jari Gaan, Jatra,* Folk theatre], Bangla translation of important articles and news items have been produced to be used as voter education materials.

● Voter education materials are to be disseminated through the Voter Education Center, TV and Radio, newspapers/journals, folk media, group meetings and discussion, and direct distribution of posters, booklets, leaflets, discussion, national essay competition, etc.

Partially supported by The Asia Foundation, the MARC is implementing its voter education activities in cooperation with the Election Commission, the Ministry of Information, selected NGOs and Free Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA)

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Major Publication of MARC on elections

1.   A Study on Voter Behaviour in Bangladesh during 1990 and 1991 Elections, July 1992. Monwar Hossain.

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)

The Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) was established in 1994 to institutionalize research and discussion on election and democracy matters among other things. The involvement of those who have founded PPRC goes back to a study on electoral violence in 1988.

Since then, individual research scholars have produced analytical reports on accountable administration, sociology of popular movements, conducted survey of voter expectations during the 1991 election and subsequent Union Parishad (Council) elections, the refugee problem in South Asia, etc. Their works have served to deepen a collective interest in the broad issues of democratic transition and the construction of a mature and dynamic polity. Participants in this collective evolution have come from the leading research and academic institutions of the country. PPRC aims to give institutional graduation in research and advocacy on the broad imperatives of democratic order.

Since its formation, the PPRC has conducted two political opinion surveys which provide useful information bases. The PPRC will soon provide findings of a larger survey [nation-wide] having many elements including prediction, people's opinions on political agenda and anticipattion of negative consequences.

The organization is aiming to provide a violence alert map of the country based on the findings of its surveys and secondary information. It is also developing software programmes to present its findings in a visual way [in maps]. This software also provides an electoral map of the country in which important data are available.

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Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman
PPRC office and main contacts:
House 26, Road 9A, Dhanmondi R/A,
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Major publications of the PPRC

1. Political Crisis: Findings from a Public Opinion Survey
2. On-going Crisis: Findings from a Follow-up Survey of Public Opinions.
3. Political crisis and Democratic Graduation, (an opinion survey of Dhaka city) Nov. 1995.

Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC)

The Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC), a non-profit NGO, was established in 1989 by a group of professionals from diverse fields such as journalism, education, politics, economics, commerce and trade. One broad goal of the CAC is promotion of discussion on policy issues of national interest and encouragement of informed decision-making in the public interest.

The CAC assists the policy formulators, particularly legislators, in discussing, exploring and promoting objective evaluations of major policy issues and in the implementation processes.

For the CAC, democracy issues and informing legislators and opinion leaders in various spheres have been particularly significant areas for focused activities. It has organized many seminars and workshops for the parliamentarians and opinion leaders, and has conducted research and opinion surveys. The organization has drawn together parliamentarians of the ruling party and the opposition to discuss problems and issues of public interest and democracy and find out solutions. It also helped parliamentarians to draft bills, questions, notices, etc. to be placed in the parliament.

The CAC information can be useful to journalists, political analysts, poll watchers and other interested groups or individuals. Materials made available by the CAC include newsletters, proceedings of the seminars and workshops, survey and research reports. These published documents contain vital information on parliament, women in politics, parliamentary activities, law making, opinions of different segments of society, among others.

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Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)

The Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), a non-profit NGO, is devoted to the promotion of basic and action research on issues related

to socioeconomic development and environment. Its main areas of research include a wide range of issues relating to sustainable development, environment and socioeconomic imperatives. Founded in 1980, the organization has provided an institutional platform for policy formulation debates.

The BUP treats the democracy issues with great importance. Elections have been one of its research and opinion survey areas. Its political opinion polling has provided information bases to the journalists and political activists. Its surveys and benchmark studies have generated data which help effective policy formulation.

The BUP has a team of professionals and experts from various disciplines. They include policy analysts, economists, resource management experts, programmers, management specialists and so on.

Its publication section regularly produces books, research reports and journals. Journalists, political analysts, poll watchers and other interested groups or individuals can find useful information bases with the BUP.

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Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

Founded in 1993, the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), a non-profit and nonpartisan organization, takes deep interest in election and democratic issues among other things. The organization has conducted research in areas such as elections, environment, development, multilateral development banks (MDBs) and human rights. One of the main objectives of the organization is to build information bases on these issues.

With the sixth parliamentary elections a year ahead, the

organization got engaged in researching election and democracy related issues and pulled together a core group of senior journalists, teachers of journalism and communication, and others who have experience in monitoring and reporting elections, to write a handbook for the use of journalists, election monitors and anyone interested.

Those who are instrumental in the organization have extensive practical experience in election reporting and monitoring.

Journalists and election monitors are welcome to make use of the books and documents SEHD has put together on elections. SEHD provides practical guidance and tips on election reporting and monitoring, and offers training expertise and consultation on election and democracy affairs.

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Nagorik Udyog (NU)

Nagorik Udyog (NU), registered under the Joint Stock Companies Act in 1995, is a non-profit and voluntary organization. Its main objectives are to help build a participatory and responsible electoral system through creating awareness among the citizens and to highlight the women's rights especially those of poorer sections.

It has undertaken programs on voters' education, especially for the female voters in some rural areas; has monitored the Tongi Model election and voter registration; pressed for inclusion of the slum voters in the voter list; and has developed training modules in different fields.

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Section

C

ANNEXURE–A

Sixth National Parliament Election, 1996

Code of Conduct to be Adhered to by Political Parties and candidates

The code of conduct was finalized after a discussion of the Election Commission with the representatives of political parties on 25 September, 1995. Earlier a draft code of conduct had been circulated among the political parties for comments and opinions. The Election Commission has adopted the Code of Conduct in the hope that the political parties and the candidates would abide by these to maintain a peaceful atmosphere during the election campaign and on the polling day.

1. Democratic Conduct

1.1 All contesting political parties and candidates should be aware not only of their own democratic rights, but also those of others.

1.2 Constitutional and legal rights of the people must be upheld. The land, buildings and any other property of the citizens shall not be abused in any way and no one shall be disturbed by unwarranted occurrences and indecent conduct.

2. Laws and rules relating to elections

2.1 All contesting political parties and candidates should obey the laws, rules and regulations relating to elections.

2.2 After the announcement of the election schedule and till the election day, no candidate or anyone on his/her behalf should promise or give any donation or grant to any organization openly or secretly in the concerned constituency or make any promise of adopting development project in the concerned constituency. Of course, the overall development plan of a political party can be presented.

2.3 Any attempts to influence the voting through money or allurement and to hire or use any kind of transport to carry voters other than

for self and family are election offenses. Everyone should be aware of these offenses.

2.4   The election expenses of a candidate shall not exceed Taka three lakhs (US\$ 7500) and one shall maintain all expenses through bank account(s) for the sake of auditing.

2.5   The persons, who have taken loans from public banks, investment institutions or the like and have been declared defaulters for failing to repay the loans in time, should be considered illegible to participate in elections.

3.   Assistance in Conducting Elections

3.1   Local leaders and workers of the political parties will extend full cooperation to the authorities in preparing Voters' Identity (ID) Cards, especially in collecting voters' photos, signature/thumb impressions and in distributing the ID cards.

3.2   All political parties and candidates participating in the polls will extend full cooperation to the election officials who are on duty and unitedly will ensure their security until all election activities are over.

3.3   In each district, an Electoral Enquiry Committee will be instituted with officials of the judiciary for submitting reports after enquiring the pre-election irregularities. On the basis of allegations received, the accused will be fined and measures will be taken to draw such fines.

3.4   All political parties and candidates will get equal opportunity to use government Dak Bungalows, rest houses and circuit houses. But the officials engaged in the conduct of elections will get a preference in using the government Dak Bungalows, rest houses and circuit houses.

4.   Election Campaign

4.1   A fair, healthy and sound election environment will be created through election campaign so that voters can exercise their right to franchise without fear or intimidation and at their free will.

4.2   It is normal that criticism of opponents will take place during electioneering. However, indecorous and provocative speeches/

statements, taunting, ridiculing, religious and communal hatred should be avoided. One party should not make any such statements or comments about another party which might cause unnecessary tension. All parties should exercise moderation and sobriety in speech and show respect to the opinions of others so that electioneering does not turn into a war of words.

4.3   All parties and candidates will have equal opportunity for publicity. Meetings, processions and other campaign activities of opponents cannot be foiled or interfered with.

4.4   Participants of a meeting or rally will not carry any sort of arms and ammunition. All parties and candidates should be careful that any material carried does not cause any harm or is not used for vindictive purposes.

4.5   Prior to organizing a mass meeting or rally, a candidates should inform all the opposing candidates from his/her constituency about the date, time and venue of such a meeting or rally.

4.6   No rally or torchlight procession in buses and trucks will be organized for any contesting candidate.

4.7   After the announcement of election schedule, the Ministers of the sitting government will not use or take help of the government media, officials and employees, transport and other government facilities.

4.8   All political parties contesting in polls will get opportunity to campaign through the government media after the announcement of the election schedule.

4.9   No poster, banner, leaflet and handbill of a candidate will be pasted over those of another opposing candidate.

4.10   An election camp cannot be constructed on roads or in any place meant for public use and movement. Election camps should be as plain as possible. Voters cannot be served any food and drinks in election camps. The number of election camps of a candidate will not exceed the number determined by the Election Commission.

4.11   After the announcement of the election schedule, the contesting candidates and their agents will refrain from erecting expensive arches, printing and publicizing multi-colored posters, exceeding the specified number of banners and from any other expensive publicity.

4.12   No governmental Dak Bungalow, rest house, circuit house or any other government office can be used as campaign place by any political party or candidate.

4.13   Everybody should refrain from any kind of wall-writing as an election campaign tool.

5.   Maintaining of Law and Order

5.1   Natural and peaceful law and order situation is a precondition of free and impartial election. But the efforts of the law enforcing agencies alone are not enough for a well-disciplined election. So all political parties and candidates will extend necessary assistance to the law enforcing agencies in this regard.

5.2   All political parties will be vocal against terrorist activities. No party will sympathize terrorist activities to demonstrate its strength or supremacy over another party. All political parties will extend cooperation to the law enforcing agencies in the recovery of illegal areas. No party will make an effort to release any one captured with arms by the police personnel during election campaign or in and around a polling center during voting. No armed person will enter the vicinity of a polling center during voting.

5.3   In the interest of peaceful atmosphere in the vicinity of a polling center, all kinds of motor cycles or motorized vehicles, firearms and explosives, movement of the goons, illegal interference of the government officials or of the local leaders will be stopped.

5.4   The Election Commission will stop election in a center at any stage outright, if election is abused or influenced by money, arms, muscle power or local influence.

5.5   Assistance of the nearest law enforcing agencies will be taken to control and resist election offences of any kind.

5.6   A sound and peaceful atmosphere prevailing in a polling center will not be disturbed by untrue and motivational rumor or conspiracy.

6.   Security of the Polling Center

6.1   Votes cannot be solicited by capturing a polling center with muscle power or through any other illegal means. In a rigged

center, the Election Commission can cancel polling.

6.2   Election camps cannot be set up close to the polling center or
       within the prohibited vicinity of the polling center and no
       campaign will be allowed inside a polling center.

6.3   No placard or badge with a party-symbol can be taken in and
       around a center.

6.4   Other than the election officials, only the voters have access to the
       polling centers. Political party workers will not loiter inside the
       center. Only the polling agents will remain seated in places
       designated for them in the polling center and discharge their
       responsibilities.

