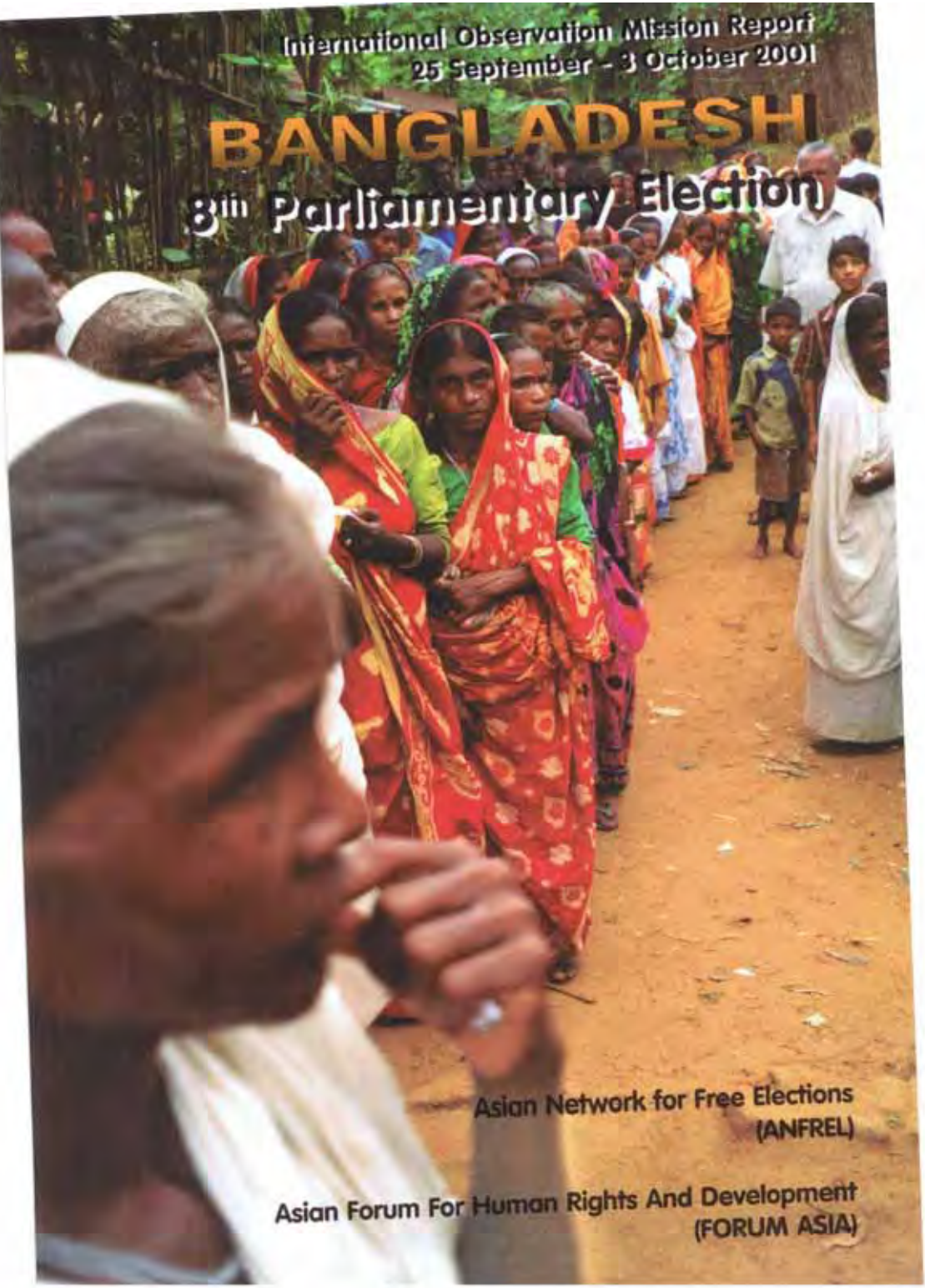
International Observation Mission Report
25 September - 3 October 2001

BANGLADESH

8th Parliamentary Election



Asian Network for Free Elections
(ANFREL)

Asian Forum For Human Rights And Development
(FORUM ASIA)

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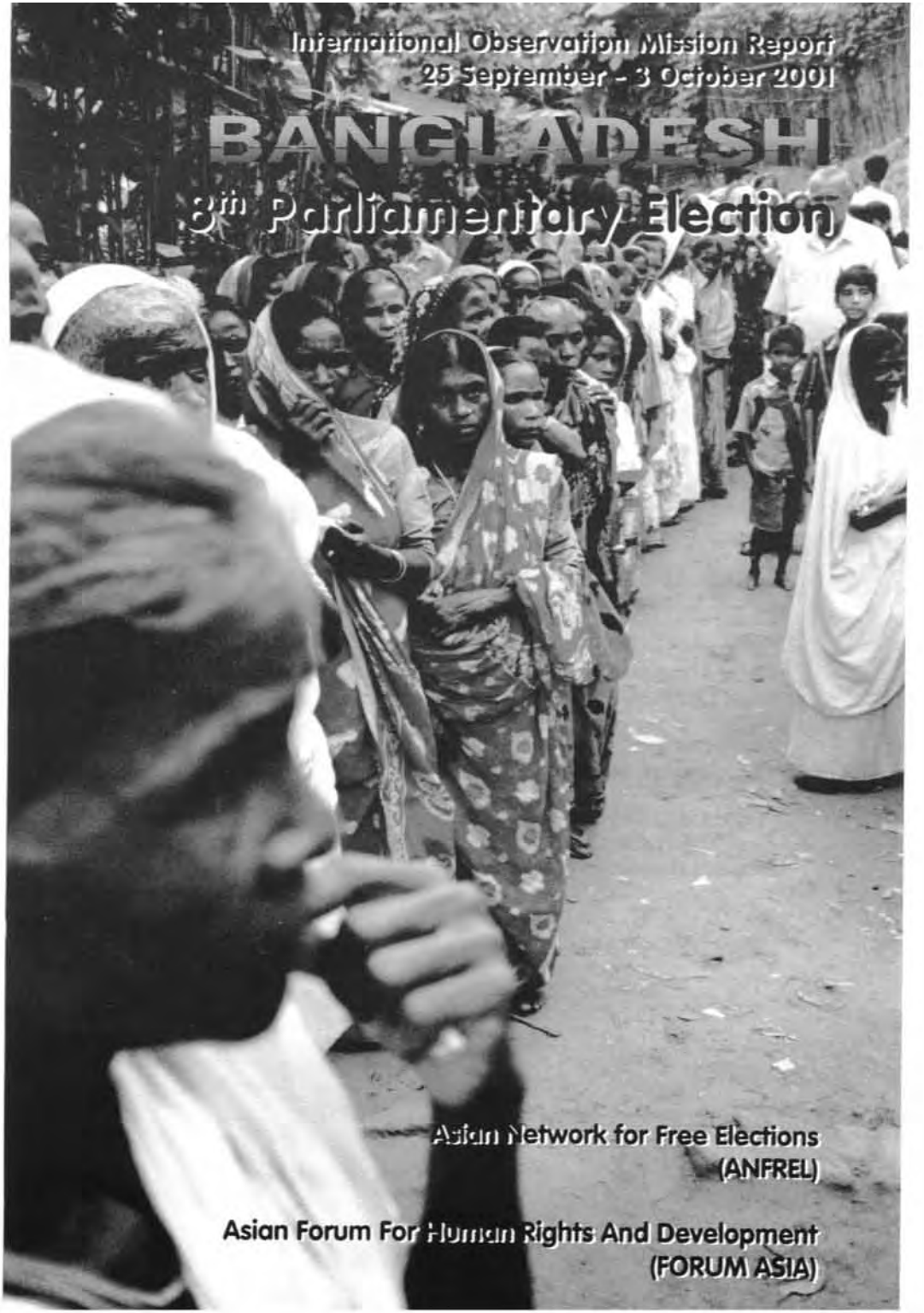

Asian Network for Free Elections
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Asian Forum For Human Rights And Development
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109 Suthisarnwinichai Road
Samsennok, Huaykwang
Bangkok 10320, Thailand

Tel : (66 2) 276 9846-7
Fax : (66 2) 693 4939, 276 2183
E-mail : anfrel@forumasia.org

Written by
Sunai Phasuk

Edited by
Kang Iong Nian
Nisa Chamsuwan

Layouted by
Thippawan Maidee

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Cover photo by:
Somsri Hananuntasuk

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MAP

Source: The Goverment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, http://www.bangladeshbov.org/, accessed on April 12,2002

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March 2002

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Report of

Election Observation Mission
Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

8th Parliamentary Election in Bangladesh
25 September - 3 October 2001

INTRODUCTION

After the partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947, a general election was held in the then East Pakistan in 1954. In that election out of a total of 237 seats Muslim League won only 10 seats and 223 seats were captured by the United Front. This encouraged the public opinion toward the independent movement of a separate state called Bangladesh. In the election of 1970, out of 300 seats the Awami League won 167. As a majority party, it tried to form a Government. But the West Pakistani Military and political leaders refused to hand over the power to the majority party. As a result the people of East Pakistan had to fight for self-determination and East Pakistan became independent as Bangladesh in 1971.

Since 1971, presidential and parliamentary system have been exercised in different times. Military intervention and taking of power had been happened twice. Bangladesh started its journey toward independence and democracy with the Parliamentary System of Government, then switched over to the Presidential System and in 1991 reverted to the Parliamentary system. The Bangladesh Awami League (AL) was in power for two terms: during 1972-1975 and 1996-2001. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was in power from 1975-1981 (including the period when the country was under the Martial Law), 1991-1996. The Jatiya Party headed the Government once in 1982-1990 (during this period, the Martial Law had been imposed from 1982-1986).

Article 11 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provides that the country is "a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respects for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured."

In conventional wisdom, the term "election"signifies the act or process of choosing for an office, position or membership by voting. Election is a political process in which the people choose their representatives for their political institutions. Election dramatizes the political life of the people by bringing politics to people's reach and provides a mechanism for the direct involvement of the people in political affairs. But in reality, the holding of elections may resurrect the parliamentary system but good governance, efficiency transparency and accountability have yet to be fully established in Bangladesh.

Due to the confrontational nature of politics and the lack of democratic political will in Bangladesh, the Parliament has not functioned to its full potential. Sessions are often abandoned because of opposition boycotts. Thugs are commonly deployed by politicians to achieve their goals. And because electoral contest has increasingly become a competitive investment, political parties and candidates have to maximize their power and authority by all means when they are elected into office so as to accumulate financial resources for the next polls. Political party funding procedures are far from scrupulous and corrupt networks between politics and local businesses are

entrenched. Politicians have increasingly treated democratic connection between elections and public accountability with little respect. It is in this context that a vicious cycle of elections, money politics with corruption and power abuse have been created and reinforced.

Voting behaviors in Bangladesh are determined by different factors such as political entity, clan, leadership personality, policy platforms and religion commitment of contesting candidates and political parties. Money and violence also play a vital role. A large number of the population of Bangladesh is illiterate and their knowledge of election laws and regulations is limited. The people usually know how to vote, where to vote, whom to vote but do not know why they must exercise their voting rights. Therefore, the "why to vote" question is answered only as "to elect somebody" but the functions as well as professional and ethical credentials of members of the Parliament to be elected are often unknown to the majority of voters. In this regard, candidates and political parties have done very little to educate voters so as to enable them to cast "quality votes" at the polls. Most of the existing campaigns to build capacity of Bangladesh's voters and raise their awareness against money politics and the use of violence (known in Bangladesh's political terminology as "terrorism") have been conducted by non-governmental organizations with support from external counterparts.

