

BANGLADESH (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF)

Date of Elections: March 7, 1973

Purpose of Elections

Following the adoption of the Constitution on November 4, 1972*, and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on December 15, 1972, general elections were held to select the totality of the membership of the newly-provided-for Parliament.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Bangladesh, the House of the Nation, consists of 300 members elected for 5 years. Until that dissolution of Parliament occurring next after the expiration of a period of 10 years subsequent to the effective date of the Constitution (December 16, 1972), 15 seats are in addition reserved exclusively for women, who are to be elected by Parliament itself.

Electoral System

Any citizen of Bangladesh — regardless of race, caste or sex — not less than 18 years of age, who has neither been declared insane nor convicted under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order 1972 may be enrolled on the electoral roll of a constituency delimited for the purpose of election to Parliament if he is a resident of that same constituency.

One electoral roll is established for each constituency. Voting is not compulsory.

All citizens of Bangladesh having attained the age of 25 qualify to be elected to Parliament. Disqualified, nevertheless, are the insane; undischarged bankrupts; persons who, on conviction for a criminal offense involving moral turpitude, have been sentenced to imprisonment for not less than 2 years, unless 5 years have elapsed since their release; persons owing allegiance to a foreign State; certain Government contractors; persons convicted under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order 1972; and persons holding certain offices of profit in the service of the Republic.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 11.

Nomination papers of candidates must be accompanied by a deposit of 1,000 Takas. Any person may simultaneously be a candidate in several constituencies.

The 300 members of Parliament chosen by popular vote are elected from as many constituencies on the basis of simple majority. Each elector expresses his vote by placing a mark with a rubber stamp within the space on the ballot containing the name and symbol of the candidates of his choice. A total of 55 different symbols had been provided for the March elections.

By-elections are held within 90 days to fill any seat falling vacant in Parliament.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On November 4, 1972 — the day of adoption of the Constitution — Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman announced that the country's first general elections would be held on March 7 — on the second anniversary of the launching of a " non-co-operation movement", the struggle for emancipation which led to the creation of Bangladesh.

When nominations closed on February 6, 1973, the approximately 1,100 candidates for the 300 parliamentary seats included members of 14 parties and 120 Independents, with the ruling Awami League not only contesting all of the seats but in fact being unopposed for 11 of them.

The main opposition was provided by the pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions of the National Awami Party and the leftist National Socialist Party, constituted by students and former soldiers. The Awami League announced its election manifesto on the basis of the 4 principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism, and discussed the national situation sector-wide, advocating domestic economic progress through rural uplifting, changes in district administration, flood control and reform of the educational system, while promising to follow a neutral and non-aligned foreign policy seeking friendship with all countries. The economy and the perilous food shortage in a country with one of the densest of the world's populations further concerned both the Awami League and the opposing parties.

While the campaign was marred by violence and accusations of voter intimidation, voting day was relatively quiet. In a landslide victory reminiscent of the Awami League's triumph in the 1970 national and provincial elections when Bangladesh was still part of Pakistan, the League won all but 7 seats. Although close contests occurred in certain constituencies, Opposition votes were generally divided. Prime Minister Sheik Mujib formed a new Cabinet on March 16.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in Parliament

Number of registered voters . . .	35,205,642 (300 constituencies)
	33,896,777 (289 contested constituencies)
Voters	19,329,683 (57%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . .	477,875
Valid votes	18,851,808

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats in Parliament
Awami League	300*	13,798,717	73.20	293
National Socialist Party	237	1,229,110	6.52	1
National Awami Party (pro-Soviet).	224	1,569,299	8.33	
National Awami Party (pro-Chinese).	169	1,002,771	5.32	
Independents.	120	989,884	5.25	
Other parties.	39	262,027	1.38	

300"

* Including 11 unrivalled candidates.

** Plus 15 seats reserved for female members, elected by Parliament itself.

2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category

Lawyers.	32 %
Merchants.	20 %
Agriculturists.	13 %
Social workers (including trade unionists).	12 %
Physicians.	9 %
Teachers.	6 %
Journalists.	6 %
Engineers.	1 %
Students.	1 %
	100 %

3. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex

Men . . .	300
Women.	15
	315

4. Average Age: 40 years