**English translation of the Code of Conduct issued by Md. Irshadul
Huq, Secretary, Election Commission and published in national
newspapers in late October, 1995.**

ANNEXURE–B

Constituencies for the Sixth Parliament Elections

Constituencies for the sixth parliamentary elections determined under section 6(4) of the Ordinance No. 15 of 1976. The Primary list of constituencies was published in Bangladesh Gazette on February 1, 1995 and the final list was published in the Gazette on May 30, 1995 by the Election Commission Secretariat.

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
001 Panchagar-1	a. Tetulia Thana,	Mirza Golam Hafiz (BNP)	48,678
	b. Panchagar Sadar Thana &	Md. Sirajul Islam, Adv.(AL)	38,604
	c. Atoari Thana. District: Panchagar.		
002 Panchagar-2	a. Boda Thana and	Md. Mojahar Hussain (CPB)	42,335
	b. Debiganj Thana. District: Panchagar.	Md. Kamiz Uddin Pradhan (JP)	25,660
003 Thakurgaon-1	Thakurgaon Sadar Thana. District: Thakurgaon.	Md. Khademul Islam (AL) Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir(BNP)	57,535 36,406
004 Thakurgaon-2	a. Baliadangi Thana,	Md. Dabirul Islam (CPB)	46,452
	b. The following unions of Ranishankail Thana: (1) Dharmagarh (2) Kashipur and	Md. Altafur Rahman (BNP)	17,707
	c. Haripur Thana. District: Thakurgaon.		
005 Thakurgaon-3	a. Ranishankail Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Dharmagarh, (2) Kashipur and	Md. Mokhlesur Rahman (AL) Md. Hafiz (JP)	50,221 38,538

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	b. Pirganj Thana. District: Thakurgaon		
006 Dinajpur-1	a. Birganj Thana and b. Kaharol Thana. District: Dinajpur.	Md. Aminul Islam (AL) Md. Abdullah Al-Kafi (JI)	56,191 35,598
007 Dinajpur-2	a. Bochaganj Thana and b. Birol Thana. District: Dinajpur.	Sri Satish Chandra Roy (AL) A.F.M. RiazulHuq Chowdhury (JP)	49,440 32,508
008 Dinajpur-3	Dinajpur Sadar Thana. District: Dinajpur.	M. Abdur Rahim (BKSAL) Md. Mokhlesur Ranman (JP)	44,784 27,318
009 Dinajpur-4	a. Khansama Thana and b. Chirir Bandar Thana. District: Dinajpur.	Md. Mizanur Rahman Manu (AL) Md. Aftab Uddin Mollah (JI)	58,745 35,538
010 Dinajpur-5	a. Parbatipur Thana and b. Phulbari Thana. District: Dinajpur.	Adv. Md. Mostafizur Rahman (AL) Md. A. Ohab Sarkar (JP)	66,533 41,039
011 Dinajpur-6	a. Nababganj Thana, b. Birampur Thana, c. Hakimpur Thana and d. Ghoraghat Thana. District: Dinajpur.	Md. Azizur Rahman Chy.(JI) Principal Abdul Salam Aman (BKSAL)	43,989 37,267
012 Nilphamari-1	a. Domar Thana and b. Dimla Thana. District: Nilphamari.	Abdur Rauf (AL) Md. Nur Kutab Alam Chy.(JP)	41,218 40,492
013 Nilphamari-2	Nilphamari Sadar Thana, District: Nilphamari.	Md. Samsuddoha (CPB) Md. Abdul Latif (JI)	35,216 30,154
014 Nilphamari-3	a. Jaldhaka Thana and b. The following unions	Md. Azaharul Islam (AL) Md: Nurul Haque (JP)	37,131 30,064

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	of Kishorganj Thana: (1) Ranachandi, (2) Baravita and (3) Putimari. District: Nilphamari.		.
015 Nilphamari-4	a. Kishorganj Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Ranachandi, (2) Baravita and (3) Putimari.	Md. Abdul Hafiz (NAP-M) Md. Kazi Faruk Kader (JP)	35,112 35,009
	b. Syedpur Thana. District: Nilphamari.		
016 Lalmonirhat-1	a. Patgram Thana and b. Hatibandha Thana. District: Lalmonirhat.	Md. Joynul Abedin Sarker (JP) Md. Motahar Hossain (AL)	37,203 34,384
017 Lalmonirhat-2	a. Kaliganj Thana and b. Aditmari Thana. District: Lalmonirhat.	Md. Mojibor Rahman (JP) Samsul Islam (AL)	51,755 42,413
018 Lalmonirhat-3	Lalmonirhat Sadar Thana. District: Lalmonirhat.	Md. Riaz Uddin Ahmed (JP) Md. Abul Hossain (AL)	31,205 25,356
019 Rangpur-1	a. Gangachara Thana and b. The following unions of Rangpur Sadar Thana: (1) Haridevapur, (2) Uttam and (3) Pashuram. District: Rangpur.	Hussain Muhammad Ershad(JP) Md. Mojibor Rahman Pramanik (AL)	50,004 20,310
	N.B. Md. Alhaj Karim Uddin Bharasha (JP) replaced Ershad after by-election.		
020 Rangpur-2	a. Taraganj Thana and	Hussain Muhammad Ershad(JP)	50,221

No. and name of constituencies		Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	b.	Badarganj Thana. District: Rangpur.	Md. Anisul Haque Chy. (AL)	45,206
			N.B. Sri Paritosh Chakrabarti (JP) replaced Ershad after by-election.	
021 Rangpur-3		Rangpur Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Haridevapur (2) Uttam and (3) Pashuram. District: Rangpur.	Hussain Muhammad Ershad(JP) Md. Afzal (GP)	86,114 27,938
022 Rangpur-4	a. b.	Pirgachha Thana and Kaunia Thana. District: Rangpur.	Md. Shah Alam (JP) Md. Shah Abdur Razzak (AL)	76,253 39,325
023 Rangpur-5		Mithapukur Thana, District: Rangpur.	Hussain Muhammad Ershad(JP) H. N. Ashiqur Rahman (AL)	71,132 38,810
			N.B. Mijanur Rahman Chy. (JP) replaced Ershad after by-election.	
024 Rangpur-6		Pirganj Thana. District: Rangpur.	Hussain Muhammad Ershad(JP) Md. Motiur Rahman (AL)	35,260 34,935
			N.B. Shah Moazzem Hossain (JP) replaced Ershad after by-election.	
025 Kurigram-1	a. b.	Bhurungamari Thana and Nageshwari Thana. District: Kurigram.	A.K.M. Sahidul Islam (Bachchu) (JP) Md. A. Sabur Chy. (AL)	46,476 31,630
026 Kurigram-2	a. b. c.	Phulbari Thana, Kurigram Sadar Thana and Rajarhat Thana. District: Kurigram.	Alhaj Md. Tajul Islam Chy. (JP) Md. Jafar Ali (AL)	59,049 44,181
027 Kurigram-3		Ulipur Thana. District : Kurigram.	Md. Amjad Hossain Talukdar (AL) A.K.M. Maidul Islam (Ind)	20,547 19,699
028 Kurigram-4	a.	Chilmari Thana	Alhaj Md. Golam Hossain(JP)	21,991

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	b. Roumari Thana and	Md. Alhaj Sirajul Haque(JI)	15,854
	c. Rajibpur Thana.		
	District: Kurigram.		
029 Gaibandha-1	Sundarganj Thana.	Md.Hafizur RahmanPramanik(JP)	28,776
	District: Gaibandha.	Maulana A. Aziz (JI)	22,732
030 Gaibandha-2	Gaibandha Sadar Thana.	Md. Abdur Rashid Sarker(JP)	49,930
	District: Gaibandha.	Md. Lutfar Rahman (BKSAL)	25,324
031 Gaibandha-3	a. Sadulyapur Thana and	Dr.T.I.M. Fazle Rabbi Chy. (JP)	56,869
	b. Palashbari Thana.	Abu Taleb Mia (BKSAL)	39,872
	District: Gaibandha.		
032 Gaibandha-4	Gobindaganj Thana.	Lutfar Rahman Chy. (JP)	44,784
	District: Gaibandha.	Afaz Uddin Ahammad (JI)	28,052
033 Gaibandha-5	a. Phulchhari Thana and	Adv. Fazle Rabbi (JP)	43,816
	b. Saghata Thana.	Eng. Md.Nurunnabi Pradhan(AL)	29,258
	District: Gaibandha.		
034 Jaipurhat-1	a. Panchbibi Thana and	Md. Golam Rabbani (BNP)	48,167
	b. Jaipurhat Sadar Thana.	Md. Abbas Ali Mondol (AL)	48,091
	District: Jaipurhat.		
035 Jaipurhat-2	a. Akkelpur Thana,	Abu Yusuf Md. Khalilur	59,692
	b. Khetlal Thana and	Rahman (BNP)	
	c. Kalai Thana.	Md. Abdur Razzak Akand (AL)	33,071
	District: Jaipurhat.		
036 Bogra-1	a. Sariakandi Thana and	Md. Dr. Habibur Rahman (BNP)	62,644
	b. Sonatala Thana.	Md. Shahabuddin (JI)	21,521
	District: Bogra.		
037 Bogra-2	Shibganj Thana.	Shahedduzzaman (JI)	33,969
	District: Bogra.	Md. Motiar Rahman Pramanik (BNP)	24,213

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
038 Bogra-3	a. Dupchanchia Thana and b. Adamdighi Thana. District: Bogra.	Haji A. Majid Talukder(BNP) Mofazzal haque (JI)	40,188 29,563
039 Bogra-4	a. Kahalu Thana and b. Nandigram Thana. District: Bogra.	Azizul Haque Mollah (BNP) Maulana Abdur Rahman Fakir (JI)	43,247 34,372
	N.B. Ziaul Haque Mollah (BNP) replaced Azizul Haque Mollah after by-election.		
040 Bogra-5	a. Sherpur Thana and b. Dhunat Thana. District: Bogra.	Golam Mohammad Sarker (BNP) Ferdaus Zaman Mukul (AL)	69,388 63,564
041 Bogra-6	Bogra Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Amrul, (2) Chupinagar and (3) Khottapara. District: Bogra.	Mojibar Rahman (BNP) Golam Rabbani (JI)	96,234 48,086
042 Bogra-7	a. The following unions of Bogra Sadar Thana: (1) Amrul, (2) Chupinagar and (3) Khottapara. b. Gabtoli Thana. District: Bogra.	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP) T.M. Musa Pesta (AL)	83,854 24,760
	N.B. Md. Helaluzzman Talukdar Lalu (BNP) replaced Begum Khaleda Zia after by-election.		
043 Nawabganj-1	Shibganj Thana. District: Nawabganj.	Shajahan (BNP) Najrul Islam (JI)	65,560 62,945
044 Nawabganj-2	a. Volahat Thana, b. Gomastapur Thana and	Syed Manjur Hossain (BNP) Afsar Ali (AL)	51,581 38,945