When the 8th Parliamentary Election was announced, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat (UNEAS) and other international organizations took unprecedented effort to make this election a critical benchmark in Bangladesh's strides toward establishing a pluralistic government conducive to the protection of human rights and the formation of a democratic rule capable of delivering efficiency, accountability, transparency, fairness and morality in the conduct of governance. International and national organizations played an important role in facilitating and monitoring this all-important election.

Nevertheless, past experiences highlighted the need for an independent and objective monitoring mechanism to observe the political climate, promote a free and fair election environment, document incidents of intimidation, harassment and violence and report them to the relevant authorities and the public both in Bangladesh and in the international community.

Since election is the exercise of people's democratic rights, ANFREL saw that existing state institutions have proven inadequate for the task of upholding the integrity and fairness of electoral process. Additional support from civil society was needed to protect the fundamental rights of voters, party members and candidates and to generally ensure a political environment conducive to free and fair elections.

For years, ANFREL has been active in contributing various efforts to the promotion of democracy in Bangladesh. In response to profound cultural and structural obstacles to democratization in Bangladesh, ANFREL has been well aware of and seeks to support people's initiatives regarding the consolidation of democracy and good governance that will allow for a more meaningful participation and representation within and outside the context of electoral politics in Bangladesh. ANFREL has worked closely with ODHIKAR to build organizational and operational capacity of ODHIKAR as well as to raise awareness of civil society organizations and local grassroots groups in general about election administration, election monitoring, voting behavior and democratic good governance in general.

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Key Players in Bangladesh 2001 General Election

1. BJD and allies	The BJD allies, formed for the purpose of year 2001 General Election, are consisted of:- a. Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal (Bangladesh Nationalist Party, **BNP**, conservative) b. Jamaat-E-Islami (Islam Conference Bangladesh, **JIB**, islamist) c. Jatiya Dal (Naziur)(National Party (Naziur), **JD-N**) d. Islami Oikya Jote (Islamic Unity Front, **IOJ**, islamist)
a. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), conservative	**Founder: Maj. Gen. Zia ur-Rahman** **Year: 1978** **Current leader: Khaleda Zia, the widow of Zia Ur-Rahman** **Maj. Gen. Zia ur-Rahman** gradually emerged as Bangladesh ruler, after the assassination of **Mujibur Rahman**, in a military coup in 1975. Assuming the presidency in 1977, he was elected to the post the following year. In 1978, he founded the **BNP**.Martial law was ended (1979) and a measure of political stability was brought to the country after the upheavals of 1975-77. He was assassinated during an attempted coup in May 1981. After Zia ur's assassination, he was succeeded by Vice President Abdus Sattar, who won election to the presidency in his own right in November. However, **Lt. Gen. Hussain Mohammad Ershad**, assumed the presidency in 1982 after a bloodless coup. In an effort to gain legitimacy, Ershad later resigned his military office and won a disputed presidential election. He was forced to resign in Dec., 1990, amid charges of corruption, for which he was later jailed (2000). Elections held in Feb., 1991, brought the Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) to power, and **Khaleda Zia**, the widow of Zia ur-Rahman, became prime minister. In 1994, nearly all opposition members of parliament denounced Zia's government as corrupt and resigned their seats. After a series of general strikes called by the opposition, parliament was dissolved in Nov., 1995; major opposition parties also boycotted the ensuing Feb., 1996, elections. Zia was returned to power, but the opposition mounted protests; In March 1996 Zia bowed to opposition demands and handed power to a neutral caretaker government. New elections held in June, 1996, resulted in a victory for the opposition Awami League. In the 2001 general election, BNP coalition won the election with landslide victory, and Khaleda Zia again became prime minister.

b. Jamaat-E-Islami-Bangladesh, islamist	**Founder: Sayyed Abul 'Ala Maududi** **Year: 1949** **Current Leader: Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami** Jamaat-E-Islami was established by a group of Islamic activists headed by Sayyed Abul 'Ala Maududi (d.1979) during the time of British India in 1941. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, this movement worked as an independent organisation in India as well as in Pakistan. Since 1971, when Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan) seceded from Pakistan and became an independent state of its own, this movement was called Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh. The Jama'ate Islami is a scientific and revolutionary movement. But it does not want to bring about a revolution through violence and chaos. Abul 'Ala was born on Rajab 3, 1321 AH (September 25, 1903 AD) in Aurangabad, a well-known town in the former princely state of Hyderabad (Deccan), presently Andhra Pradesh, India. Born in a respectable family, his ancestry on the paternal side is traced back to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be on him). Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami is a political arena of Bangladesh. He is held in high esteem by the people of the country as a prominent Alim, Islamic thinker, ideal organizer, orator par excellence, research scholar, parliamentarian, writer and uncompromising and struggling leader in the cause of Allah. He is nominated as ameer of Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh. The aims and objects of the Jama'ate is nothing but to achieve the pleasure of Allah and the success in the life hereafter through all-round struggle to establish Islamic order revealed by Allah and exemplified by His last Prophet, so that mankind may enjoy peace, prosperity, security and progress. The Jama'ate Islami appeals to mankind in general and to the Muslims in particular to respond to a 3-Point Call derived from the clarion call of all Messengers of Allah as mentioned in the Holy Quran.

2. Awami League (AL) (Bangladesh People's League, social-democratic)	**Founder: Mujibur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh nation** **Year: 1949** **Current leader: Hasina Wazed, the daughter of Mujibur Rahman** Bangladesh Awami League is the oldest political party in the country which actively taking part in the political activities of Bangladesh. **AL** was founded in 1949 as an opposition party in Pakistan and had a moderately socialist ideology. The Awami [people's] League, with cofounder **Mujibur Rahman** as its leader from 1953, called in 1966 for a federation of East and West Pakistan, an arrangement that would have given much greater autonomy to East Pakistan. The league's candidates won a majority in the 1970 elections, but the central government in West Pakistan banned the league after war between East and West Pakistan erupted in early 1971. When Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) won its independence in late 1971, the league was the nation's dominant political force. In 1981 and again in 1991 the league was defeated in a popular election by the Bangladesh National party (BNP), but the league won the 1996 parliamentary elections, and party leader **Hasina Wazed**, the daughter of Mujibur Rahman, became prime minister. As Hasina struggled with the country's ongoing economic problems, a series of opposition-led strikes, beginning in 1998, once again paralyzed the country. In July 2001, a caretaker government headed by Latifur Rahman was appointed in advance of parliamentary elections in October. The league lost the 2001 elections in a landslide to the BNP.
3. Jatiya Dal (Ershad) (National Party (Ershad), authoritarian, **JD-E**) incl. Islami Jatiya Oikya Front (Islamic National Unity Front)	**Founder: Lt. Gen. Hussain Mohammad Ershad** **Year: 1982** **Current leader: Hussain Mohammad Ershad** **Lt. Gen. Hussain Mohammad Ershad**, assumed the Bangladesh presidency after a bloodless coup in 1982 replacing Ziur Rahman's successor. Ershad ruled Bangladesh as chief martial law administrator until 1983, when he proclaimed himself president. In an effort to gain legitimacy, Ershad later resigned his military office to found the **Jatiya party** and won a disputed presidential election in 1986.

	Agitation against Ershad's rule by opposition parties intensified and turned violent after the elections, and in November 1987 he declared a state of emergency. In December he dissolved parliament and called for new elections. Opposition parties boycotted the March 1988 elections, demanding nothing less than Ershad's resignation. Intense and prolonged opposition maneuvers involving opposition parties, student groups, and an indifferent army forced him to resign in December 1990. He was placed under house arrest and later convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of corruption and illegal-weapons possession. The Vision of Bangladesh Jatiya Party is to build a Bangladesh free of Poverty following the path of rural development. They believe that villages are the key-factors for the Bangladeshi development and the development of Bangladesh means the development of the rural areas. According to their Chairman, "If 68,000 villages of Bangladesh will keep alive, then Bangladesh will keep alive."

Sources:
The Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2001 database;
The Encyclopedia.com, http://www.encyclopedia.com;
http://www.bdnirbachon.com/political_parties/jamaat.htm;
http://electionworld.org

INFORMATION ON ELECTORAL SYSTEM

1. Contesting Political Parties in the 8th Parliamentary Election

Name of Political Party	Symbol	Contesting Candidates	Comments
Bangladesh Awami League	Boat	300	
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Sheaf of Paddy	269	Including Jatiya Party (Naziur) and Islami Oikya Jote
Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh	Scales	31	
Jatiya Party (Ershad)	Plough	281	Including Islami Jatiya Oikya Front
Jatiya Party (Manju)	Bycycle	140	
Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal(JSD)	Mashal	76	
Bangladesher Communist Party	Sickle	64	
Krisak Sramik Janata League	Gamcha	39	
Bangladesh Workers Party	Hammer	32	
Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Khalekuzzaman)	Lock	37	
Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon	Banyan Tree	30	
Other Political Parties		152	
Independent Candidates		484	

2. Qualifications of Voters and Candidates

Elections of members of the Parliament will be on the basis of adult franchise. Every citizen of the country has only one voting power. The Constitution states in Article 121 that there will be one electoral roll for each constituency for the

purpose of elections of members of the Parliament. No special electoral roll will be prepared so as to classify electors according to religion, race, caste or sex. Under this stipulation, women, the youth, the disable and the elderly are not excluded from their voting rights.

Article 122 (1) of the Constitution specifically states that a person will be entitled to be enrolled on the electoral roll for a constituency delimited for the purpose of the Parliamentary Election if he/she is a citizen of Bangladesh; is not less than 18 years of age; does not stand declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind; and is deemed by law to be a resident of that constituency.

Article 123 (3) of the Constitution states that an election of members of the Parliament will be held in the following cases: (a) the dissolution of the Parliament by the reason of the expiration of its term within the period of 90 days preceding the dissolution; and (b) the dissolution of the Parliament other reasons within the period of 90 days after the dissolution. The Election Commission also holds an election to fill the seat of a member of the Parliament that becomes vacant within the period of 90 days of the occurrence of the vacancy.

The election of members of the Parliament is held within 90 days after the Parliament is dissolved, whether by reason of the expiration of its term or other reasons as stipulated in Article 123 (3) of the Constitution. A person is qualified to be elected as a member of the Parliament if he/she is a citizen of Bangladesh and has attained the age of 25 years.

A person is disqualified for the election as, or for being, a member of Parliament if he/she (a) is declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind; is an un-discharged insolvent; (c) acquires the citizenship of a foreign country; (d) 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/her release; (e) holds any office of profit in the service of the government or of a statutory public authority other than an office declared by law not to disqualify its holders; (f) is disqualified for the election by any law; (g) by himself/herself or by any person or body of persons in trust for him/her or for his/her benefit or on his/her account or as a member of a Hindu undivided family; (h)

has any shares or interests in a contract, not being a contract between a co-operative society and the government for the supply of goods to, or for the execution of any contract or the performance of any services undertaken by the government; and (i) is a bank defaulter.

3. Election Administration Organizations

The formation and composition of the Election Commission is determined by Article 118 of the Constitution as follows:

- The Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (if any) as the President may from time to time direct. The presidential appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (if any) will subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf.

- When the Election Commission consists of more than one person, the Chief Election Commissioner will act as the chairman.

- Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the term of office of an Election Commissioner is five years from the date on which he/she enters the office. A person who has held office as the Chief Election Commissioner is not eligible for appointment in the service of the government while any other Election Commissioners can, on ceasing to hold the office, be eligible for appointment as the Chief Election Commissioner but are not be otherwise eligible for appointment in the service of the government.

- The Election Commission is independent in the exercise of its functions and subjects only to the Constitution and any other related law.