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	c. Nachol Thana. District: Nawabganj.		
045 Nawabganj-3	Nawabganj Sadar Thana. District: Nawabganj.	Md. Latifur Rahman (JI) Md. Sultanul Islam Moni (BNP)	58,333 44,381
046 Naogaon-1	a. Porsha Thana, b. Sapahar Thana and c. Niamatpur Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. Azizur Rahman Mia (AL) Md. Salequr Rahman (JI)	54,803 41,479
047 Naogaon-2	a. Patnitala Thana and b. Dhamuirhat Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. Shahidduzzaman (AL) Abdur Rauf Mannan (BNP)	51,317 44,040
048 Naogaon-3	a. Badalgachhi Thana and b. Mohadevapur Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. A. Hamid Siddiqui (BNP) Md. Abdul Jalil (AL)	85,785 64,966
049 Naogaon-4	Manda Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. Nasir Uddin (JI) Md. Emajuddin Pramanik (AL)	59,801 45,794
050 Naogaon-5	Naogaon Sadar Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. Alhaj Shams Uddin Ahammed (BNP) Md. A. Jalil (AL)	85,367 46,184
051 Naogaon-6	a. Raninagar Thana and b. Atrai Thana. District: Naogaon.	Md. Alamgir Kabir (BNP) Sheikh Ohidur Rahman (CPB)	61,183 46,780
052 Rajshahi-1	a. Godagari Thana and b. Tanor Thana. District: Rajshahi.	Md. Aminul Haque (BNP) Md. Mohsin (AL)	61,975 42,897
053 Rajshahi-2	a. Paba Thana, b. Boalia Thana, c. Rajpara Thana, d. Motihar Thana and	Md. Kabir Hossain (BNP) Md. Ataur Rahman (JI)	81,014 40,141

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	e. Shahmokhdum Thana. District: Rajshahi.		
054 Rajshahi-3	a. Mohanpur Thana and b. Bagmara Thana. District: Rajshahi.	Sardar Amjad Hossain (JP) Md. A. Ahad Kabiraj (JI)	49,136 40,463
055 Rajshahi-4	a. Durgapur Thana and b. Puthia Thana. District: Rajshahi.	Tajul Islam Md. Faruq (AL) Md. Ayen Uddin (ML- A)	47,194 36,254
056 Rajshahi-5	a. Charghat Thana and b. Bagha Thana. District: Rajshahi.	Md. Azizur Rahman (BNP) Dr. Md. Alauddin (AL)	48,542 46,116
057 Natore-1	a. Lalpur Thana and b. Bagalipara Thana, District: Natore.	Md. Fazlur Rahman Patal (BNP) Md. Momtaz Uddin (AL)	70,646 40,264
058 Natore-2	Natore Sadar Thana. District: Natore.	Sri Shankar Gobinda Chy. (AL) Md. Yunus Ali (JI)	34,882 32,590
059 Natore-3	Singra Thana. District: Natore. **N.B. Kazi Golam Morshed (BNP) replaced Md. Abu Bakar after by-election.**	Md. Abu Bakar (JI) Md. Shahjahan Ali (AL)	38,138 36,287
060 Natore-4	a. Gurudaspur Thana and b. Boraigram Thana. District: Natore.	Prof. Md. A. Kuddus (AL) Md. Mozammel Haque (BNP)	54,860 47,566
061 Sirajganj-1	Kazipur Thana, District: Sirajganj.	Nasim (AL) Amir Hossain Vulu (BNP)	48,338 26,618
062 Sirajganj-2	Sirajganj Sadar Thana. District: Sirajganj.	Mirza Muraduzzaman (BNP) Motahar Hossain Talukder (AL)	58,437 42,376
063 Sirajganj-3	a. Rayganj Thana and b. Tarash Thana. District: Sirajganj.	A. Mannan Talukder (BNP) Ishaq Hossain Talukder (AL)	46,101 41,692

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
064 Sirajganj-4	Ullapara Thana. District: Sirajganj.	M. Akbar Ali (BNP) Maulana Abu Bakkar Siddique(JI)	45,539 41,637
065 Sirajganj-5	a. Belkuchi Thana and b. Kamarkhand Thana. District: Sirajganj.	Sahidullah Khan (BNP) Ali Alam (JI)	39,091 31,729
066 Sirajganj-6	a. The following unions of Shahjadpur Thana: (1) Khukni, (2) Jalalpur, (3) Koijuri, (4) Sonatoli and b. Chouhali Thana. District: Sirajganj.	Muhammad Ansar Ali Siddiqui (BNP) Prof. Shahjahan Ali (AL)	15,433 12,468
067 Sirajganj-7	Shahjadpur Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Khukni, (2) Jalalpur, (3) Koijuri, (4) Sonatoli. District: Sirajganj.	Qamruddin Ehia Khan Mazlis (BNP) Dr. Mazaharul Islam (AL)	38,678 28,163
068 Pabna-1	a. Santhia Thana and b. The following unions of Bera Thana: (1) Bera Municipality, (2) Haturia Nakalia Union (3) Notun Varenga Union. District: Pabna.	Md. Motiur Rahman Nizami (JI) Prof. Abu Sayeed (BKSAL)	55,707 49,923
069 Pabna-2	a. Bera Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Bera Municipality, (2) Haturia Nakalia Union (3) Notun Varenga Union.	Md. Osman Goni Khan (BNP) Ahammad Tafiz Uddin (AL)	67,431 48,086

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	District: Pabna.		
	b. Sujanagar Thana.		
	District: Pabna.		
070 Pabna-3	a. Chatmohor Thana,	Saiful Azam (BNP)	91,540
	b. Vangura Thana and	Md. Waji Uddin Khan (AL)	64,523
	c. Faridpur Thana.		
	District: Pabna.		
071 Pabna-4	a. Atghoria Thana and	Md. Sirajul Islam (BNP)	48,058
	b. Ishwardi Thana.	Md. Habibur Rahman (AL)	40,970
	District: Pabna.		
072 Pabna-5	Pabna Sadar Thana.	Md. Abdus Sobhan (JI)	75,586
	District: Pabna.	Md. Rafiqul Islam (AL)	48,559
073 Meherpur-1	Meherpur Sadar Thana.	Prof. A. Mannan (AL)	40,474
	District: Meherpur.	Ahammad Ali (BNP)	39,632
074 Meherpur-2	Gangni Thana.	Md. Abdul Gani (BNP)	29,649
	District: Meherpur.	Hisab Uddin (AL)	28,474
075 Kushtia-1	Daulatpur Thana.	Md. Ahsanul Haque Molla	56,807
	District: Kushtia.(BNP)	Korban Ali (JP)	26,140
076 Kushtia-2	a. Veramara Thana and	Abdur Rauf Chy (BNP)	50,183
	b. Mirpur Thana.	Md. Abdul Wahed (JI)	29,868
	District: Kushtia.		
077 Kushtia-3	Kushtia Sadar Thana,	Alhaj K.M.A. Khaleque	
	District: Kushtia.	Chantu (BNP)	62,180
		Md. Anowar Ali (AL)	33,862
078 Kushtia-4	a. Kumarkhali Thana and	Md. A. Awal Mia (AL)	42,855
	b. Khoksa Thana.	Nur-e-Alam Jiku (JSD-Rob)	42,627
	District: Kushtia.		
079 Chuadanga-1	a. Alamdanga Thana and	Mia Md. Monsur Ali (BNP)	55,387

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	b. Chuadanga Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Titudaha and (2) Begumpur. District: Chuadanga.	Solaiman Haque Joarder (AL)	53,535
080 Chuadanga-2	a. Damurhuda Thana, b. Jibannagar Thana, c. The following unions of Chuadana Sadar Thana: (1) Titudaha and (2) Begumpur. District: Chuadanga.	Maulana Habibur Rahman (JI) Md. Mozammel Haque (BNP)	49,688 40,020
081 Jhenaidah-1	Shailkupa Thana. District: Jhenaidah.	Abdul Wahab (BNP) Md. Qamruzzaman (AL)	63,663 46,029
082 Jhenaidah-2	a. Jhenaidah Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Naldanga, (2) Ghorashal, (3) Fursandi, (4) Maharajpur and b. Harinakunda Thana. District: Jhenaidah.	Moshiur Rahman (BNP) Motiar Rahman (AL)	76,001 37,923
083 Jhenaidah-3	a. Kot Chandpur Thana and b. Moheshpur Thana. District: Jhenaidah.	Md. Shahidul Islam (BNP) A.S.M. Mozammel (JI)	61,391 44,861
084 Jhenaidah-4	a. The following unions of Jhenaidah Sadar Thana: (1) NalDanga, (2) Ghorashal,	Shahiduzzaman Beltu (BNP) Shah Md. Jahangir Sikder Thandu (AL)	41,971 31,553

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(3) Fursandi		
	(4) Maharajpur and		
	b. Kaliganj Thana.		
	District: Jhenaidah.		
085 Jessore-1	Sharsha Thana.	Tabibur Rahman Sardar (AL)	36,747
	District: Jessore.	Adv. Nur Hossain (JI)	33,018
086 Jessore-2	a. Chougachha Thana and	Prof. Rafiqul Islam (AL)	62,373
	b. Jhikargachha Thana.	Md. Moqbul Hossain (JI)	46,854
	District: Jessore.		
087 Jessore-3	Jessore Sadar Thana excluding Basundia union,	Rawshan Ali (AL)	56,883
		Tariqul Islam (BNP)	56,586
	District: Jessore.		

N.B. Tariqul Islam (BNP) replaced Rawshan Ali after by-election.

088 Jessore-4	a. Basundia union of Jessore Sadar Thana,	Shah Hadiuzzaman (AL)	55,008
		Nazrul Islam (BNP)	36,590
	b. Avayanagar Thana and		
	c. Bagherpara Thana.		
	District: Jessore.		
089 Jessore-5	Monirumpur Thana.	Khan Tipu Sultan (AL)	55,214
	District: Jessore.	Shahid Iqbal Hossain (BNP)	44,202
090 Jessore-6	Keshabpur Thana.	Maulana Md. Sakhawat	
	District: Jessore.	Hossain (JI)	39,119
		Abdul Halim (AL)	30,418
091 Magura-1	a. Sripur Thana and	MG (Rtd) Md. Majid-Ul-Huq (BNP)	69,728
	b. Magura Sadar Thana excluding the following unions:	Altaf Hossain (AL)	57,795
	(1) Shatrujitpur,		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(2) Gopalgram, (3) Kuchiamora, (4) Beroil Polita. District: Magura.	*I*	
092 Magura-2	a. The following unions of Magura Sadar Thana: (1) Shatrujitpur, (2) Gopalgram,(BNP) (3) Kuchiamora, (4) Beroil Polita, b. Mohammadpur Thana and c. Shalikha Thana. District: Magura.	Md. Asaduzzaman (AL) MG (Rtd) Md. Majid-Ul-Huq	61,067 32,266

N.B. Kazi Salimul Haque (BNP) replaced Md. Asaduz-zaman after by-election.

093 Norail-1	a. Kalia Thana and b. Norail Sadar Thana excluding the following areas (1) Norail Municipality area, (2) Banshgram Union, (3) Tularampur Union, (4) Maijpara Union, (5) Auria Union, (6) Chandibarpur Union, (7) Shahbadpur Union, (8) Habukhali Union and (9) Mulia Union. District: Norail.	Dhirendra Nath Saha (AL) Goutam Mitra (BNP)	47,158 25,604
094 Norail-2	a. The following areas of Norail Sadar Thana: (1) Norail Municipality area, (2) Banshgram Union, (3) Tularampur Union, (4) Maijpara Union, (5) Auria Union,	Sharif Khasruzaman (AL) Mokbul Hossain (BNP)	59,506 32,516

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(6) Chandibarpur Union,		
	(7) Shahbadpur Union,		
	(8) Habukhali Union		
	(9) Mulia Union and		
	b. Lohagara Thana.		
	District: Norail.		
095 Bagerhat-1	a. Fakirhat Thana,	Dr. Mozammel Hossain MBBS (AL)	62,045
	b. Mollarhat Thana and	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (BNP)	40,155
	c. Chitalmari Thana.		
	District: Bagerhat.		
096 Bagerhat-2	a. Bagerhat Sadar Thana	A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman (BNP)	48,081
	b. Kachua Thana.	Mir Sakhawat Ali Daru (AL)	46,652
	District: Bagerhat.		
097 Bagerhat-3	a. Rampal Thana and	A. Khaleque Talukder (AL)	46,126
	b. Mongla Thana.	Gazi Abu Bakar Siddique (JI)	35,205
	District: Bagerhat.		
098 Bagerhat-4	a. Morelganj Thana and	Md. Maulana A. Sattar Akan (JI)	55,124
	b. Sharankhola Thana.	Sheikh A. Aziz (AL)	50,467
	District: Bagerhat.		
099 Khulna-1	a. Batiaghata Thana and	Seikh Harunur Rashid Mia (AL)	44,812
	b. Dacope Thana.	Achintya Biswas (CPB)	21,668
	District: Khulna.		
100 Khulna-2	a. Khulna Metropolitan Thana and	Sheikh Razzak Ali (BNP)	41,590
		Monjurul Imam (AL)	28,266
	b. Sonadanga Metropolitan Thana.		
	District: Khulna.		
101 Khulna-3	a. Khalishpur Metropolitan Thana,	Ashraf Hossain (BNP)	38,872
		Begum Monnujan Sufian (AL)	31,502
	b. Daulatpur Metropolitan Thana and		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencles	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	c. Khanjahan Ali Metropolitan Thana (excluding Atra Gilatala Union). District: Khulna.		
102 Khulna-4	a. Rupsa Thana, b. Dighalia Thana, c. Terakhada Thana. District: Khulna.	Mostafa Rashidi Suja (AL) A. Khaled Md. Zia Uddin (BNP)	41,693 37,071
103 Khulna-5	a. Phultala Thana (including Atra Gilatala Union) and b. Dumuria Thana. District: Khulna.	Salah Uddin Yusuf (AL) Prof. Majedul Islam (BNP)	63,211 33,239
104 Khulna-6	a. Paikgachha Thana and b. Koira Thana. District: Khulna.	Shah Md. Ruhul Kuddus (JI) Sheikh Md. Nurul Haque (AL)	58,369 57,669
105 Satkhira-1	a. Kalaroa Thana and b. Tala Thana. District: Satkhira.	Ansar Ali (JI) Syed Kamal Bakht (AL)	72,692 67,053
106 Satkhira-2	Satkhira Sadar Thana. District: Satkhira.	Kazi Shamsur Rahman (JI) A.F.M. Entaz Ali (AL)	45,546 30,767
107 Satkhira-3	Ashashuni Thana. District: Satkhira.	A. M. Riasat Ali (JI) Md. Hafizur Rahman (AL)	31,631 29,680
108 Satkhira-4	a. Devahata Thana and b. Kaliganj Thana. District: Satkhira.	Munsur Ahmed (AL) G.M.A. Gaffar Gazi (JI)	44,225 41,552
109 Satkhira-5	Shyamnagar Thana. District: Satkhira.	Nazrul Islam (JI) Fazlul Haque (AL)	45,776 37,303
110 Borguna-1	a. Betagi Thana and b. Borguna Sadar Thana.	Adv. Dhirendra Debnath Shamvu (AL)	44,722

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	District: Borguna.	Maulana A. Rashid Pir Saheb (IOJ)	29,507
111 Borguna-2	a. Bamna Thana and	Nurul Islam Moni (Ind)	19,616
	b. Patharghata Thana.	Golam Kabir (AL)	13,764
	District: Borguna.		
112 Borguna-3	Amtoli Thana.	Md. Mojibur Rahman Talukder (AL)	29,575
	District: Borguna.	Md. Motiar Rahman Talukder (JP)	11,543
113 Patuakhali-1	a. Mirzaganj Thana and	M. Keramat Ali (BNP)	51,278
	b. Patuakhali Sadar Thana.	Shajahan Mia, Adv. (AL)	45,006
	District: Patuakhali.		
114 Patuakhali-2	Baufal Thana.	A.S.M. Firoz (AL)	40,202
	District: Patuakhali.	Abu Zafar Khan (Ind)	20,221
115 Patuakhali-3	a. Galachipa Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Bara Baishdia, (2) Chalitabunia, (3) Chhoto Baishdia, (4) Rangabali, (5) Char Montaz and	A.K.M. Jahangir Hossain (AL)	51,754
		A. Baten (BNP)	19,243
	b. Dashmina Thana.		
	District: Patuakhali.		
116 Patuakhali-4	a. The following unions of Galachipa Thana: (1) Bara Baishdia, (2) Chalitabunia, (3) Chhoto Baishdia, (4) Rangabali, (5) Char Montaz and	Anwarul Islam (AL)	32,707
		Jahangir Hossain Akan (BNP)	21,837
	b. Kalapara Thana.		
	District: Patuakhali.		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
117 Vola-1	Vola Sadar Thana. District: Vola.	Tofael Ahmed (AL) Md. Naziur Rahman (JP)	36,465 31,644
118 Vola-2	a. Daulatkhan Thana and b. Borhan Uddin Thana. District: Vola.	Tofael Ahmed (AL) Md. Naziur Rahman (JP)	38,626 23,445
	N.B. Mosaraf Hossain Sajahan (BNP) replaced Tofael Ahmed after by-election.		
119 Vola-3	a. Tazumuddin Thana and b. Lalmohan Thana. District: Vola.	Maj. (Rtd.) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed (Ind) M.A. Kashem (AL)	36,925 26,515
120 Vola-4	a. Monpura Thana and b. Charfashion Thana. District: Vola.	Principal M.M. Nazrul Islam M. A.(AL) Md. Naziur Rahman (JP)	32,719 21,638
	N.B. Md. Jafar Ullah Chy. (AL) replaced Principal M.M. Nazrul Islam after by-election		
121 Barisal-1	a. Gaurnadi Thana and b. Agoiljhara Thana. District: Barisal.	A. Hasanat Abdullah (AL) Kazi Golam Mahbub (BNP)	55,697 46,855
122 Barisal-2	a. Babuganj Thana and b. Ujirpur Thana. District: Barisal.	Rashed Khan Menon (WP) Haranath Bain (AL)	36,311 27,697
123 Barisal-3	a. Hijla Thana and b. Muladi Thana. District: Barisal.	Mosharraf Hossain Mongu (BNP) Prof. A. Bari (AL)	23,777 18,952
124 Barisal-4	Mehendiganj Thana. District: Barisal.	Mohiuddin Ahamad (AL) Prof. Maulana Mahmud Hossain Al Mamun (JI)	22,093 16,943
125 Barisal-5	Barisal Sadar Thana. District: Barisal.	Abdur Rahman Biswas (BNP) Mahbub Uddin Ahmad (AL)	52,095 28,705
	N.B. Majibor Rahman Sarwar (BNP) replaced Abdur Rahman Biswas after by-election.		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
126 Barisal-6	Bakerganj Thana. District: Barisal.	Md. Yunus Khan (BNP) Mujibur Rahman Talukder (Finu Mia Adv.) (NAP-M)	42,361 27,189

N.B. Principal Md. Abdur Rashid Khan (BNP) replaced Md. Yunus Khan after by-election.

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
127 Jhalakathi-1	a. Rajapur Thana and b. Kanthalia Thana. District: Jhalakathi.	Md. Shajahan Omar (BNP) A. Kuddus (AL)	33,500 16,357
128 Jhalakathi-2	a. Jhalakathi Sadar Thana b. Nolchhiti Thana. District: Jhalakathi.	Gazi Aziz Ferdous (BNP) Zulfikar Ali Vutto (JP)	43,673 32,639
129 Pirojpur-1	a. Nazirpur Thana and b. Pirojpur Sadar Thana. District: Pirojpur.	Sudhanshu Shekhar Halder (AL) Gazi Nuruzzaman (BNP)	55,405 38,538
130 Pirojpur-2	a. Kaukhali Thana and b. Vandaria Thana. District: Pirojpur.	Anowar Hossain (JP) Adv. A. Hakim (AL)	36,651 15,560
131 Pirojpur-3	Mothbaria Thana. District: Pirojpur.	Mohiuddin Ahmed (BKSAL) Haji M.A. Jabbar Engineer (JP)	26,813 24,844
132 Pirojpur with Barisal.	a. Banaripara Thana. District: Barisal and b. Nesarabad (Swarupkathi Thana). District: Pirojpur.	Sayed Shahidul Huq Jamal (BNP) Amir Hossain (Amu Mia) (AL)	64,864 39,875
133 Tangail-1	Modhupur Thana. District: Tangail.	Abul Hasan Chy. (AL) Mrs. Asika Akbar (BNP)	37,454 35,507
134 Tangail-2	a. Gopalpur Thana and b. Bhuapur Thana. District: Tangail.	Md. A. Salam Pintu (BNP) Md. Alhaj Hatem Ali Talukder (AL)	75,603 56,582

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
135 Tangail-3	Ghatail Thana.	Md. Lutfar Rahman Khan (BNP)	71,157
	District: Tangail.	Shamsur Rahman Khan (AL)	47,141
136 Tangail-4	Kalihati Thana.	Shajahan Siraj (JSD-Siraj)	51,429
	District: Tangail.	A. Latif Siddiqi (AL)	50,967
137 Tangail-5	a. Tangail Sadar Thana,	MG(Rtd) Mahmudul Hasan (JP)	74,144
	b. Delduar Thana.	Abdul Mannan (AL)	71,455
	District: Tangail.		
138 Tangail-6	Nagarpur Thana.	Khandaker A. Taher (BNP)	32,845
	District: Tangail.	Abdul Mannan (AL)	17,936
139 Tangail-7	Mirzapur Thana.	Khandaker Badar Uddin (BNP)	62,882
	District: Tangail.	Md. Fazlur Rahman Faruq (AL)	41,392
140 Tangail-8	a. Basail Thana and	Humayun Khan Ponni (BNP)	61,396
	b. Sakhipur Thana.	Md. Kader Siddiqi (AL)	59,089
	District: Tangail.		
141 Jamalpur-1	a. Bakshiganj Thana and	Abul Kalam Azad (AL)	38,726
	b. Dewanganj Thana.	I.A.M. Abdul Aziz (BNP)	25,567
	District: Jamalpur.		
142 Jamalpur-2	Islampur Thana	Haji Rashed Mosharaf MP(AL)	33,919
	District: Jamalpur.	Sultan Mahmud (Babu) (BNP)	30,358
143 Jamalpur-3	a. Melandaha Thana and	Mirza Golam Azam (AL)	39,907
	b. Madarganj Thana.	Shah Md. Khairul Bashar	31,032
	District: Jamalpur.	Chisti (BNP)	
144 Jamalpur-4	Sarishabari Thana.	Md. Abdus Salam Talukder (BNP)	46,152
	District: Jamalpur.	Motiur Rahman (AL)	33,611
145 Jamalpur-5	Jamalpur Sadar Thana.	Sirajul Haque (BNP)	70,392
	District: Jamalpur.	MG(Rtd) Khalilur Rahman(AL)	65,320
146 Sherpur-1	Sherpur Sadar Thana.	Shah Md. Rafiqul Bari Chy.	31,108