- Subject to the provisions of any laws made by the Parliament, the conditions of service of Election Commissioners are such as the President may determine, provided that an Election Commissioner will not be

removed from the office except in like manner and on the like ground as a judge of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

- An Election Commissioner may resign from the office by writing under his/her hand address to the President.

The fundamental duty of the Election Commission is to hold elections freely, justly, neutrally and independently. Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the Election Commission will regulate its own procedures regarding the holding of Presidential Elections and Parliamentary Elections as well as the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of elections of members of the Parliament (the latest delimitation of constituencies have been made by a Gazette Notification dated 30 May 1995 under Section 6 (4) of the Delimitation of Constituencies Ordinance 1976) and the preparation of the electoral rolls for elections of the President and elections of members of the Parliament. All executive authorities of the government must assist the Election Commission in the performance of functions which the Election Commission cannot functions due to inevitable situations. The Election Commission also has the power to require any persons or authorities to perform functions or render assistance for the purpose of elections.

Picture 1: A Sample of voter slip issued by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL) which contained the photo of the candidate and party logo on it.

The Election Commission maintains close contact and relations with all the political parties. On matters of election schedule, election process and overall arrangement for elections, dialogue is initiated with all political parties. Discussions on issues relating to voter registration, preparation and updating of electoral rolls and related matters are also conducted regularly with all political parties.

The Election Commission carries on briefing of the media on regular basis so that people are informed of all developments. Problems and complaints highlighted in the media are attended to promptly by the Election Commission on priority basis.

The Election Commission has a full-fledged Secretariat to render all assistance to execute its decisions and orders. The Election Commission Secretariat is headed by a Secretary to the government.

The Election Commission Secretariat provides assistance to the Election Commission for: (a) the preparation of electoral rolls for use in all national and local bodies elections; (b) the delimitation of territorial constituencies for the purposes of elections of members of the Parliament; (c) the conduct of referendum and elections (including by elections and reelections) of the President and members of the Parliament, members of Paurashavas (Municipal Committees), City Corporations, Union Parishads (Union Councils) and Hill Districts Councils; (d) the reservation and allocation of symbols to political parties and candidates; (e) the supervision of polling arrangements throughout the country on the eve of each election and appointment of polling personnel, namely Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers and Polling Officers; (f) the printing and supply of ballot papers to all polling centers located all over the country; (g) the procurement of election materials including ingredients for the manufacture of indelible ink and their distribution amongst the polling centers; (h) the procurement, supply, storage and maintenance of ballot boxes throughout the country; (i) the setting up of elaborate machinery throughout the country for collection and dissemination of result of elections; (j) the consolidation of all election results and their formal publication in the official gazette, as required by law; (k) the constitution of tribunal for the disposal of election petitions and performance of such other

functions in this regard as may be prescribed by any other law; (l) the framing and publicity pertaining to the elections and their implementation; (m) the collection and compilation of election data for research, reference and records; (n) the preparation and publication of comprehensive reports of all types of elections; and (o) the regulation and control of officers and staff of the Election Commission Secretariat and its field establishment.

Picture 2 : Voter slip issued by Awami League (AL). The Bangladesh government does not issue Identity Card to its citizen. In this 8th Parliamentary Election, decision was made by the Election Commission (EC) not to issue the voter ID as well. The task of verifying the voter validity was then entrusted to the local polling station officials; political parties agent whom the EC claimed of competence to identified their own local people. Under such vacuum, contesting political parties in certain intensified constituencies had came up with their own voter card for the voter as another form of campaigning material.

There are five Deputy Election Commissioners posted at five administrative Divisional Headquarters (an arrangement for the posting of a Deputy Election Commissioner at the newly created Sylhet Division is in the process). Functions of the Divisional Offices are to maintain liaison between the Election

Commission Secretariat and the subordinate field level offices and to co-ordinate the work relating to conduct of all types of elections and registration of voters and preparation of electoral rolls including day to day amendment and correction in the list of electoral rolls and other matters as and when entrusted by the Election Commission.

There are 83 Election Offices in the 64 District Headquarters headed by District Election Officer. District Election Officers carry out all work relating to registration of voters, printing of voters' list, management of national and local level elections, training of polling personnel and all logistical arrangements for elections. As an officer of the Election Commission, District Election Officers render all possible assistance to the Returning Officer and polling personnel with forms, packets, manuals, instructions and supply of ballot boxes, electoral rolls, ballot papers and maintain all accounts for expenses incurred for different elections.

At the lowest tier of the field organization of the Election Commission, there are Thana Election Officers in all thanas. The main functions of Thana Election Officers are to assist divisional/district offices in the discharge of functions relating to elections.

For all national and local level elections, Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers. Returning officers are appointed from among government officials by the Election Commission or by authorized officers of the Commission for conducting specified election.

Within the constituency, Polling Centers(each generally having five polling booths) are organized in such a way that about 400 voters can cast their votes at a booth between 8 am. and 4 pm. on the polling day. Each polling center is headed by a Presiding Officer and each booth by an Assistant Presiding Officer. Each Assistant Polling Officer is assisted by two Polling Officers. All these officials are drawn from government and non-governmental organizations, taking into account their experience, ability and integrity.

4. Caretaker Government

With the objective of ensuring free, fair and impartial general elections of members of the Parliament, the 13th Amendment Act 1996 of the Constitution was made on 28 March 1996 to provide for the non-party Caretaker Government collectively responsible to the President.

The Caretaker Government is operative from the date on which the Chief Adviser enters upon office after the Parliament is dissolved or stands dissolved by reason of expiration of its term until the date on which a new Prime Minister enters upon office after the elections of members of the Parliament. The executive power during this period, subject to the provisions of Article 58D (1) of the Constitution, vests in the Chief Adviser.

The Caretaker Government consists of the Chief Adviser at its head and not more than 10 other Advisers to be appointed by the President. The Chief Adviser is required to be appointed, in the manner stipulated in Article 58C of the Constitution, from among the two last retired Chief Justices or from the two last retired judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court or from eminent citizens qualified to be an Adviser after consultation with major political parties. An Adviser is required to be a person qualified for election as an member of the Parliament, not to be a member of any political parties or of any organization associated with any political parties, not be a candidate for the ensuing Parliamentary Election and not over seventy two years of age.

The primary responsibility of the Caretaker Government is to render to the Election Commission all possible aid and assistances that may be required for holding elections of members of the Parliament peacefully, fairly and impartially. The concept of having the Caretaker Government is a constitutional device to enable the holding of general parliamentary elections in a fair and impartial manner, free from any political party influences on the government machinery

5. Polling and Vote Count Process

5.1 Before the Polls

- The Returning Officer provides each Presiding Officer with necessary ballot boxes and materials as approved by the Commission. Not more than one ballot box is used at a time for the purpose of the polls at any polling booth.

5.2 During Polling Hours

- The polling time is generally 8 am.-4 pm. No person is allowed entry into the polling center after 4 pm.

- At least half an hour before the time fixed for the commencement of the polls, the Presiding Officer is required to ensure that every ballot box to be used is empty. The empty ballot box must be shown to the contesting candidates and their election agents and polling agents present at the polling booth. The Presiding Officer closes and seals the ballot box and places the ballot box so as to be conveniently accessible to voters and visible to every person present in the polling booth.

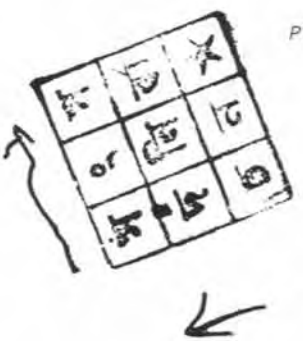
- The Presiding Officer regulates the number of electors to be admitted to the polling center at a time and excludes from the polling center all other persons except those connected with the polls. The Presiding Officer is responsible for keeping order at the polling center so that an elector can exercise his free will to cast his vote at the polling center. Every voter marks his/her ballot paper in secret before the same is folded and inserted in the ballot box by himself/herself.

- Where the voter presents himself/herself at the polling center to vote, the Presiding Officer will verify voter's identity before giving the voter a personal mark made with indelible ink on his/her thumb or any other finger of either hand, placing a mark on the electoral roll against the number and name of the voter to indicate that a ballot paper has been issued to him/her and recording the voter's number and procuring signature

of the voter on the counter foils of electoral roll and ballot paper respectively. After that, the Presiding Officer will issue to the voter a ballot paper.

Picture 3 : Bangladesh electoral system was designed it a way that allows its voter to mark on the ballot paper with a special design ballot stamp instead of marking it with pen.

- The voter, upon receiving a ballot paper, will forth with proceed to the place reserved for marking the ballot paper and put the prescribed mark on the ballot paper at any place within the space containing the name and symbol of the contesting candidate for whom he/she wishes to vote. After he/she has marked the ballot paper, the voter will fold the ballot paper and insert it in the ballot box. The voter has to do the whole procedures at the quickest speed.



Picture 4: Sample of enlarged stamp mark on the ballot paper

- If a person representing himself/herself to be a voter applies for a ballot paper when another person has already represented himself/herself to be that voter and has voted under the name of that voter. He/she will be entitled to receive a ballot paper called a tendered ballot paper. The Presiding Officer maintains separate accounts of tendered and challenged votes and also spoilt ballot papers.

5.3 Vote Count

- Immediately after the close of the polls with the casting of vote by the last voter of the day, the Presiding Officer (in the presence of contesting candidates, election agents and polling agents) proceeds with the count of votes.

- The Presiding Officer gives contesting candidates, election agents and polling agents reasonable facility of observing the count and gives them information with respect thereto as can be given consistent with the orderly conduct of the count and the discharge of his/her duties in connection therewith.

- No person other than the Presiding Officer, the Polling Officer, any other person on duty in connection with the polls, contesting candidates and their election agents and polling agents are to be present at the count. However, authorized observers are allowed by the Election Commission to observe the count as a special dispensation. The Presiding Officer will open the used ballot box or ballot boxes and count the entire lot of ballot papers in presence of these persons.

- The valid ballot papers cast in favor of each contesting candidate are preserved in separate packets. The Presiding Officer, immediately after the count, prepares a statement of the count and if so requested by any candidate or election agent or polling agent present, gives him a certified copy of the statement of the count and the ballot paper account.

- The Presiding Officer puts in good order all records of the poll and sends them to the Returning officer immediately.

- The Returning Officer is required to give the contesting candidates and their election agents a notice in writing of the day, time and place for the consolidation of the result and (in the presence of the contesting candidates and election agents) consolidate in the prescribed manner the result of the count furnished by the Presiding Officer, including the postal ballots received by him/her before the time.

- When, after consolidation of the result or the count, it is found that there is equality of votes between two or more contesting candidates and the addition of one vote for one such candidate will entitle him/her to be declared elected, the Returning Officer will forth with draw a lot in respect of such candidates and the candidate on whom the lot falls will be deemed to have received the highest number of votes entitling him/her to be declared elected. The lot will be drawn in the presence of the contesting candidates and their election agents.

- The Returning Officer will recount the valid ballot papers in respect of any polling center if the count by the Presiding Officer is challenged in writing by a contesting candidate or his/her election agent and the Returning Officer is satisfied about the reasonableness of the challenge or he/she is directed by the Election Commission.

6. Code of Conduct for Contesting Candidates and Political Parties

To ensure free and fair election and to avoid malpractice and manipulation of any kind in electoral process, the Election Commission has, under article 92B of the Representation of the People Order 1972, formulated the Code of Conduct for the contesting candidates and political parties. The salient features of the Code of Conduct are as follows:

- Following the announcement of the election schedule until the day of polling, no candidate or any person on his /her behalf will give any subscription or donation or make promise for giving such subscription or donation to any institution of their concerned constituency or to any other institution or will commit to undertake any development project within the concerned constituency either openly or in secret.

- All political parties and candidates will be given equal rights for using government rest house and circuit house on the basis of the application first made and in accordance with the existing rules. But the government officers engaged in the conduct of the election will get preference to use Government bungalows, rest houses and circuit houses.

- All political parties and candidates will be given equal rights with respect to election campaign. Meetings, processions and election campaigns of the opponent will not be disrupted.

- Ban on use of any thoroughfare creating hindrances to the movement of the public; use of government media, government officers, employees vehicles or other state facilities; pasting of posters, leaflets or handbills over those of rival candidates; setting up camps on any road or places meant for use of the public; use of government rest houses, circuit house as a place of election campaign; use of printed paper imported from outside the country and use of multi-colored posters; use of number of microphones at a time; damage of land, building, movable or immovable properties of any citizen; wall writings; use of motor cycle or any other mechanical transport or any other mechanical transport; carrying of fire arms or explosives within the premises of a polling center; illegal interference of government officers or local influential persons in the election process; procession of buses, trucks or any other vehicle or torch procession; any bitter and provocative statement and any such statement that may hurt the sentiments of the followers of any religion; crossing of limits of election expenses; influences of money, arms, muscle power or local influence.

Violation of any provision of the above rules will be considered as pre-poll irregularities (pre-poll period means the period commencing on the announcement of the election schedule and ending on the declaration of election result). The Electoral Enquiry Committee will, on the basis of information received or complaints made to it or on its own initiative, inquire into any pre-poll irregularities. It will also inquire into any matters that may involve intimidation, obstruction, coercion or the publication of false information intended to or actually resulting in the obstruction of frustration of the preparation for or the conduct of free and fair elections.

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FINDINGS OF ANFREL'S ELECTION OBSERVATION

Based in Bangkok, ANFREL is the biggest regional network of election monitoring, democracy advocacy and human rights organizations. ANFREL's members include 21 regional and national civil society organizations from 11 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

ANFREL has supported a number of countries in the efforts to consolidate democracy via electoral process. In this regard, ANFREL's objectives are: 1) to minimize election irregularities and election-related human rights violations; 2) to provide reliable information and analysis on issues related to the commune election in particular and prospects for democratic development in general; and 3) to enhance and sustain the capacity of people's organizations to ensure an environment conducive for the conduct of free and fair elections as well as for the realization of people's aspiration for full democracy.

For four years, ANFREL has been active in representing international efforts to promote and support democratization via electoral process. ANFREL's election observers were deployed to ensure the integrity, credibility and transparency of electoral process in Cambodia, East Timor, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand.

In collaboration with the UNEAS, ANFREL sent international observers to witness and monitor the General Election in Bangladesh on 1 October 2001. During the period between 25 September and 3 October 2001, ANFREL deployed an observation mission comprising of a strong team of 27 international observers from 17 countries.

This mission was in support ODHIKAR, ANFREL's member and a leading national human rights and democracy advocate organization in Bangladesh. Extensive cooperation

between ANFREL's experienced international observers and prominent domestic monitoring organizations was proven to be effective in increasing a chance to deter and detect frauds, irregularity and violence. The presence of ANFREL's international observers also helped to uphold the integrity, credibility and transparency of the electoral process in Bangladesh, which as a result will encourage enthusiasm and active participation of both candidates and voters in the polls.

ANFREL conducted a joint training session in Dhaka with ODHIKAR. With a focus on human rights and election monitoring, 35 young lawyers and professionals within and outside the local network of ANFREL in Bangladesh attended the three-day training. The training was also attended by renowned personalities from the Supreme Court, women's groups and the media. Participants subsequently became trainers and echoed their knowledge to their respective network at district level throughout the country. The second wave of this training was given to 210 young graduates and students so as to introduce to them the rights of human rights defenders and to encourage young graduates and students to be conscious about their rights and responsibilities to the country. These participants later contributed significantly to ODHIKAR's election monitoring activities. Another training was directed to ODHIKAR's existing network of 45 election observers at district level. For this training, the focus emphasized particularly issues related to rights and duties of election observers as well as basic techniques in the conduct of observation activities.

In consultation with ODHIKAR, the areas of deployment were selected based on the sensitivity of electoral contest, record of irregularity and violence and the availability of ODHIKAR's monitoring network that provided local interpreters/coordinators for ANFREL's international election observers in the field. ANFREL's observation mission covered the following 28 sensitive constituencies throughout the country: Dhaka-1, Dhaka-4, Dhaka-5, Dhaka-6, Dhaka-7, Dhaka-8, Dhaka-9, Dhaka-10, Dhaka-11, Dinajpur-3, Naogaon-1, Rajshahi-2, Sirajgonj-2, Jhenaidah-2, Jessore-3, Khulna-2, Patuakhali-2, Barisal-5, Jhalakhati-2, Tangail-2, Tangail-4, Tangail-5, Mymensingh-4,Munshinganj-4, Narayanganj-5, Sylhet-1, Sylhet-2, Chittagong-9 and Rangamati Hill District.

Poll watchdog for Bangladesh

■ *Associated Press*

A BANGKOK-BASED regional watchdog said yesterday it would send 30 international observers to monitor the October 1 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh.

The Asian Network for Free Elections will deploy observers from 16 countries from today, and they will remain in place until October 3, the group said in a statement.

"Extensive cooperation between experienced international observers and prominent local monitoring organisations will increase a chance of deterring and detecting frauds, irregularities and violence," the statement said.

It said the monitors would work in collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Service.

Nearly 100 people have been killed in pre-election violence in Bangladesh since July 15, when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party transferred power to a caretaker administration. She is the first Bangladeshi leader to serve out a term.

Awami League faces stiff competition from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of Khaleda Zia, another former prime minister. Their traditional rivalry often leads to violence even outside the electoral process. The election monitoring team will travel to all six administrative divisions of Bangladesh.

The Asian Network for Free Elections is a coalition of election monitoring and human rights organisations, which aim to support democratisation and related initiatives in Asia. Monitors are from Asia, Australia, the United States, Canada and Europe.

In the past, the coalition has represented international efforts to ensure fair elections in Cambodia, East Timor, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand.

Election monitors will meet with representatives of the Election Commission, political parties and leading civil society organisations.

Picture 5: ANFREL news carried by the The Nation, September 25, 2001, P.6.

Balloting and vote counting process were the focal point of election observation activities of ANFREL. But apart from that, ANFREL was also active in examining other aspects of electoral process such as the appointment of electoral officers, the registration of political parties and voters, the verification and designation of candidates, the demarcation of constituencies, the enforcement of election campaign regulations, the conduct of voting and vote counting, the review of complaints and the installation of election winners. The authority and the media were also put under special scrutiny given their potential for improperly using their status to manipulate electoral process and influence election outcomes. At the end of the polls and after preliminary results are released, ANFREL examined the way in which complaints about cheating and irregularities are handled by related agencies.

1. Election-Related Violence

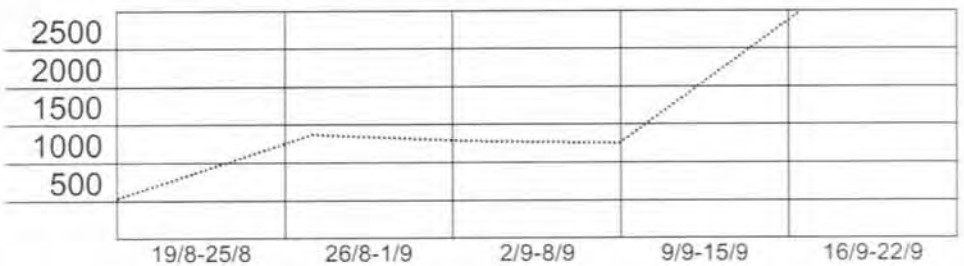
According to report of ODHIKAR and other 28 local monitoring organizations that formed the Election Monitoring Working Group (EMWG) to represent people's aspiration for peaceful, democratic and fair electoral contest, the 8th Parliamentary Election was more violent than the previous elections in 1996. The level of political violence around the country intensified as the polling day approached from about 500 reports of election-related killings and injuries on 25 August to more than 2,000 reports on the last week before the polling day.

Such an increase in violence was believed to be a result of the increasing polarization of voters and the diminished tolerance for different political opinions.

Areas known to be dangerous in terms of disturbing security situations were: Bhola, Narsingdi, Chanpur, Noakhali, Comilla, Feni, Nagarkanda, Netrakona, Pabna, Sirajganj, Bagerhat, Shorishabari, Kushtia, Chittagong, Munshiganj, Mymensing, Barisal, Khulna, Chuandanga and Dhaka. Competition between candidates of the AL and the BNP in these areas was so high that it created tensed hostility between their supporters and clearly divided the constituencies into two camps, leaving very little chance for political reconciliation. Voters, members of the media, local networks of ODHIKAR and even supporters of both major political parties mentioned to ANFREL's international observers about their suffering caused by violence and atrocity unleashed during the pre-election period.

Among election monitoring groups both domestic and international, there were concerns that the climate of violence and fear caused by the deteriorated political stability could undermine voter's freedom of choice and disrupt the free and fair conduct of the polls.

Election-Related Killings and Injuries



Source: ODHIKAR' s Reports, cited in Draft EMWG Observation Report, on September 25, 2001.

In response, the Caretaker Government took initiatives by deploying the army in sensitive areas. The army set up security checkpoints and enacted arms control measures. Although it was rather late, the strong presence of the army could significantly reassure Bangladesh's people to continue to participate in the polls.

For contesting candidates and political parties, the deployment of the army also allowed them to conduct more effective election campaigns in "no-go areas" dominantly controlled by their rivals. To avoid provocation and confrontation that might lead to further violence, the army was instructed to work with the District Commissioner to ensure that only one political party to campaign each day in the same area.

Meanwhile, voters, members of the media, local networks of ODHIKAR and supporters of all major political parties did not have confidence in the police. They saw that the police, especially at district and constituency levels, was inactive, partial and likely to be under influence of contesting candidates and political parties.

Among the 28 sensitive constituencies covered by ANFREL's international observers, Munshiganj-4 presented the resulted in more death, injury and destruction of property. Although security forces could eventually control clashes between supporters of the two sides, tension and the lack of political tolerance could still be felt in many parts of Munshingaj-4.

Picture 6: The 8th Parliamentary Election was rated more violence than the previous 1996 election. Report cases of clashed among the contesting parties supports happened daily toward the Election Day. The photo above was taken by ANFREL observers deployed to Narayanganj-5 who arrived shortly to investigate on a report of physical fight in an Awami League (AL) branch happened earlier.

It was only until the army was deployed that "no-go areas" in Munshingaj-4 became more accessible. Nevertheless, domestic monitoring organizations closely watched development in and around polling centers in these sensitive areas because they were still prone to violence, fraud and irregularity on the polling day.

The killing in Munshiganj-4 and reports about election-related violence in other areas of Bangladesh as well as the fact that a large number of polling centers were categorized as vulnerable to fraud and violence highlighted the urgent need for the Caretaker Government, the Election Commission and related agencies to work hard in undertaking swift, decisive and effective measures to uphold peace, order and fairness in the 8th Parliamentary Election.

In conclusion, ANFREL's international observers found that pre-election situations in Bangladesh were marred by campaigns of terror committed by supporters of the AL and the BNP. But interestingly, Bangladesh's people seemed to determine that they had suffered enough from intimidation and physical violence during the campaign period. By going to vote in large number, they could send a message to political thugs that they were not afraid anymore.

For voters in general, the election on 1 October provided an important opportunity for them to defy political terror to show that peace was what people wanted for the country to progress toward development and stability after the polls. Against the backdrop of reports about election-related violence, ANFREL's international observers were impressed by remarkable enthusiasm of the voting public as specifically mentioned in preliminary reports from Barisal-5, Chittagong-9, Dhaka-1, Dhaka-6, Dinajpur-3, Jessore-3, Khulna-2, Mymensingh-4, Naogaon-1, Narayanganj-5, Rajshahi-2 and Sirajgonj-2.