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	District: Sherpur.(JP)	Md. A. Samad (AL)	23,519
147 Sherpur-2	a. Nakla Thana and	Mst. Begum Motia Chy. (AL)	47,886
	b. Nalitabari Thana.	Prof. A. Salam (Ind)	34,644
	District: Sherpur.		
148 Sherpur-3	a. Sribordi Thana and	Dr. Md. Serajul Haque (BNP)	34,749
	b. Jhinaigati Thana.	Md. A. Halim, Adv. (AL)	31,688
	District: Sherpur.		
	N.B. Md. Mahmudul Haque (Ind) replaced Dr. Md. Serajul Haque after by-election.		
149 Mymensingh-1	Haluaghat Thana.	Mr. Promod Mankin (AL)	27,191
	District: Mymensingh.	Md. Emdadul Haque (JP)	19,390
150 Mymensingh-2	Phulpur Thana.	Md. Shamsul Haque (AL)	35,432
	District: Mymensingh.	Zulmat Ali Khan (BNP)	21,091
151 Mymensingh-3	Gauripur Thana.	Nazrul Islam (AL)	28,092
	District: Mymensingh.	Nurul Amin Khan Pathan (JP)	24,239
	N.B. Mrs. Rawshanara Begum (AL) replaced Nazrul Islam after by-election.		
152 Mymensingh-4	Mymensingh Sadar Thana.	A.K.M. Fazlul Haque (BNP)	44,842
	District: Mymensingh.	Principal Motiur Rahman (Bir Pratik) (AL)	30,454
153 Mymensingh-5	Muktagachha Thana.	Keramat Ali Talukder (BNP)	38,126
	District: Mymensingh	Shamsul Haque, Adv. (AL)	26,675
154 Mymensingh-6	Phulbaria Thana.	K. Amirul Islam (Hira Mian) (BNP)	24,023
	District: Mymensingh.	Md. Moslem Uddin, Adv. (AL)	23,609
155 Mymensingh-7	Trishal Thana.	Md. A. Khaleq (BNP)	28,349
	District: Mymensingh.	Maulana A. Salam Tarafdar (AL)	27,838
156 Mymensingh-8	Iswarganj Thana.	Khurram Khan Chy. (JP)	18,209
	District: Mymensingh.	Golam Nabi (BNP)	15,095

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
157 Mymensingh-9	Nandail Thana. District: Mymensingh.	Anwarul Hossain Khan Chy. (BNP) Md. Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan (AL)	33,107 27,981
158 Mymensingh-10	Gafargaon Thana. District: Mymensingh.	Altaf Hossain Golondaz (AL) Fazlur Rahman Sultan (BNP)	55,224 41,812
159 Mymensingh-11	Valuka Thana. District: Mymensingh.	Alhaj Aman Ulla Chy. (BNP) Mostafa M.A. Matin Adv. (AL)	35,959 35,347
160 Mymensingh with Netrakona.	a. Dhobaura Thana. District: Mymensingh and b. Purbadhala Thana. District: Netrakona.	Musharraf Hussain (AL) Dr. Mohammad Ali Talukder (BNP)	38,230 37,123
161 Netrakona-1	a. Durgapur Thana and b. Kalmakanda Thana. District: Netrakona.	Md. A. Karim, Adv. (BNP) Md. Jalal Uddin Talukder (AL)	38,437 38,023
162 Netrakona-2	a. Netrakona Sadar Thana b. Barohatta Thana. District: Netrakona.	Abu Abbas (BNP) Fazlur Rahman Khan (AL)	47,191 40,604
163 Netrakona-3	a. Aatpara Thana and b. Kendua Thana. District: Netrakona.	Zubed Ali (AL) Md. Lutfe Ahmad Khan (BNP)	45,882 44,977
164 Netrakona-4	a. Mohanganj, b. Madan Thana and c. Khaliajuri Thana. District: Netrakona.	Lutfuzzaman (Babar) (BNP) Abdul Momin (AL)	61,233 53,338
165 Kishoreganj-1	a. Hossenpur Thana and b. Pakundia Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	A.B.M. Zahidul Haque (BNP) Md. Shamsul Haque (Golap Mian) (AL)	41,010 36,256
166 Kishoreganj-2	Katiadi Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Md. Maj. Akhtaruzzaman (Rtd) (BNP) Md. Habibur Rahman (AL)	32,652 24,874

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
167 Kishoreganj-3	Kishoreganj Sadar Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Maulana Ataur Rahman Khan (BNP) Md. Fazlur Rahman Adv. (AL)	57,671 40,205
168 Kishoreganj-4	a. Tarail Thana and b. Karimganj Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Md. Dr. Mizanul Haque (AL) Md. Kabir Uddin Ahmed (BNP)	45,608 39,554
169 Kishoreganj-5	a. Itna Thana, b. Mithamoin Thana and c. Ashtagram Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Adv. Md. A. Hamid (AL) Md. Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan (BNP)	62,792 26,540
170 Kishoreganj-6	a. Nikli Thana and b. Bajitpur Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Amir Uddin Ahmad (BNP) Adv. A. Latif (AL)	46,586 23,858
171 Kishoreganj-7	a. Kuliarchar Thana and b. Bhairab Bazar Thana. District: Kishoreganj.	Haji Dr. A. Latif Bhuiyan (BNP) Md. Zillur Rahman (AL)	58,553 51,159
172 Manikganj-1	a. Daulatpur Thana b. Ghior Thana. District: Manikganj.	Khandakar Delwar Hossain(BNP) Siddiqur Rauf Khan (AL)	46,817 20,415
173 Manikganj-2	a. Shibalaya Thana and b. Harirampur Thana. District: Manikganj.	Harun Ur Rashid Khan (BNP) Golam Mohiuddin (AL)	59,280 29,342
174 Manikganj-3	a. Saturia Thana b. Manikganj Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Putail, (2) Vararia and (3) Hatipara. District: Manikganj.	Nizam Uddin Khan (BNP) Mofizul Islam Khan (Kamal) (AL)	63,963 29,068

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
175 Manikganj-4	a. The following unions of Manikganj Sadar Thana: (1) Putail, (2) Vararia and (3) Hatipara. District: Manikganj. and b. Singair Thana. District: Manikganj.	Shamsul Islam Khan (BNP) Fazlul Haque (NAP-M)	45,970 34,783
176 Munshiganj-1	a. Srinagar Thana and b. The following unions of Sirajdikhan Thana: (1) Chitrakot, (2) Shekharnagar, (3) Rajnagar, (4) Keyain, (5) Basail and (6) Kola. District: Munshiganj.	Dr. Baddruddoza Chy. (BNP) A. R. Khandakar (AL)	75,099 42,583
177 Munshiganj-2	a. Sirajdikhan Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Chitrakot, (2) Shekharnagar, (3) Rajnagar, (4) Keyain, (5) Basail, (6) Kola and b. Lauhajang Thana. District: Munshiganj.	W.C.(Rtd) M. Hamidullah Khan (BNP) Nazrul Islam (AL)	60,697 33,422
178 Munshiganj-3	a. Tongibari Thana and b. The following unions of Munshiganj Sadar Thana: (1) Rekabibazar,	Shamsul Islam (BNP) Adv. Moktadir (AL)	63,053 29,488

No. and name of constituencies		Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
		(2) Rampal,		
		(3) Mohakali and		
		(4) Bajrajogini.		
		District: Munshiganj.		
179	Munshiganj-4	a. Munshiganj Sadar Thana excluding the following unions (1) Rekabibazar, (2) Rampal, (3) Mohakali, (4) Bajrajogini and	Abdul Hai (BNP) Mohiuddin Ahmed (AL)	64,881 38,749
		b. Gajaria Thana. District: Munshiganj.		
180	Dhaka-1	a. Dohar Thana. District: Dhaka.	Nazmul Huda (BNP) Md. Mahbubur Rahman (AL)	55,152 31,245
181	Dhaka-2	a. Nawabganj Thana. District: Dhaka.	Abdul Mannan (BNP) Azizur Rahman (BKSAL)	37,415 28,820
182	Dhaka-3	Keraniganj Thana. District: Dhaka.	Md. Aman Ullah (BNP) Mostafa Mohsin Montu (AL)	97,299 66,220
183	Dhaka-4	a. Demra Thana and b. The following Mouzas of Sabujbag Thana: (1) Manda, (2) Daksingaon and (3) Nandipara. District: Dhaka.	Salah Uddin Ahmed (BNP) Saifuddin Ahmed Manik (CPB)	56,362 42,454
184	Dhaka-5	a. Gulshan Thana, b. Cantonment Thana and c. Uttara Thana excluding Harirampur Thana. District: Dhaka.	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP) Adv. Sahara Khatun (AL)	71,266 45,811

N.B. Maj (Rtd) Md. Kamrul Islam (BNP) replaced Begum Khaleda Zia after by-election.

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
185 Dhaka-6	a. Motijheel Thana,	Mirza Abbas (BNP)	59,851
	b. Sabujbag Thana excluding the following Mouzas: (1) Manda, (2) Dakshingaon and (3) Nandipara. District: Dhaka.	Mozaffar Hossain Paltu (AL)	34,101
186 Dhaka-7	a. Sutrapur Thana,	Sadeq Hossain (BNP)	76,601
	b. Kotwali Thana. District: Dhaka.	Sheikh Hasina (AL)	49,362
187 Dhaka-8	Lalbag Thana. District: Dhaka.	Mir Shawkat Ali (BNP) Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin (AL)	53,651 34,285
188 Dhaka-9	a. Dhanmondi Thana and	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP)	55,946
	b. Mohammadpur Thana. District: Dhaka.	Sajeda Chowdhury (AL)	29,464

N.B. Barrister Zamir Uddin Sirkar (BNP) replaced Begum Khaleda Zia after by-election.

189 Dhaka-10	a. Tejgaon Thana and	Maj.(Rtd) A. Mannan (BNP)	45,711
	b. Ramna Thana. District: Dhaka.	Sheikh Hasina (AL)	29,451
190 Dhaka-11	a. Mirpur Thana,	Md. Harun Rashid Molla (BNP)	49,886
	b. Pallabi Thana and	Dr. Kamal Hossain (AL)	47,750
	c. Harirampur Union of Uttara Thana. District: Dhaka.		

N.B. Sayed Md. Mohosin (BNP) replaced Md. Harun Rashid Molla after by-election.