Apart from the proliferation of election-related violence, ANFREL's international observers also found that candidates of the AL, the BNP and other political parties violated rules and regulations set by the Election Commission in different ways such as the use of microphones beyond predetermined hours, the writing of graffiti and campaign messages on the wall and the distribution of colored leaflets. Campaign statements were crated and delivered in the manner that could easily instigate hatred, violence and communal division during and after the polls.

ANFREL's international observers were horrified by the spreading usage of inflammatory language and brutal campaign materials especially by candidates of the AL and the BNP.

2. Status of Domestic Monitoring Organizations and the Media

Access to the media was a critical issue. A BNP candidate was not able to get access to and run election campaigns in certain parts of Munshingaj-4, including Chanka Ware, Mollah Kandy, Adhara, Bangla Bazar and Shiloy. Two weeks before the polling day, he and his campaign agents were attacked by AL activists while trying to go to meet voters in Mollah Kandy. Although he could escape safely, two of his supporters were shot.

Picture 7: ANFREL observers interviewing members of political party during the observation mission.

Similar problems also happened to the AL camp in the constituency. The killing of the AL's Munshingaj Town President on 29 September put voters in Munshingaj-4 in fear and uncertainty as the rivalry between the AL and the BNP continue to erupt violently.

The media in Bangladesh played an important role in educating voters and publicizing various issues relating to electoral process. The Election Commission kept close watch on the media in order to get balanced coverage and opinions.

Members of the media and domestic monitoring organizations complained that they experienced problems in dealing with the authority, especially the District Commissioners. They found that it was rather difficult to get helpful cooperation from these officers, especially in obtaining accreditation cards, allegedly as a result of the exposure of inefficiency and partiality of officers of state agencies regarding the administration of electoral process. Most of them said that there were fewer problems in activities of contesting candidates and political parties.

In parallel to the Election Commission and government agencies, ANFREL highlighted that extensive cooperation between international and domestic observers could significantly deter and detect fraud, irregularity and violence as well as uphold public confidence in electoral process. The work of domestic and international observers must not be unduly and unlawfully obstructed. Particularly in relation to domestic observers, ANFREL stressed that the 8th Parliamentary Election was a basic democratic exercise that belonged to the people of Bangladesh and it would be undemocratic if ODHIKAR and other domestic monitoring organizations as well as members of the media were put into an environment in which they could not function effectively and safely to ensure the integrity, credibility and transparency of the polls.

3. Conduct of the Polls

On 30 September, ANFREL issued a statement stressing that candidates and political parties that came to power by means of thuggery and cheating were not acceptable. ANFREL strongly urged all contesting candidates and political parties to stop using terror, violence and fraudulent tactics. They must strictly observe the principles of tolerance, fair play, mutual respect, rule of law and good citizenship. To maintain unity and reconciliation in the society, they must not make campaign statements that could instigate hatred and public unrest during and after the polls. In this connection, the impartiality, decisiveness and fairness of the Election Commission and related agencies in their handling of all

aspects of electoral process were specifically essential factors that would make election result more acceptable by all sides.

3.1 General Atmosphere

Picture 8: A long queue of enthusiastic male voter on the polling day (October 1, 2001)

On the election day, against the backdrop of reports about pre-election violence, ANFREL's international observers were impressed by remarkable enthusiasm of the voting public. Voter turnout in most areas visited by ANFREL's international observers was high. For the 8th Parliamentary Election, Bangladesh had 750,000,656 eligible voters and more than 70 percent of them went to cast their votes on 1 October. The active participation of female voters was also admirable. In general, the atmosphere in and around 250 polling centers covered by ANFREL's international observers was festive and relatively peaceful. Initiatives of the Caretaker Government contributed to the restoration of a safe and stable environment on 1 October. Concerted efforts to maintain law and order by the civil servant and the security forces also encouraged voters to participate actively in the polls.

Picture 9 : As an Islamic country, the Bangladesh electoral system separates its man and female voter into different queue.

ANFREL's international observers noted that the presence of foreign and domestic observers significantly strengthened voter's confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of the polls. The election on 1 October was the exercise of people's democratic rights and ANFREL's international observers were pleased to find that representatives of civil society, particularly domestic observers from various non-governmental organizations and members of the media, were mostly welcome and able to perform their duties independently and safely on the election day. Representatives of contesting candidates and political parties were also helpful in assisting voters to locate their names on voter's rolls and identify their respective polling booths.

3.2 Administration of Voting Process

Poverty and limited resources clearly caused technical problems in the arrangement and the setting up of polling centers in the way that would be acceptable in terms of security, order and voting secrecy.

Regarding voting secrecy and voter's freedom of choice, ANFREL's international observers noted that polling officers did their best to ensure voting secrecy despite obvious limitation in terms of space, equipment and lighting. There were, however, notable problems regarding the overwhelming presence of party agents of the AL and the BNP outside every polling booth. The presence of party agents could possibly influence voter's decision to the extent that voter's freedom of choice was undermined.

Picture 10: A scene inside a polling station. A "local initiated" polling booth, set up by every usable materials from the surrounding, is clearly seen in this picture.

Most places visited by ANFREL's international observers were crowded as voters began to queue up many hours before the opening of the polls at 8.00 am., making the control of order obviously difficult. In some places in Sylhet-1 and Sylhet-2, security officers had to shout and used wooden clubs to keep order of the queue.

Most voters did not have any difficulties locating their names and polling booths. Nevertheless, 20 Hindu people at polling center number 103 in Munshiganj-4 complained that their names were missing from voter's rolls although some of them were able to vote in the previous elections in 1996. It was not verifiable whether this problem was a technical error in the making of voter's rolls or it was caused by prejudice against members of minority groups. ANFREL's international observers deployed in Dhaka constituencies, Sylhet-1 and Sylhet-2 also expressed their concerns about the disenfranchisement of voting rights of a number of people partly due to errors and confusions in the making of official voter's rolls.

Picture 11: Scenes of political parties poster found at the building compound wall near to the polling station are very common in Bangladesh

Picture 12: Devoted Muslim women dressed up in their Islamic custom to vote. In some areas, there have been reports of young female voters clearly under legal voting age, dressed in heavily covered custom to impersonate eligible voter and some were arrested.

Inside the polling center, although there were reports about minor lapses and technical inconsistencies such as the application of indelible ink and the verification of voter's identity, the integrity of overall voting process was upheld. ANFREL's international observers noted that key procedures were actively and dutifully followed by most polling officers. The progression of voting process went on relatively well.

ANFREL's international observers in Dhaka constituencies, Chittagong-9 and Munshiganj-4 found that democratic rights of some voters were taken away by problems of impersonation. (Many young female voters, some of them seemed to be clearly under legal voting age, were dressed up in adult cloth and heavily covered by facial makeup to impersonate eligible voters. These incidents were reported to the Presiding Officers and some imposers were arrested.)

3.3 Violence and Disruption of the Polls

In deployment areas of ANFREL's international observers, the most serious incidents that led to the disruption of the polls were reported in Munshiganj-4. More than 10 Hindu people that could not find their names on official voter's roll tried to disrupt voting process at polling center number 101. At 10 am., the Presiding Officer had to call the police to prevent these people from breaking into the polling center. Voting process was suspended for 10 minutes. After the police had restore order, polling center number 101 was reopened again. But at 2.30 pm., this polling center was attacked by a group of armed men allegedly from the BNP and after that voting process was terminated. Polling center number 179 was attacked at 9.25 am. by a group of armed men allegedly from the AL. They looted four polling booths and took 598 marked ballots together with 20 unused ballots. Voting process was also terminated. Nevertheless, the collapse of security order in these polling centers was an isolated case. The attacks and looting of polling centers were reported only in limited areas. Altogether six people were killed and over 500 injured as a result of election-related violence on 1 October in different parts of the country.

Vote count and tabulation in general were conducted properly. Although there were reports about minor lapses, technical mistakes and inconsistencies in some area, ANFREL's

international observers saw that the overall process of vote count and tabulation was not seriously affected by those problems.

Picture 13: A Scene of counting process, which took place at the same polling station after the poll was closed at 4.00 PM.

3.4 Situations After the Election

Although there was considerable violence in the campaign period before the polls, all indicators pointed to an unexpectedly peaceful election. Bangladesh appeared to pass a critical benchmark in the conduct of a democratic election peacefully with remarkable participation of the voting public. In the next step, ANFREL sought to ensure that vote count and tabulation was conducted with transparency and fairness.

Picture 14: Press conference releasing the finding of the Election Observations, held jointly by ANFREL and ODHIKAR in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

ANFREL also called on the Election Commission to investigate all serious complaints and reports about fraud and irregularity immediately, openly and impartially. This would be the foundation for election result to be respected voluntarily and peacefully by all sides. ANFREL also sincerely urged all contesting candidates and political parties to respect people's decisions with grace no matter election result would declare their victory or defeat.

Voters in Bangladesh rejected the incumbent government and opted for a change. The electoral verdict was that the BNP-led alliance achieved a momentous victory. In an unprecedented swing, voters in Bangladesh overwhelmingly rejected the AL's leadership and policies. The size of the victory was such that it could bring about new configurations in the politics of Bangladesh. However, the AL rejected the result and threatened to call nationwide strikes and demonstrations to pressure for the cancellation of the election result. There were also rumors about a military coup. Fortunately, the public mood was with the Caretaker Government and the Election Commission when they insisted that the election was held properly and participation of voters was spontaneous and massive. As a result, the allegation and demands of the AL was virtually rejected by the majority of Bangladesh's population.

Nevertheless after the election, the Electoral Enquiry Committee investigated reports about irregularity, including matters that involved violence, intimidation, obstruction, coercion or the publication of false information intended to or actually resulting in the obstruction of frustration of the preparation for or the conduct of free and fair polls. Re-elections were subsequently ordered for 90 polling centers in Barisal-6, Brahmanbaria-3, Brahmanbaria-6, Chandpur-2, Comilla-8, Comilla-9, Lakshmipur-4, Kishoregonj-1, Kishoregonj-4, Munshiganj-4, Mymensingh-5, Mymensingh-6, Sariatpur-1, Bagerhat-4, Moulavibazar-1 and Moulavibazar-2.

3.5 Election Result

Political Party	Seats in the Parliament
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	199
Bangladesh Awami League	62
Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh	17
Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Ershad)	14
Others	8
Total	300

Source: Bangladesh Election Commission Information Sheet, November 12, 2001.

4. Post-Election Activities

After the Parliamentary Election on 1 October, ANFREL continues to engage in efforts of Bangladesh's civil society to develop full democracy via participatory process. The cornerstone of ANFREL's activities includes a seminar-workshop on good governance, a training on people's participation in democratic good governance movement and a mutual learning and experience sharing within the network of member organization regarding the realization of democratic good governance.

Immediately after the election observation mission, ANFREL conducted a South Asia sub-regional training of trainers on good governance in Dhaka with 13 participants from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. It was due to the change of security situation in the region and in the world after the 11 September's terrorist attacks on America that made participants from Pakistan unable to travel out of the country while participants from India were restricted from entering into Bangladesh.

Participants presented papers explaining the current state of governance in their countries. After that, a workshop was conducted to identify good governance practices and bad governance practices in Asian countries. The findings of this seminar-workshop indicated that the involvement of all societal sectors was essential in the realization of democratic good governance against widespread political, economic and social illness that existed as a result of bad governance.

Finally, recommendations were drawn with a focus on people's participation in governance as well as mutual learning and experience sharing within the network of member organization regarding the realization of democratic good governance. A guideline on which the production of country manuals for South Asia would be based was drafted. With relevancy and practicability, these country manuals would then be used for actual training activities in each country in the future. As for participants from Pakistan and India, they were requested to review this draft guideline and submit their comment for further improvement before it would be finalized and put into actual training manuals for countries in South Asia.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the polls, there was the sense of guarded optimism in the air that Bangladesh might just had the first election that showed signs of political maturity. The 8th Parliamentary Election on 1 October was much more peaceful than expected. Nearly 150 centers were disrupted due to various disturbances but that was still less than one percent of almost 30,000 polling centers in total. Given the almost collapse of law and order during the run up to the polls, this figure was another evidence of an emerging political culture of vote as a vehicle for change.

In many ways, this election has been a watershed of a new trend toward people's empowerment. Contesting candidates and political parties took much greater cognizance of the voters than ever before. Door to door campaigning signified that reaching voters directly had become a major necessity of contesting candidates and political parties for effective presentation of their credentials. This indicated a shift in the political environment. Widespread feeling of empowerment of the people as well as their aspiration for peace and security inspired high turnout.

The Election Commission deserved congratulations for completing what was almost an incredible task. Not only had the Election Commission ensured that the voting process was safe but it paid special attention to voting rights of the minorities and women. ANFREL's international observers also saw that the Caretaker Government had performed an onerous task in holding the election than ever before. Door to door campaigning signified that reaching voters directly had become a major necessity of contesting candidates and political parties for effective presentation of their credentials. This indicated a shift in the political environment. Widespread feeling of empowerment of the people as well as their aspiration for peace and security inspired high turnout.

The presence of election observers, both domestic and international, was proven to be contributive to the strengthening of people's confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of the polls. ANFREL's international observers were pleased to find that representatives of civil society, particularly domestic observers from various non-governmental organizations and members of the media, were mostly welcome and able to perform their duties independently and safely on the election day.

Based on findings of ANFREL's observation mission, recommendations for further improvement of electoral process in Bangladesh are set out on key issues as follows:

- Legal provisions should have to be effective and the procedural actions should have to be prompt and meaningful. Otherwise, the violation of election law makes the election meaningless and the dream of having free and fair elections cannot be realized. For example, ANFREL's international observers were concerned about lapses that led to problems regarding the overwhelming presence of party agents in the perimeter of polling centers as these problems could possibly influence voter's decision to the extent that voter's freedom of choice was undermined.

- ANFREL cannot accept any candidates or political parties that resort to violence, condone it or are being ambivalent about it. To stop the vicious cycle of protracted violence in Bangladesh's electoral politics that has effectively eaten out the prospect for democratic development for decades, ANFREL strongly urges all political parties to sincerely respect people's aspiration for peace and stability. Leaders of all political parties, in particular, must take decisive legal and disciplinary actions against their candidates and supporters that engage in murder and other forms of political thuggery. The Election Commission, law enforcement agencies and the Judiciary should ensure that the disposal of election dispute in all forms are dealt with as prompt, transparent and fair as possible.

- To deal with problems of vote buying and the excessive use of money in electoral contest, the enforcement of laws and regulations in respect to financial expenses and unduly inducement of votes must be ensured.

- Since electoral process involves complex functions and procedures, it is necessary that election officers take extensive training in performing their tasks properly and effectively. This rationale also applies to voters, election observers and political activists so that they can have sufficient knowledge and understanding about election procedures. Training programs to be conducted should focus on the methods and procedures of voter registration, up-dating voter's rolls, election offence, election irregularity, duty and responsibility of polling officers, role of the Electoral Enquiry Committee, duty and responsibility of law enforcing agencies, the requirement and the use of different forms, packets and materials at the polling station, conducting polls, franchise rights and role of voters, role of election observers, political activists and the media in ensuring free and fair elections, process of counting of votes, preparation of ballot paper account, statement of counts and consolidation of result.

- To ensure efficiency, impartiality and transparency among members of law enforcement agencies and election officers at all levels, they must be subject to public scrutiny and those who commit corrupt practice in any forms must be punished in accordance with the laws and regulations governing electoral process.

- To prevent impersonation, a better system to verify voter's identification must be introduced and implemented seriously such as photograph identification cards and voter's registration cards.

- To ensure the transparency of vote count and tabulation, all procedures regarding vote count and tabulation must be conducted openly with the presence of independent observers and the public until election result is officially announced.

- The successful holding of free and fair elections requires a better flow of information. It is necessary for the Election Commission and domestic monitoring groups to equip their staffs in the field with modern telecommunication network and powerful computers that will be connected to the computers located in all districts of Bangladesh.

- Elections are people's democratic exercise. Independent election observation organizations must be fully recognized and accredited. Organizations like ODHIKAR and other members of the EMWG merit more support so as to be able to function actively and efficiently to ensure the integrity and transparency of electoral process.

- As democratization is a borderless phenomenon, international election observers should be fully accredited and allowed to work in Bangladesh. The presence of international election observers has been proven to be effective in deterring and detecting violence and fraud as well as in providing greater confidence to candidates, political parties and the voting public.

- To allow for the true universal suffrage, Bangladesh should introduce postal vote or other measures to allow eligible voters living overseas or have to be away from their designated voting constituencies (such as polling officers and election observers) to exercise their democratic rights. Similarly, the right to vote of prisoners should not be taken away as well.

Regarding long-term support for people's aspiration for democracy and good governance in Bangladesh, recommendations are set out on key issues as follows:

- Voter awareness is an important factor for the conduct of elections in a free, fair and impartial manner. More concerted efforts should be made by the Election Commission, government agencies, civil society organizations and the media to make people aware of

their right of franchise and the importance of the exercise of this right. Non-governmental organizations are specifically encouraged to conduct voter education programs that highlight the importance of vote, the right of voters, functions of the legislature, responsibility and accountability of elected representatives to their constituents.

- Nearly 50 percent of the total population are women. It is essential that women participate in large numbers in electoral process. Unfortunately, women participation in electoral process has been found to be discouraged by a number of cultural factors. Conservative women feel hesitant to meet male registration personnel due to social and religious restrictions. Potential violence and absence of convenient transportation system, especially in the rural areas, also discourage women from participating actively in electoral process. More effective broad-based awareness and education programs for large-scale women participation should be conducted.

- Having good elections is not a pre-condition for a better system of governance. Both the BNP and the AL had been in power before and their first innings as rulers were not exactly undisputed success. In fact, both were rejected by voters after a single term and the opposition was voted in. This fact reiterates that elections belong to the people and so does the management of public affairs. That is a message that all political parties must listen and respect. Future activities regarding the promotion of democracy and good governance in Bangladesh should put the people in focus and have as equal representation of concerns and needs from various sectors in the society as possible.

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ANNEX

1 ANFREL INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION MISSION 8th Bangladesh Parliamentary Election (25th September – 3rd October 2001)

1.1 Mission Program

25 September	:	Foreign Observers Arrive
26 September	:	**ANFREL Briefing for all Observers + Press Conference**
27 September	:	**UN Briefing for Foreign Observers**
28 September	:	Deployment of Observers
29 Sept - 01 Oct	:	Election observation
1st October, 2001		**——POLLING DAY——-**
02 October	:	De-Briefing Post-Election Press Conference

1.2 Deployment of Mission Members.

Number of Constituency	Name of Constituency	Name of Foreign Observers
08	Dinajpur-3	Mr. Muflizar
46	Naogaon-1	Mr. Sek Sophal
62	Rajshahi-2	Mr. Soheil Ahmed
53	Sirajgonj-2	Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo
82	Jhalakhati-2	Mr. Weligodage Saman Ratnapriya Silva
87	Jessore-3	Mr. Hamid Ansari
100	Khulna-2	Mr. William Kolding Lausen
114	Patuakhali-2	Dr. Rabindranath Mukhopadlyay
125	Barisal-5	Mr. Nevin Perera
128	Jhenaidah-2	Ms. Kang long Nian
134 136 137	Tangail-2 Tangail-4 Tangail-5	Ms. Hmangaihzuali Ms.Samja Shreshtha
152	Mymensingh-4	Mr. Santos Lamban and Mr. Hari Phuyal
179	Munshigonj-4	Mr. Sunai Phasuk
180	Dhaka-1	Ms. Luz Baastrup
183 184	Dhaka-4 Dhaka-5	Mr. Tim Meisburger Ms. Karen Casper
185 186 187	Dhaka-6 , 10 Dhaka-7, Dhaka-8	Ms. Auxilium Olayer Mr.Damaso G. Magbual Ms. Anne Marie Loong
206	Narayanganj5	Ms. Nisa Chamsuwan and Ms. Takako Kon
228 229	Sylhet-1 Sylhet-2	Ms. Kim Eun Young Ms. Somsri Berger
287 299	Chittagong-9 Rangamati Hill District	Mr. Kae Matsuura Ms. Stephen Beeby

1.3 Directory of Mission Members.

Names	Countries	Positions	Address and Tel.
1. Md. Hamid Ansari	Nepal	INSEC Board Member	Informal Sector Service Centre P.O. Box 2726, Kathmandu, Nepal Tel. 9771-1-270770/278770 Telefax; 977-1 –270551 insec@wlink.com.np
2. Ms. Samja Shreshtha	Nepal	INSEC-Program Officer	
3. Mr. Hari Phuyal	Nepal	NEOC Officer	C/o NEOC or Pacific Law Associates Post Box No. 12577, Bagbazar, Kathmandu, NEPAL Tel/fax9771-226246
4. Ms. Hmangaihzuali (Thin Thin Aung)	Burmese	General Secretary Of Women Rights and Welfare Asso. Of Burma (WRWAB)	3/26, 2nd floor, Vikas Puri, New Delhi-18, India Phone : +91 11 5529817 Fax: +91 115514356 mizzima@del6.vsnl.net.in
5. Mr Sohail Ahmed	India	Journalist Doordarshan Kendra Kolkata and Southern Health Improvement Samity	8/3, Abdul Halim Lane, Kolkata –700 016, India, Phone: 91-33-244.9860, E-Mail: sohail_16@yahoo.com
6. Mr. Damaso G. Magbual	Philippine	President NAMFREL-NCR (National for Free Elections)	701 Pioneer Highlands North Condominium Pioneer St. corner Madison St. Mandaluyong City, Philippine Direct Line: 719-1255 Trunkline: 719-1265 to 69 Fax. Number: 719-1265 loc. 120 E-mail address: dgm@skyinet.net **NAMFREL** Tel. Nos. 631-0141 631-0078, 638-8558 Fax Nos. 631-0078, 638-8558 E-mail : namfrel@rfm.com.ph
7. Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo	Sri Lanka	Executive Director For People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)	PAFFREL 93/10, Dutugemunu Street, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: 941 824425, 818675, 828544 Fax: 941 828597,818675 Web: www.lankaworld.com/paffrel Email : paffrel@sltnet.lk