191 Dhaka-12	Savar Thana. District: Dhaka.	Md. Niamat Ullah (BNP) Shamsuddoha Khan Majlish (AL)	63,279 37,298
192 Dhaka-13	Dhamrai Thana. District: Dhaka.	Md. Ziaur Rahman Khan (BNP) Md. Benazir Ahmed (AL)	81,034 45,194

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
193 Gazipur-1	a. Kaliakoir Thana and b. Sripur Thana. District: Gazipur.	Rahmat Ali (AL) Chy. Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqi (BNP)	70,537 56,077
194 Gazipur-2	a. Gazipur Sadar Thana, b. Tongi Thana. District: Gazipur.	Prof. M.A. Mannan (BNP) A.K.M. Mozamme! Haque (AL)	97,597 66,418
195 Gazipur-3	Kaliganj Thana. District: Gazipur.	Dr. Asfar Hossain Molla (AL) K.M. Habib Zaman (Arun) (BNP)	30,377 26,233
196 Gazipur-4	Kapasia Thana. District: Gazipur.	A.S.M. Hannan Shah (BNP) Sayeda Johra Tajuddin (AL)	46,766 43,255
197 Narshingdi-1	Narshingdi Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Amdia, (2) Pachdona and (3) Meherpara. District: Narshingdi. .	Shamsuddin Ahmed (BNP) Alhaj Mosleh Uddin (AL)	80,206 41,340
198 Narshingdi-2	a. The following unions of Narshingdi Sadar Thana: (1) Amdia, (2) Pachdona,(JP) (3) Meherpara and b. Palash Thana. District: Narshingdi.	Dr. A. Moin Khan (BNP) Md. Delwar Hossain Khan .	42,851 23,896
199 Narshingdi-3	Shibpur Thana. District: Narshingdi.	Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan (BNP) Md. Shahjahan Saju (JP)	41,515 19,979
200 Narshingdi-4	a. Monohardi Thana and b. Belabo Thana. District: Narshingdi.	Sar. Sakhawat Hossain Bakul (BNP) Adv. Nurul Majid Humayun (AL)	 71,350 47,309

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
201 Narshingdi-5	Raipura Thana.	Abdul Ali (BNP)	37,360
	District: Narshingdi.	Raji Uddin (AL)	36,455
202 Narayanganj-1	Rupganj Thana.	Abdul Matin Chy. (BNP)	60,532
	District: Narayanganj.	Akhtaruzzaman (AL)	53,361
203 Narayanganj-2	Araihajar Thana.	Ataur Rahman Khan (BNP)	38,400
	District: Narayanganj.	Emdadul Bhuiyan (Ind)	35,353
204 Narayanganj-3	Sonargaon Thana.	Prof. Rezaul Karim (BNP)	50,769
	District: Narayanganj.	Abul Hasnat (AL)	29,613
205 Narayanganj-4	The following areas of Narayanganj Sadar Thana:	Sirajul Islam (BNP)	54,578
	(1) Gaganpur Union	Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnu (AL)	31,121
	(2) Alirtek Union,		
	(3) Godnail Union (Urban and rural area),		
	(4) Siddhirganj Union,		
	(5) Sumillpara Union,		
	(6) Boktabali Union,		
	(7) Kashipur Union,		
	(8) Enayetnagar Union,		
	(9) Kutubpur Union and		
	(10)Fatulla (urban and rural area)		
	District Narayanganj.		
206 Narayanganj-5	a. Narayanganj Sadar Thana excluding the following areas:	Adv. Abul Kalam (BNP)	53,300
		Prof. Nazma Rahman (AL)	38,603
	(1) Gaganpur Union,		
	(2) Alirtek Union,		
	(3) Godnail Union (urban and rural area),		
	(4) Siddhirganj Union,		
	(5) Sumillpara Union,		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(6) Boktabali Union,		
	(7) Kashipur Union,		
	(8) Enayetnagar Union,		
	(9) Kutubpur Union,		
	(10)Fatulla (urban and rural area) and		
	b. Bandar Thana.		
	District: Narayanganj.		
207 Rajbari-1	a. Rajbari Sadar Thana and	Md. A. Wajed Chy. (AL)	33,187
	b. Goalanda Ghat Thana.	A. Khaleq (BNP)	30,489
	District: Rajbari.		
	N.B. Mr. Keramat Ali (AL) replaced Md. A. Wajed Chy. after by-election		
208 Rajbari-2	a. Pangsha Thana and	Dr. A.K.M. Asjad (JI)	70,901
	b. Baliakandi Thana.	Nasiruddin (NAP-M)	68,223
	District: Rajbari.		
209 Faridpur-1	a. Madhukhali Thana,	Md. A. Rauf Mia, M.A. B.Ed. (AL)	68,027
	b. Boalmari Thana and	Shah Md. Abu Zafar (JP)	45,134
	c. Alfadanga Thana.		
	District: Faridpur.		
210 Faridpur-2	Nagarkanda Thana.	Sayeda Begum Sajeda Chy. (AL)	37,229
	District: Faridpur.	K.M. Obaidur Rahman (JD)	34,210
211 Faridpur-3	Faridpur Sadar Thana.	Chy. Kamal Ibne Yusuf.(BNP)	62,432
	District: Faridpur	Imam Uddin Ahmed (AL)	33,653
212 Faridpur-4	a. Charvadrasan Thana and	Mosharraf Hossain (AL)	43,313
	b. Sadar Thana.	Chy. Akmal Ibne Yusuf (BNP)	24,730
	District: Faridpur.		
213 Faridpur-5	Vanga Thana.	Dr. Kazi A. Yusuf (AL)	45,052
	District: Faridpur.	Md. Sarwar Jan Mia (BNP)	13,071
214 Gopalganj-1	a. Moksudpur Thana,	Kazi A. Rashid (AL)	79,219
	b. Kashiani Thana	Mukul Chandra Bose (BAKSAL)	14,602

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	excluding the following unions: (1) Singa, (2) Hatiara, (3) Puisur, (4) Bethuri, (5) Nizamkandi, (6) Orakandi and (7) Fukra. District: Gopalganj.		
215 Gopalganj-2	a. The following unions of Kashiani Thana: (1) Singa, (2) Hatiara, (3) Puisur, (4) Bethuri, (5) Nizamkandi, (6) Orakandi, (7) Fukra and b. Gopalganj Sadar Thana. District: Gopalganj.	Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (AL) Fazle Elahi Sarfuzzaman Mia (BNP)	93,015 9,661
216 Gopalganj-3	a. Tungipara Thana, b. Kotalipara Thana. District: Gopalganj.	Sheikh Hasina (AL) Hafez Omar Ahmed (KA)	67,945 17,256
217 Madaripur-1	Shibchar Thana, District: Madaripur. **N.B. Nur-E-Alam Chy. (Liton) (AL) replaced Ilias Ahmed Chy. after by-election**	Ilias Ahmed Chy. (AL) Abul Khair Chy. (JP)	47,595 32,333
218 Madaripur-2	a. Rajoir Thana and b. Madaripur Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Khoajpur,	A. Razzak (BKSAL) Shahjahan Khan (JSD-Inu)	61,532 30,156

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received

		(2) Jhaudi,	
		(3) Ghatmajhi,	
		(4) Mostafapur and	
		(5) Kendua.	
		District: Madaripur.	

N.B. Shahjahan Khan (AL) replaced A. Razzak after by-election.

219	Madaripur-3	a.	The following unions of Madaripur Sadar Thana:	Alhaj Sayed Abul Hossain (AL)	60,660
			(1) Khoajpur,	A. Matin Molla (BNP)	27,022
			(2) Jhaudi,		
			(3) Ghatmajhi,		
			(4) Mostafapur,		
			(5) Kendua and		
		b.	Kalkini Thana.		
			District: Madaripur.		
220	Shariatpur-1	a.	Zazira Thana and	Hemayet Ullah (AL)	54,953
		b.	Shariatpur Sadar Thana.	Sardar A.K.M. Nasir Uddin (BNP)	28,895
			District: Shariatpur.		
221	Shariatpur-2	a.	Naria Thana.	Col. (Rtd) Shawkat Ali (AL)	44,327
			District: Shariatpur.	Harun Or Rashid (BNP)	22,408
222	Shariatpur-3	a.	Vedarganj Thana,	A. Razzak (BKSAL)	65,455
		b.	Damuddya Thana and	S.M. Lutfar Rahman Sar. (BNP)	60,128
		c.	Gosairhat Thana.		
			District: Shariatpur.		
223	Sunamganj-1	a.	Dharmapasha Thana,	Nozir Hossain (CPB)	44,117
		b.	Tahirpur Thana and	Ali Amzad (JSD-Rob)	30,187
		c.	Jamalganj Thana.		
			District: Sunamganj.		
224	Sunamganj-2	a.	Dirai Thana and	Suranjit Sen Gupta (GP)	58,580
		b.	Shalla Thana.	Dabirul Islam Chy. (JP)	36,067
			District: Sunamganj.		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
225 Sunamganj-3	a. Jagannathpur Thana and	Abdus Samad Azad (AL)	37,701
	b. The following unions of Sunamganj Sadar Thana: (1) Durgapasha, (2) East Pagla, (3) West Pagla, (4) East Birgaon, (5) West Birgaon, (6) Patharia, (7) Joykalas, (8) Shimulbak. District: Sunamganj.	Faruq Rashid Chy. (JP)	23,723
226 Sunamganj-4	a. Sunamganj Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Durgapashá, (2) East Pagla, (3) West Pagla, (4) East Birgaon, (5) West Birgaon, (6) Patharia, (7) Joykalas, (8) Shimulbak and	A. Zahur Mia (AL)	30,649
		Dewan Shamsul Abedin (BNP)	25,865
	b. Biswamvar Thana. District: Sunamganj.		
227 Sunamganj-5	a. Chhatak Thana and	A. majid (JP)	22,266
	b. Doara Thana. District: Sunamganj.	M. Yahia (Ind)	20,518
228 Sylhet-1	a. Companyganj Thana and	Khandakar Abdul Malik (BNP)	37,090
	b. Sylhet Sadar Thana excluding the following unions and areas: (1) Mulargaon, (2) Boroikandi,	Iftekhar Hossain Shamim (AL)	35,470

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(3) Tetli,		
	(4) Lalabazar,		
	(5) Silam,		
	(6) Jalalpur,		
	(7) Kuchai,		
	(8) Moglabazar and		
	(9) Daudpur.		
	District: Sylhet.		
229 Sylhet-2	a. Biswanath Thana and	Mohsud Ibne Aziz (Lama) (JP)	39,015
	b. Balaganj Thana.	Md. Lutfar Rahman (BKSAL)	22,087
	District: Sylhet.		
230 Sylhet-3	a. The following unions	Md. A. Mukit Khan (JP)	33,416
	of Sylhet Sadar Thana:	Md. Atiqur Rahman (AL)	19,057
	(1) Mulargaon,		
	(2) Boroikandi,		
	(3) Tetli,		
	(4) Lalabazar,		
	(5) Silam,		
	(6) Jalalpur,		
	(7) Kuchai,		
	(8) Moglabazar ,		
	(9) Daudpur and		–
	b. Fenchuganj Thana.		
	District: Sylhet.		
231 Sylhet-4	a. Goainghat Thana and	Imran Ahmed (AL)	23,018
	b. Jaintapur Thana.	Nazim Kamran Chy. (BNP)	14,508
	District: Sylhet.		
232 Sylhet-5	a. Kanaighat Thana and	Alhaj Maulana Obaidul Haque(IOJ)	26,267
–	b. Jokiganj Thana	Hafiz Ahammad Majumder	19,682
	District: Sylhet.		
233 Sylhet-6	a. Bianibazar Thana and	Sharaf Uddin Khasru (JP)	39,065
	b. Golapganj Thana.	Nurul Islam Nahid (CPB)	33,332
	District: Sylhet.		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
234 Moulavibazar-1	Baralekha Thana.	Ebadur Rahman Chy. (JP)	27,900
	District: Moulavibazar.	Alhaj Iman Uddin Ahmed (AL)	27,558
235 Moulavibazar-2	Kulaura Thana.	Nabab Ali Abbas Khan (JP)	61,108
	District: Moulavibazar.	Sultan Md. Monsur Ahmed (AL)	45,526
236 Moulavibazar-3	a. Rajnagar Thana and	Azizur Rahman (AL)	55,977
	b. Moulavibazar Sadar Thana.	Gias Uddin Chy. (JP)	38,528
	District: Moulavibazar.		
237 Moulavibazar-4	a. Kamalganj Thana and	Md. Abdus Shahid (AL)	75,321
	b. Srimangal Thana.	Ahad Mia (JP)	60,215
	District: Moulavibazar.		
238 Hobiganj-1	a. Nobiganj Thana and	Khalilur Rahman (JP)	41,957
	b. Bahubal Thana.	Farid Gazi (AL)	38,927
	District: Hobiganj.		
239 Hobiganj-2	a. Ajmiriganj Thana and	Sharif Uddin Ahmed (AL)	50,397
	b. Baniachang Thana.	Zakaria Khan Chy. (BNP)	40,025
	District: Hobiganj.		
240 Hobiganj-3	a. Hobiganj Sadar Thana and	Abu Lais Md. Mobin Chy.(JP)	38,260
	b. Lakhai Thana	Chy. Abdul Hai (NAP-M)	31,045
	District: Hobiganj.		
241 Hobiganj-4	a. Chunarughat Thana and	Enamul Haque (AL)	67,847
	b. Madhabpur Thana.	Sayed Md. Faisal (BNP)	51,694
	District: Hobiganj.		
242 Bramhanbaria-1	Nasirnagar Thana.	Murshed Kamal (JP)	26,376
	District: Bramhanbaria	F.S. Safi Mahmud (BNP)	23,856
243 Bramhanbaria-2	a. Sarail Thana and	Ukil A. Sattar (BNP)	52,672
	b. The following unions	Md. Zahirul Haque Khan	35,034
	of Bramhanbaria Sadar	(Bir Pratik) (AL)	
	Thana:		
	(1) Budhanti,		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(2) Chandura, (3) Mojlishpur, (4) Suhilpur (north) and (5) Tal Shahar (east). District: Bramhanbaria.		
244 Bramhanbaria-3	b. Bramhanbaria Sadar Thana excluding The following unions: (1) Budhanti, (2) Chandura, (3) Mojlishpur, (4) Suhilpur (north) and (5) Tal Shahar (east). District: Bramhanbaria.	Harun Al Rashid (BNP) Adv. Humayun Kabir (JP)	62,842 56,178
245 Bramhanbaria-4	a. Akhaura Thana and b. Kasba Thana. District: Bramhanbaria.	Mia Abdullah Wajed (BNP) Sirajul Haque Adv. (AL)	37,328 26,867
246 Bramhanbaria-5	Nobinagar Thana. District: Bramhanbaria.	Kazi Md. Anwar Hossain (JP) A. Kuddus Makhan (AL)	60,830 53,522
247 Bramhanbaria-6	Banchharampur Thana. District: Bramhanbaria.	A.T.M. Wali Ashraf (BNP) A. B. Tajul Islam (AL)	35,172 30,613