8. Mr. Navin Perera	Sri Lanka	Law and Society Trust , Board	Telefax: 94-1 686843 Email: navinperera@hotmail.com
9. Mr. Weligodage Saman Ratnapriya Silva	Sri Lanka	President, Govt. Nursing Officers Association	5/10 , Welikademulle, Balapitiya, Sri Lanka Tel. Fax. 094-01-873775
10. Ms. Auxilium Toling – Olayer	Philippines	ANFREL Coordinator	ANFREL-Forum Asia 109 Suthisarn Winitchai Rd., Ratchada Huaykwang, Samsennok, Bangkok 10320 Thailand Tel. 662 2769846-7 ext 3 Fax. 662 2762183 Email. anfrel@forumasia.org
11. Ms. Somsri Berger	Thailand	ANFREL Election Monitoring Program Coordinator	
12. Mr. Sunai Phasuk	Thailand	ANFREL Research and Information Program Coordinator	
13. Ms. Nisa Chamsuwan	Thailand	ANFREL Staff	
14. Mr. Stephen Beeby	Australia	Forum – Asia / ANFREL Resource Center Coordinator	
15. Ms. Anne Marie Loong	Canada	ANFREL Intern	
16. Ms. Kae Matsuura	Japan	Board of Interband	**InterBand office** 2816-22 Shinohara-cho Kohuku-ku, Yokohama , Japan 222-0026 Tel. 81(0) 45-439-4003 Fax 45-439-4004 Email: intrband@gol.com Kaematsu@nifty.com Suyan@hotmail.com
17. Ms.Takako KON	Japan	Interband	
18. Mr. Santos Lamban	Philippines	PAHRA – Secretary General	Teachers Village , Malingap St. Telefax: (632) 436-26-33 Email: pahra @revelation.net.ph
19. Mr. Muflizar	Indonesia	KIPP –Election Monitoring Officer	Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu Jl Rawamangun ,Muka !! Bo. 16 Rawamangun , Jakarta Timur 13220 Tlp. (6221) 47862773-74 Fax : (62 21) 478 655 78 Email: muflizar@yahoo.com muflizar@hotmail.com

20. Mr. Sek Sophal	Cambodia	Executive Director of COFFEL	#74, St. 606, Sangkat Boeung Kok, Khan Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Tel/Fax: (855-23) 881 741 coffel@camnet.com.kh :csd@bigpond.com.kh
21. Ms. Kim Eun Young	South Korea	Chief Coordinator of "Participatory Economy Committee" for People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD)	3F New Anguk Bldg. Anguk-Dong Chongno-Ku Seoul, 110-240 S.Korea Tel.. No: +82-2-723-4250 Fax no. +82-2-723-5055 Email: pspdint@pspd.org beth1004@pspd.org
22. Mr. William Kolding Lausen	Hong Kong	Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)	**AHRC** , C/O Asian Human Rights Commission Tel. 852 26986339 Fax. 852 26986367
23. Mr. Kang Iong Nian	Malaysia	SUARAM Documentation & Monitoring Coordinator	SUARAM 383, 1st Fl. Jalan 5/59, Petaling Gardens, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Malaysia Tel. No. 603-7784-3525 Fax No. 603-7784-3526 Email: wkpeng@pc.jaring.my
24. Mr. Tim Meisburger	USA	The Asia Foundation Election Advisor	The Asia Foundation –cambodia #59 St. 242 POBox 536 Phnom Penh, Cambodia Office phone – (855-23) 216-895 Fax No. : 362 – 344 Email: tmeisburger @cb.asiafound.org
25. Ms. Karen Casper	USA	The Asia Foundation Bangladesh	The Asia Foundation – Bangladesh Dhaka, Bangladesh
26. Ms. Luz Baastrup	Sweden	Forum Syd	No 14, St 398, Boeung Keng Kang 1, Phnom Penh Phone: 855-23-364 727, Fax: 855-23-210 901, mobile: 855-12-812 055 Email: luz@bigpond.com.kh
27.Dr.Rabindranath Mukhopadhyay	India	CARID Member and Treasurer	University of Calcutta, Dept. of Economics Email: Carid@rediffmail.com

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ANFREL'S ELECTION

OBSERVATION

ANFREL was formed in 1997 as the first regional network of civil society organizations in Asia with a principal mandate to promote and support democratization initiatives at national and regional levels in Asia. Based in Bangkok, ANFREL is the biggest regional network of election monitoring, democracy advocacy and human rights organizations. ANFREL's members include 21 regional and national civil society organizations from 11 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

For four years, ANFREL has been active in representing international efforts to promote and support democratization via electoral process. ANFREL's election observers were deployed to ensure the integrity, credibility and transparency of electoral process in Cambodia, East Timor, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand.

Activities of ANFREL regarding the promotion of democratization via electoral process are primarily guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21), which states that:

1. Everyone has the rights to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

2. Everyone has the rights of equal access to public service in his country.

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government. This will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held be secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Equally important, the Framework for Future Efforts at Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1989 provides that universal and equal suffrage

as well as impartial administration must be ensured in the conduct of electoral process. Apart from independent administration and supervision of electoral process by related agencies, there have to be appropriate voter registration methods, reliable balloting procedures and effective measures for preventing frauds and resolving disputes.

Therefore, ANFREL sees that international election observers play an important role in the pursuit of democratic elections that should have the following minimal conditions: franchise is genuinely universal; political parties and individual candidates are able to enjoy their legitimate rights to take part in the election; there is freedom of expression allowing possible criticism of the incumbent government; there is the right to free movement and assembly; all contesting parties and candidates have reasonable access to the media; and there is freedom of choice for voters to cast ballots.

International election observers observe electoral process as it takes place to make an informed and accurate assessment on both the conduct of elections and the surrounding environment. ANFREL believes that the use of international election observers can provide an effective means of verifying the integrity and fairness of electoral process and its outcomes. In addition, the presence of international election observers will create an atmosphere that decreases the likelihood of intimidation, violence or fraud. Well-planned observation missions can significantly instill confidence in voters and increase not only their willingness to seriously participate in electoral process but also their ability to freely express political wills at the polls without fears of reprisal.

It is therefore essential that election observers come from non-partisan organizations with proven records and reputations for professional and ethical qualifications in areas related to the technicality of electoral process and the promotion of democracy.

Balloting and vote counting process usually form the focal point of election observation activities of ANFREL. But apart from that, ANFREL's international election observers are also active in examining other aspects of electoral process such as the appointment of electoral officers, the registration of political parties and voters, the verification and designation of

candidates, the demarcation of constituencies, the enforcement of election campaign regulations, the conduct of voting and vote counting, the review of complaints and the installation of election winners. The authority and the media deserve special scrutiny given their potential for improperly using their status to manipulate electoral process and influence election outcomes. At the end of the polls and after preliminary results are released, ANFREL's international election observers examine the way in which complaints about cheating and irregularities are handled by related agencies.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ANFREL'S ELECTION OBSERVERS

- Election observers must remain objective and impartial in all activities.
- Election observers must perform their duties with transparency, diligence and thoroughness. Election observers must observe and detect any violation of election laws and procedures as well as any suspicious act of frauds. If any irregularity is found, election observers are expected to be able to compile and report such incident and related evidences to electoral officers. But in performing their duties, election observers must not interfere in electoral process. Election observers are reminded not to be over-zealous because their function is not to participate in the conduct of electoral process but rather to observe, assess and report the conduct of elections and the surrounding environment as it takes place in an informed, objective and non-partisan manner. International observers, in particular, must respect the sovereignty of the host country. They must not interfere with the internal jurisdiction of the host country. Above all, election observers must not involve in any dispute that may disrupt their designate missions and put them in danger.
- Election observation is a practical endeavor. Election observers must be constantly alert, always keep eyes and ears open for any possible wrongdoing and irregularity. To ensure the efficiency and credibility of monitoring efforts, election observers must investigate and record their findings in an objective, informed and

accurate manner. Election observation findings should be documented in a comprehensive and verifiable manner. And in all instances, election observers must attempt to distinguish objective evidences from subjective evidences. Election observers should also avoid reaching and publicizing judgments prematurely. Mission findings are likely to have greater influences if they are presented in a constructive rather than purely critical manner.

- Election observers can further enhance the credibility of their efforts by publicizing objectives, methodology and findings of election observation missions. Informing the public, the media, the government and political parties of intentions and operating procedures of election observers can diminish suspicions and avoid misunderstanding.

4. BASIC STATISTICS OF THE 8TH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Date of the Election	Monday 1 October 2001
Polling Hours	8 am - 4 pm (without break)
Number of Constituencies	300
Number of polling stations	29,978
Number of polling booths	149,288
Number of Voters	75,000,656
- Male Voters	38,684,972
- Female Voters	36,315,684
Number of Divisions	6
Number of Districts	64
Number of Contesting Political Parties	52
Number of Contesting Candidates	1,935
Number of Contesting Female Candidates:	37 in 47 Constituencies

5. ANFREL'S STATEMENTS DURING THE ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION IN BANGLADESH

5.1 ANFREL Will Deploy International Election Observers from 17 Countries in Bangladesh (22 September 2001)

Based in Bangkok, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) is the biggest regional network of election monitoring, democracy advocacy and human rights organizations. ANFREL's members include 21 regional and national civil society organizations from 11 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

For four years, ANFREL has been active in representing international efforts to promote and support democratization via electoral process. ANFREL's election observers were deployed to ensure the integrity, credibility and transparency of electoral process in Cambodia, East Timor, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand.

In collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat (UNEAS) and ODHIKAR, a leading national human rights and democracy advocate organization in Bangladesh, ANFREL will deploy 27 international observers from 17 countries to observe Bangladesh's 8th Parliamentary Election. From 25 September to 3 October, ANFREL's observation mission covered the following 28 sensitive constituencies throughout the country: Dhaka-1, Dhaka-4, Dhaka-5, Dhaka-6, Dhaka-7, Dhaka-8, Dhaka-9, Dhaka-10, Dhaka-11, Dinajpur-3, Naogaon-1, Rajshahi-2, Sirajgonj-2, Jhenaidah-2, Jessore-3, Khulna-2, Patuakhali-2, Barisal-5, Jhalakhati-2, Tangail-2, Tangail-4, Tangail-5, Mymensingh-4, Munshinganj-4, Narayanganj-5, Sylhet-1, Sylhet-2, Chittagong-9 and Rangamati Hill District.

ANFREL's efforts to promote democracy in Bangladesh General Election will be in support ODHIKAR. Extensive co-operation between experienced international observers and prominent domestic monitoring organizations will increase a chance in deterring and detecting frauds, irregularities and violence. ANFREL hopes that the presence of international observers will also help upholding the integrity, credibility, and transparency of the electoral process in Bangladesh, which as a result will encourage enthusiasm and active participation of both candidates and voters in the polls.

ANFREL's election monitoring activities will be a continuation of its long-term supports to the consolidation of democracy and good governance in Bangladesh. For years, ANFREL has worked closely with ODHIKAR to raise awareness of civil society organizations and local grassroots groups about election administration, election monitoring, voting behavior and democratic governance in general.

During the mission, ANFREL will meet and exchange views with representatives of the Election Commission, political parties and leading civil society organizations about situations surrounding the General Election as well as prospects for peace, development and democracy in the future. Visits will also be made to domestic election monitoring organizations to share basic standards in administering and monitoring democratic elections.

ANFREL mission will be officially announced on 26 September 2001 at 3.00 pm at the National Press Club in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

For more information, please contact:

ANFREL's Secretariat Office in Bangkok, Thailand: Tel. (662) 2769846-7 ext. 3; ANFREL's Secretariat Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh at Hotel Abakash Room 316: Tel. (88-02) 607085-8 Fax: (880-2) 871150; or via ODHIKAR office in Dhaka, Bangladesh: Tel. (88-02) 9560173 Fax. (88-02) 9567280.

5.2 ANFREL Calls for Peace and Fair Play in Bangladesh Election (30 September 2001)

In collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat (UNEAS) and a leading Bangladeshi human rights and democracy advocate organization ODHIKAR, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) deploys 27 international observers from 17 countries to observe electoral process and surrounding situations in 28 sensitive constituencies throughout Bangladesh from 25 September to 3 October.

Against the backdrop of reports about election-related violence, ANFREL's observers are impressed by enthusiasm of the voting public. As specifically mentioned in preliminary

reports from Barisal-5, Chittagong-9, Dhaka-1, Dhaka-6, Commission's impartiality, decisiveness and fairness in the handling of all aspects of electoral process are specifically essential factors that will make election results acceptable by all sides.