N.B. Shahjahan Miah (BNP) replaced A.T.M. Wali Ashraf after by-election.

248 Comilla-1	Homna Thana. District: Comilla	M.K. Anwar (BNP) Mortuza Hossain Molla (AL)	69,941 21,380
249 Comilla-2	Daudkandi Thana District: Comilla.	Dr. Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain (BNP) Badal Kumar Roy (AL)	57,706 12,699
250 Comilla-3	Muradnagar Thana. District: Comilla.	Md. Rafiqul Islam Barrister (BNP) Jahangir Alam (AL)	46,380 44,797
251 Comilla-4	Deviddar Thana.	Monjurul Hasan Munshi (BNP)	27,139

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	District: Comilla.	Prof. Md. Mozaffor Ahmed (NAP-M)	26,299
252 Comilla-5	a. Bramhanpara Thana and	A. Matin Khasru (AL)	42,680
	b. Burichang Thana.	Md. A. Latif (BNP)	23,960
	District: Comilla.		
253 Comilla-6	Chandina Thana.	Md. Redwan Ahamad (Ind)	31,179
	District: Comilla.	Md. Ali Ashraf (AL)	30,631
254 Comilla-7	Barura Thana.	A.K.M. Abu Taher (BNP)	36,068
	District: Comilla.	Abdul Hakim M. A. (AL)	35,059
255 Comilla-8	Comilla Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Barpara, (2) Jorkaran (east), (3) Jorkaran (west), (4) Galiara, (5) Chouara and (6) Bijaypur. District: Comilla.	Akbar Hossain (BNP) A.K.M. Bahauddin (Bahar)–AL	54,496 28,552
256 Comilla-9	a. The following unions of Comilla Sadar Thana: (1) Barpara, (2) Jorkaran (east), (3) Jorkaran (west), (4) Galiara, (5) Chouara and (6) Bijaypur. District: Comilla. b. The following unions of Laksam Thana: (1) Bagmara, (2) Bhuloin,	Monirul Haque Chy. (JP) Principal Abul Kalam Majumdar (AL)	42,746 34,612

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(3) Perul and		
	(4) Belghar.		
	District: Comilla.	.	
257 Comilla-10	a. Laksam Thana excluding	A.T.M. Alamgir (BNP)	
	the following unions:		36,658
	(1) Bagmara,	Khorshed Alam Suruj (AL)	33,709
	(2) Bhuloin,		
	(3) Perul and		
	(4) Belghar.		
	District: Comilla.		
258 Comilla-11	Langalkot Thana.	Dr. A.K.M. Qamaruzzaman	24,948
	District: Comilla.(BNP)	Md. Jainal Abedin (AL)	21,078
259 Comilla-12	Chouddagram Thana.	Kazi Jafar Ahmed (JP)	35,809
	District: Comilla.	Dr. Abdullah Md. Taher (JI)	25,418
260 Chandpur-1	Kachua Thana.	Mesbahuddin (AL)	25,732
	District: Chandpur.	Principal Abul Hasnat (BNP)	25,232
261 Chandpur-2	Matlab Thana excluding	Md. Nurul Huda (BNP)	
	the following unions:		41,301
	(1) Nayergaon (North),	Mofazzal Hossain Chy.	
	(2) Nayergaon (South),	(Maya) Bir Bikram (AL)	33,801
	(3) Narayanpur,		
	(4) Khadergaon,		
	(5) Matlab (North),		
	(6) Matlab (South),		
	(7) Upadi (North) and		
	(8) Upadi (South).		
	District: Chandpur.		
262 Chandpur-3	a. The following unions	Alam Khan (BNP)	38,162
	of Matlab Thana:	Md. Riasatulla (AL)	22,747
	(1) Nayergaon (North),		
	(2) Nayergaon (South),		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(3) Narayanpur,		
	(4) Khadergaon,		
	(5) Matlab (North),		
	(6) Matlab (South),		
	(7) Upadi (North) and		
	(8) Upadi (South).		
	b. The following unions of Chandpur Sadar Thana:		
	(1) Bishnupur,		
	(2) Ashikati,		
	(3) Rampur,		
	(4) Rajrajeswar,		
	(5) Kalyanpur and		
	(6) Shahmohammadpur.		
	District: Chandpur.		
263 Chandpur-4	a. Chandpur Sadar Thana excluding the following unions:	Md. Abdulla (BNP)	33,848
		Abdul Awal (AL)	22,527
	(1) Bishnupur,		
	(2) Ashikati,		
	(3) Rampur,		
	(4) Rajrajeswar,		
	(5) Kalyanpur,		
	(6) Shahmohammadpur and		
	b. Haimpur Thana.		
	District: Chandpur.		
264 Chandpur-5	a. Hajiganj Thana and	M.A. Matin (BNP)	35,944
	b. Shahrasti Thana.	M.A. Sattar (Ind)	34,682
	District: Chandpur.		
265 Chandpur-6	Faridganj Thana.	Alamgir Haidar Khan (BNP)	37,661
	District: Chandpur.	Zakaria Chy. (AL)	27,314
266 Feni-1	a. Parashuram Thana and	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP)	36,375
	b. Chhagalnaia Thana.	Md. Zakaria Bhuiyan (AL)	23,250
	District: Feni.		

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
267 Feni-2	a. Feni Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Farhadnagar, (2) Dhalia, (3) Lemua, (4) Chhanua, (5) Fazilpur and b. Daganbhuyan Thana District: Feni.	Jainal Abedin Hazari (AL) Sahid Uddin Ferdous (BNP)	44,000 37,045
268 Feni-3	a. Sonagazi and b. The following Unions of Feni Sadar Thana: (1) Farhadnagar, (2) Dhalia, (3) Lemua, (4) Chhanua and (5) Fazilpur. District: Feni.	Mahabubul Alam (BNP) A.B.M. Taleb Ali (AL)	40,406 34,467
269 Noakhali-1	Senbag Thana. District: Noakhali.	Jainul Abedin Faruq (BNP) Barrister Moudud Ahmed (JP)	21,418 19,508
270 Noakhali-2	Begumganj Thana . District: Noakhali.	Barkat Ullah (Vulu) (BNP) Prof. Md. Hanif (AL)	53,671 31,353
271 Noakhali-3	Chatkhil Thana. District: Noakhali.	Salahuddin Quamran (BNP) Nurul Islam, M.A. (CPB)	11,378 10,082
272 Noakhali-4	Noakhali Sadar Thana excluding the following unions: (1) Batoia, (2) Norottampur, (3) Sundalpur, (4) Ghoshbag,	Md. Shahjahan (BNP) Golam Mohiuddin Latu (AL)	33,339 29,261

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	(5) Chaprashihat, (6) Niazpur and (7) Ashwadia. District: Noakhali.		
273 Noakhali-5	a. The following unions of Noakhali Sadar Thana: (1) Batoya, (2) Norottampur, (3) Sundalpur, (4) Ghoshbag, (5) Chaprashihat, (6) Niazpur and (7) Ashwadia. b. Companyganj Thana. District: Noakhali.	Barrister Moudud Ahmed (JP) Obaidul Kader (AL)	31,448 27,917
274 Noakhali-6	Hatia Thana. District: Noakhali	Prof. Md. Wali Ullah (AL) Mohammad Ali (JP)	32,590 18,655
275 Laxmipur-1	Ramganj Thana. District: Laxmipur.	Ziaul Haque (BNP) Lutfar Rahman(JI)	24,727 11,248
276 Laxmipur-2	a. Raipur Thana and b. The following unions of Laxmipur Sadar Thana: (1) Charruhita, (2) Dalalbazar, (3) South Hamchhadi, (4) North Hamchhadi, (5) Basikpur, (6) Parvatinagar and (7) Shakchar. District: Laxmipur.	Mohammad Ulla (BNP) Principal M.A. Zabbar (JI)	38,599 30,097
277 Laxmipur-3	Laxmipur Sadar Thana excluding the following	Adv. Khairul Enam (BNP) Alhaj Md. Safiq Ulla (JI)	26,908 19,132

No. and name of constituencies	Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
	unions:		
	(1) Charruhita,		
	(2) Dalalbazar,		
	(3) South Hamchhadi,		
	(4) North Hamchhadi,		
	(5) Basikpur,		
	(6) Parvatinagar and		
	(7) Shakchar.		
	District: Laxmipur.		
278 Laxmipur-4	Ramgati Thana,	Abdur Rob Chy. (BNP)	25,884
	District: Laxmipur.	A.S.M. Abdur Rob (JSD-Rob)	25,631
279 Chittagong-1	Mirswarai Thana.	Md. Ali Jinnah (BNP)	.66,969
	District: Chittagong	Mosharab Hossain (AL)	48,030
280 Chittagong-2	Sitakunda Thana.	L.K. Siddiqui (BNP)	36,855
	District: Chittagong.	A.B.M. Abul Kashem (AL)	28,928
281 Chittagong-3	Sandip Thana.	Mustafizur Rahman (AL)	55,523
	District: Chittagong.	A.K.M. Rafiqulla Chy.(BNP)	22,805
282 Chittagong-4	Fatikchhari Thana.	Sayed Nojibul Bashar (AL)	51,679
	District: Chittagong.	Dr. Nurussafa (BNP)	45,894
283 Chittagong-5	Hathajari Thana (including Ward no. of City Corporation). District: Chittagong.	Sayed Ohidul Alam (BNP) Alhaj Md. Nazim Uddin (AL)	56,469 39,471
284 Chittagong-6	Raujan Thana.	Md. Salahuddin Kader Chy. (NDP)	48,646
	District: Chittagong.	Abdullah Al Harun (AL)	32,105
285 Chittagong-7	Rangunia Thana.	Md. Yusuf (CPB)	34,615
	District: Chittagong.	Gias Uddin Kader Chy. (NDP)	27,640
286 Chittagong-8	a. Doublemuring Thana	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP)	69,422

No. and name of constituencies		Area of the constituencies	1991 Elections: Winner/Runner-up	Votes Received
		in Chittagong City Corporation excluding Following Wards: (1) Ward No. 29 and (2) Ward No. 30 ,	Ishaq Mian M.P. (AL)	44,154
	b.	Bandar Thana,		
	c.	Pahartali Thana.		
		District: Chittagong.		

N.B. Amir Khosru (BNP) replaced Begum Khaleda Zia after by-election.

287	Chittagong-9	a.	The following Wards of Doublemuring Thana in Chittagong City Corporation: (1) Ward No. 29 and (2) Ward No. 30,	A. Al Noman (BNP) Md. A.B.M. Mohiuddin Chy.(AL)	49,818 48,245
		b.	Kotwali Thana,		
		c.	Ward No. 8 of Panchlaish Thana in Chittagong City Corporation.		
		d.	The following Wards of Chandgaon Thana in Chittagong City Corporation: (1) Ward No. 6 (2) Ward No. 17 (3) Ward No. 18 (4) Ward No. 19 District: Chittagong.		

288	Chittagong-10	a.	Panchlaish Thana in Chittagong City Corporation excluding Ward No. 8.	Sirajul Islam (BNP) Nurul Islam (AL)	51,134 46,757
		b.	Chandgaon Thana in Chittagong City Corporation excluding the following Wards: (1) Ward No. 6		

5. **Communist Party of Bangladesh**
   21/1 Purana Paltan, Dhaka

   President: Mr. Shahidullah Chowdhury
   General Secretary: Muzahidul Islam Selim (Tel: 416106)

   Office Tel: 238612

6. **National Awami Party (NAP-Muzaffar)**
   21/1 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market
   Dhanmondi, Dhaka

   President: Mr. Muzaffar Ahmed (407944)
   General Secretary: Advocate Nurul Alam

7. **Workers Party (WP)**
   31/F Topkhana Road, Dhaka

   President: Mr. Amal Sen
   General Secretary: Mr. Rashed Khan Menon (Tel: 831777)

   Tel: 245862

8. **Ganatantri Party**
   109 Siddique Bazar, Dhaka

   President:
   GS: Mohammad Afzal

   Tel: 239972, 245862

9. **Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Siraj)**
   35/36 Bangabandhu Avenue
   Dhaka

   President: Kazi Aref Ahmed
   GS: Hasanul Huq Inu (Tel: 245564, 802866)

   Office Tel: 239972

10. **National Democratic Party (NDP)**
    109 Siddique Bazar Road, Dhaka

Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL) which won 5 seats in the fifth national parliament subsequently joined the Awami League.

ANNEXURE–D

Maladies/Abuses observed in Election Management in India

The Election Commission (of India) has listed out 150 malpractices in Indian elections in an effort to curb them stage by stage. Many of the malpractices observed in the Indian elections take place in Bangladesh elections as well. The following list of malpractices in the Indian elections will provide practical tips to apprehend the malpractices in Bangladesh elections.

Preparation of Electoral Rolls

1. Inadequate publicity of rolls revision programme.
2. Voters' apathy at the time of registration.
3. Exclusion of working voters not found at home.
4. Apathy of political parties.
5. Partisan role of enumerators and supervisors.
6. Mushrooming of JJ Colonies on the eve of enumeration and elections.
7. Fictitious enumeration.
8. Inclusion of ineligible names.
9. Exclusion of eligible electors.
10. Large scale omission of localities
11. Foreign nationals
12. Minors as electors.
13. Non-resident electors.
14. Inclusion of dead electors.
15. Incorrect particulars of electors.
16. Duplicate registration.
17. Difficult accessibility of Competent Officers.
18. Non-publication of draft rolls in polling stations.
19. Non-availability of forms for claims and objections.
20. Unhelpful attitude of officers responsible for registration of electors.
21. Unreliable Citizenship documents.
22. Insistence on production of unnecessary documents.
23. Slipshod disposal of claims and objections.
24. Difficult accessibility of appellate officers.
25. Manipulative overlapping of PS and Ac areas.
26. Duplicate registration in disputed areas.
27. Faulty updating of last part of rolls.

Setting up of Polling Stations

28. Clubbing of weaker sections with others.

29. Location of PSs for weaker sections in areas inhabited by influential sections.

30. Location of polling stations at distance beyond prescription.

31. Natural barriers across polling areas.

32. Housing polling stations in private buildings.

33. Inconvenient buildings of PSs.

34. Too many polling stations in the same building.

35. Last minute changes in polling stations.

36. Proximity of PSs to political offices.

37. Temporary structures leading to vitiation.

Maladies before Election Announcement

38. Transfers of inconvenient ROs/DEOs

39. Transfers of middle level officials and posting of pliable officers on key positions.

40. Inauguration of new schemes, projects etc.

41. Deliberate delay in inauguration of completed projects to synchronise with elections.

Programming of Elections

42. Staggering due to shortage of police forces.

43. Phasing of poll in manageable states.

Nominations, Scrutiny and Withdrawals

44. Dummy candidates.

45. Prevention of nomination of weak candidates.

46. Bribery and horse-trading.

47. Hesitation of good persons to join the fray.

48. Caste/community based selection of candidates.

49. Nomination of party candidates on death bed with a view to have the election countermanded.

50. Nominations with forged signatures of proposers.

51. Multiple nomination from more than one constituency.

The Period of Electioneering

52. Ostentatious and wasteful election expenses. Expensive cut-outs.

53. Non-accounting of expenditure of political parties.

54. Misuse of personal security staff.

55. Intimidation of voters.

56. Intimidation of candidates.

57. Intimidation of political parties.

58. Assaults on offices of political parties.

59. Mobilisation of musclemen.

60. Disturbance of public meetings.

61. Disturbance of political processions.

62. Defacement of party posters, arches etc.

63. Unauthenticated posters.

64. Communal and cast based electioneering.

65. VIP visits on so-called official business.

66. Misuse of Govt. rest houses as election offices.

67. Processions through sensitive areas.

68. Indiscriminate use of loudspeakers.

69. Defacement of public and private property.

70. Misuse of electronic equipment and uncensored material.

71. Misuse of State and private aircrafts.

Day of Poll

72. Inducement to polling staff.

73. Forcible booth capturing.

74. Silent booth capturing.

75. Booth jamming.

76. Tasmanian dodge.

77. Immobilisation of police forces.

78. Immobilisation of Central forces.

79. Misuse of vehicles.

80. Transportation of voters.

81. Impersonation.

82. Misuse of media for electioneering.

83. Breach of peace to reduce turnout.

84. Misuse of law and order machinery.

85. Misuse of illicit arms and ammunition.

86. Misuse of licensed weapons.

87. Ministers as polling agents.

88   Faulty maintenance of POs diaries.

89. Faulty maintenance of ballot paper account.

Repoll and Adjourned Poll

90. Biased recommendations for repoll.
91. Reuse of missing ballot papers for repoll.
92. Diluted law and order arrangement for repoll.
93. Absence of Observers to oversee repoll.

Counting of Votes

94. Wrongful/biased rejection of votes.
95. Wrongful/biased acceptance of votes. Bundling with incorrect numerical totals.
96. Manipulated entries in the result sheet.
97. Last minute appointment of counting agents.
98. Ministers as counting agents.
99. Misuse of agents of dummy candidates.
100. Crowding of counting centres.
101. Incomplete disposal of representations.
102. Violation of Section 66 of RP Act.

Election Petitions

103. Delayed disposal.
104. No remedy for malpractices of the defeated.
105. Tyranny of procedure.
106. Non-inclusion of ECI as a party.

Storage and Preservation of Polled Materials and Records

107. Destruction of essential records.
108. Non-scientific storage of polled material.

Post-Election Maladies

109. Victimisation of forthright officers.
110. Non-prosecution of cases of electoral offences.
111. Past election reprisals against voter and areas.

Manipulative Tactics of the Ruling Party

112. Contaminated Roll Revision staff.
113. Elimination of non-supportive voters.
114. Non-judicious location of the polling stations.
115. Transfer of inconvenient ROs.
116. Misuse of police officers.
117. Grant of parole to favourite musclemen.
118. Detention of known supporters of opponents.
119. Immobilisation of the central police forces.
120. Misuse of official vehicles in electioneering.
121. Misuse of officials in electioneering.

122. Committed officials as polling personnel.
123. Announcements of concessions to govt. servants.
124. Misuse of official meetings in the constituency.
125. Misuse of official rest house for electioneering.
126. Grants out of discretionary funds.
127. Misuse of enforcement machinery.
128. Immobilisation of Commission's Observers.
129. Misuse of state owned media.
130. Misuse of the infrastructure of public sector.
131. Visits and public meetings of VIPs and VVIPs.
132. Misuse of personal-official staff of Ministers.
133. Publicity of achievements of ruling party.
134. Dodge of bye-elections due to law and order.
135. Misuse of President's Rule.

Miscellaneous

136. Inadequate training of polling staff.
137. Lack of knowledge of election rules among contestants and supporters.

Structural Weaknesses in Election Management

138. Appointment of the CEC by the President on the recommendation of the political executive.
139. Appointment the other Election Commissioners by the President on the advice of the political executive without the constitutional protection about removability.
140. Appointment of the Deputy Election Commissioners against cadre posts out of the serving bureaucrats.
141. Absence of any independent secretariat of the Commission with independent service rules.
142. Commission's officials subjected to UPSC, CAT, Vigilance Commission and such like institutions governing the Servants of the Union.
143. Voted budget of the Commission.
144. Skeleton manpower with the Election Commission.
145. Divided loyalty of the Chief Electoral Officer.
146. Divided loyalty of the Returning Officer.
147. Divided loyalty of the law and order machinery.
148. Privileged position of the party in power.
149. Fragile law to control the role of money power.
150. Fragile law to punish the electoral offenders.

Source: Kutty, Govindan K. 1994. *Seshan, An Intimate Story*. Delhi.

HANDBOOK ON ELECTION REPORTING

▼

The Handbook on Election Reporting tries to make your election reporting/monitoring easier and professional. The book compiles practical guidelines and advice from senior journalists and researchers on elections. Essential background on national elections covers a period from 1937 to date. This collection of articles includes:

Important Sources of Election Reporting
Election Coverage: Stage by Stage
Election Commission Informs
Reporting from Remote Areas
Covering Elections for the International Media
Things Deserving More Coverage
Voters vs Candidates
Election Features
Rapport for Reporting
Manifesting Manifestos
Meet the Press
General Elections: British and Pakistan Periods
General Elections in Bangladesh
Fifth Parliament at a Glance
Essential Election Laws and Their Loopholes
A Penny for People's Thoughts
Election Monitoring in Bangladesh
Radio Bangladesh and BTV: Elections on Air
The Election Researchers

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