In parallel to the Election Commission and other governmental agencies, ANFREL believes that extensive cooperation between international and domestic observers can significantly deter and detect frauds, irregularities and violence as well as uphold public confidence in electoral process. The work of domestic and international observers must not be unduly and unlawfully obstructed. Particularly in relation to domestic observers, election is a basic democratic exercise that belongs to the people of Bangladesh and it will be undemocratic if ODHIKAR and other people's organizations constituting the Election Monitoring Working Group (EMWG) are put into an environment in which they cannot function effectively and safely to ensure the integrity, credibility and transparency of the upcoming election on 1 October.

Findings of ANFREL's election observation mission in Bangladesh will be presented on 2 October at 3.00 pm at the National Press Club in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

For more information, please contact:

ANFREL's Secretariat Office in Bangkok, Thailand: Tel. (662) 2769846-7 ext. 3; ANFREL's Secretariat Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh at Hotel Abakash Room 316: Tel. (88-02) 607085-8 Fax: (880-2) 871150; or via ODHIKAR office in Dhaka, Bangladesh: Tel. (88-02) 9560173 Fax. (88-02) 9567280.

5.3 ANFREL's International Observers Found the Polling Day in Bangladesh Relatively Peaceful and Festive (1 October 2001)

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) in collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat (UNEAS) and ODHIKAR, a leading national human rights and democracy advocate organization, deployed 27 international observers from 17 countries to observe Bangladesh 8th Parliamentary Election. From 25 September to 3 October, ANFREL's observation mission covered the following 28 sensitive

constituencies throughout the country: Dhaka-1, Dhaka-4, Dhaka-5, Dhaka-6, Dhaka-7, Dhaka-8, Dhaka-9, Dhaka-10, Dhaka-11, Dinajpur-3, Naogaon-1, Rajshahi-2, Sirajgonj-2, Jhenaidah-2, Jessore-3, Khulna-2, Patuakhali-2, Barisal-5, Jhalakhati-2, Tangail-2, Tangail-4, Tangail-5, Mymensingh-4, Munshinganj-4, Narayanganj-5, Sylhet-1, Sylhet-2, Chittagong-9 and Rangamati Hill District.

Against the backdrop of reports about pre-election violence, ANFREL's observers were impressed by remarkable enthusiasm of the voting public on 1 October. Voter turnout in most areas visited by ANFREL's observers was high. The active participation of female voters was also admirable. Nevertheless, ANFREL's observers in Dhaka, Munshinganj and Sylhet specifically expressed concerns about the disenfranchisement of voting rights of a number of people partly due to errors and confusions in the making of official voter lists. In addition, as reported by ANFREL's observers in Dhaka and Chittagong, democratic rights of some voters were taken away by problems of impersonation.

In general, the atmosphere in and around 250 polling centers covered by ANFREL's observers was festive and relatively peaceful. Initiatives of the caretaker government contributed to the restoration of a safe and stable environment on the polling day. Concerted efforts to uphold law and order by members of the civil servant and the various security forces also encouraged voters to participate actively in the election although isolated cases about the attacks and looting of polling centers and the intimidation of certain were reported in some areas such as in Munshinganj.

ANFREL's observers noted that the presence of foreign and domestic observers significantly strengthened voter's confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of the polls. The election on 1 October was the exercise of people's democratic rights and ANFREL was pleased to find that representatives of civil society, particularly domestic observers from various non-governmental organizations and members of the media in Bangladesh, were mostly welcome and able to perform their duties independently and safely on the election day. Representatives of contesting political parties were also helpful in assisting voters to locate their names on voter lists and identify their respective polling booths.

Regarding the administration of voting and counting process, ANFREL's observers pointed out that key procedures were actively and dutifully followed by polling and returning officers. Although there were reports about minor lapses and technical inconsistencies in some area, those problems should not undermine the integrity of overall electoral activities on 1 October.

At this stage, Bangladesh has passed a critical benchmark in the conduct of a democratic election peacefully with remarkable participation of the voting public. In the next step, ANFREL would like to see that vote tabulation be conducted with transparency and fairness. ANFREL calls on the Election Commission to investigate all serious complaints and reports about fraud and irregularity immediately, openly and impartially. This would be the foundation for election results to be respected voluntarily and peacefully by all sides. ANFREL also sincerely urges all contesting political parties to respect people's decisions with grace no matter election results will declare their victory or defeat.

Findings of ANFREL election observation mission in Bangladesh will be presented on 2 October at 3.00 pm at the National Press Club in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

For more information, please contact:

ANFREL Secretariat Office in Bangkok, Thailand: Tel. (662) 2769846-7 ext. 3; ANFREL Secretariat Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh at Hotel Abakash Room 316: Tel. (88-02) 607085-8 Fax: (880-2) 871150; or via ODHIKAR office in Dhaka, Bangladesh: Tel. (88-02) 9560173 Fax. (88-02) 9567280.

5.4 ANFREL Observation Mission statement carried by The New Nation (Local Bangladesh Press)2 October 2001

DHAKA
Tuesday
October 02, 2001

The New Nation
INDEPENDENT DAILY

ANFREL lauds enthusiasm of voters

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), a foreign election observer group which monitored parliamentary polls, said Bangladesh has passed a critical benchmark in conduct of a democratic election, reports BSS.

ALFREL called upon the Election Commission to investigate all serious complaints and reports about fraud and irregularity immediately, openly and fairly, a press release said in Dhaka on Monday.

This would be the foundation for election results to be respected voluntarily and peacefully by all sides. ANFREL also urged all contesting political parties to respect the people's will with grace no matter election results would declare their victory or defeat, the release said.

Against the backdrop of reports about pre-election violence, ANFREL observers were impressed by high enthusiasm of voters. The active participation of female voters was admirable, the observers noted.

Nevertheless, ANFREL observers in Dhaka, Munshiganj and Sylhet expressed concern over the disenfranchisement of a number of people partly due to errors on official voter lists. In addition, as reported by ANFREL observers in Dhaka, democratic rights of some eligible voters were taken away by problems of impersonation.

In general, the atmosphere in and around 205 polling centres covered by ANFREL observers was festive and relatively peaceful. Initiatives of the caretaker government contributed to the restoration of a safe and stable environment on the polling day.

Concerted efforts to uphold law and order by members of the civil servant and the various security forces, including the police, the army, the Bangladesh Rifle and the Village Defence Force, also encouraged voters to participate actively in the election although isolated cases about the attacks and looting of polling centres and the intimidation of voters were reported in certain areas such as in Munshiganj.

ANFREL observers noted that the presence of foreign and domestic observers significantly strengthened voter's confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of the polls.

The election was the exercise of people's democratic rights and ANFREL found that representatives of the civil society, particularly domestic observers and Bangladeshi journalists, were mostly welcome and able to perform their duties independently and safely.

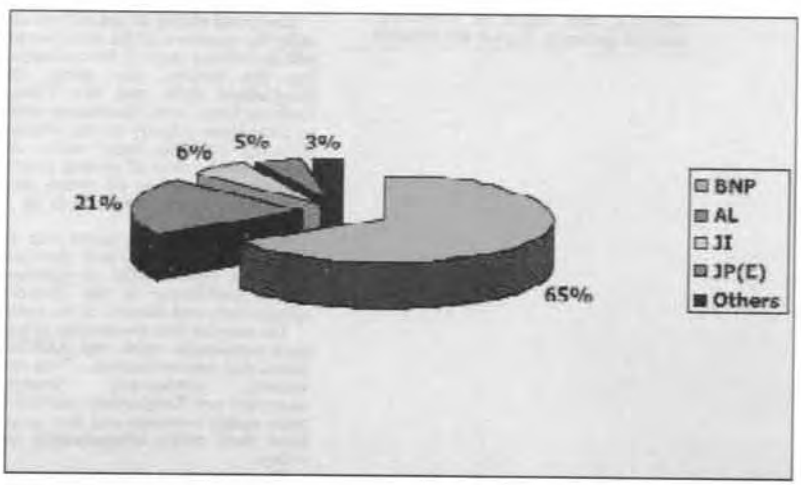
Representatives of contesting political parties were also helpful in helping voters to locate their names on voter lists and identify their respective polling booths.

Regarding the administration of voting and counting process, ANFREL observers pointed out that key procedures were actively and dutifully followed by polling officers.

6. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN BANGLADESH

6.1 Division-Wise Election Result Summery

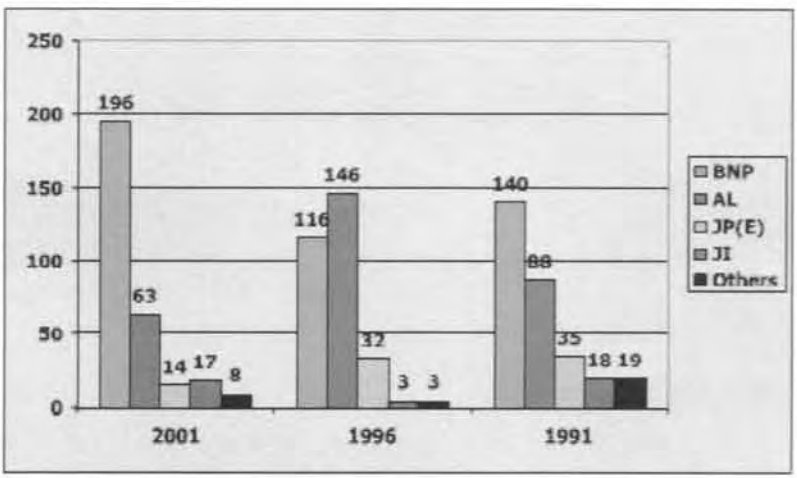
	Bangladesh Nationalist Party	Bangladesh Awami League	Jamaat- E- Islami Bangladesh	Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Ershad)	Others	Total
Dhaka	57	30	0	0	3	90
Chittagong	50	6	2	0	1	59
Rahshahi	44	9	5	14	0	72
Khulna	23	7	7	0	0	37
Barisal	16	3	2	0	2	23
Sylhet	9	7	1	0	2	19
Total	199	62	17	14	8	300



Source: Bangladesh Election Commission Information Sheet, November 12, 2001

6.2 Comparison of Parliamentary Seats

Political Party	Seats in the Parliament		
	2001	1996	1991
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	199	116	140
Bangladesh Awami League	62	146	88
Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh	17	32	35
Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Ershad)	14	3	18
Others	8	3	19
Total	300	300	300



Source: Bangladesh Election Commission Information Sheet, November 12, 2001

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This 8th Parliamentary Election was rated more disturbing than the previous elections in 1996 with reports of violence had intensified from about 500 reports of election-related killings and injuries to more than 2000 reports within a month toward the polling day. Such an increase was believed to be a result of the increasing polarization of political parties supporters and the diminished tolerance for different political opinions, which left no space for any reconciliation. Interestingly, Bangladesh's ordinary people seemed to have determined that they had suffered enough from intimidation and physical violence during the campaign period. With a high voter turnout of more than 70 percent on polling day, this could be a message sent to the political thugs that they were not afraid anymore.

ANFREL is a special project of Forum-Asia. It came about as part of Forum Asia's campaign for human rights and democratization in the region, starting from Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia and Malaysia. Formed in November 1997 by election monitoring groups and human rights organizations in Asia, ANFREL aims to contribute to the democratization process by building capacities through training and supporting actual monitoring of elections by local groups, lobbying and disseminating election-related information.

Forum Asia is a regional network of human rights and development organizations in Asia. It was established in Manila, Philippines in 1991. It strives to promote, on the basis of global perspective, a regional initiative towards the protection of human rights, development and peace in the region through collaboration of human rights and development NGOs and peoples' organizations in Asia.