

BANGLADESH

Date of Elections: 7 May 1986

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament in the first such poll since nationwide martial law was imposed and the Parliament elected in February 1979 was dissolved in March 1982*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Bangladesh, the House of the Nation, consists of 300 members elected for 5 years. Thirty 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 offence involving moral turpitude, have been sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years, unless five 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 or of a statutory public authority.

Nomination papers of candidates must be accompanied by a deposit of 2,000 *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.

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

*See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XVI (1981-1982)*, p. 9.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The election date was finally set on 22 March 1986 after several postponements. On 7 April (the final day for submitting candidatures), a total of 1,527 nominations (including those of 453 independents) had reportedly been filed.

Main contenders for the parliamentary seats were the *Jatiya* (People's) Party, formed on 1 January 1986 when the nationwide ban on political activity was lifted, and comprising the five parties which had together formed the pro-government National Front in July 1985; the opposition leftist Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina Wazed, the daughter of Bangladesh's first Prime Minister Sheik Mujibur Rahman; and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which ultimately decided to boycott the poll.

Election day was held in a climate of unrest and was marked by opposition charges of voting fraud and malpractices. On 10 May, polling was suspended in 109 constituencies. Following re-elections in 37 constituencies on 19 May, final results giving *Jatiya* an absolute parliamentary majority were announced ten days later. On 7 July, *Jatiya* also gained the 30 House seats set aside for women, who were declared elected unopposed.

On 9 July, the inaugural House session was boycotted by 119 opposition and independent MPs. The same day, a new Cabinet was sworn in. The Prime Minister is Mr. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, a civilian. The Head of State since March 1982 is Lt-Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. 47,880,000 (approx.)

Political Group	J " ^
Jatiya Party.	183*
Awami League.	76
<i>Jamaat-i-Islami.</i>	10
Bangladesh Communist Party.	5
National Awami Party (Bhashani).	5
Bangladesh Moslem League.	4
<i>Jatiya Samajtantrik Dai-Rob.</i>	4
<i>Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal</i> (Shahjahan Siraj)	3
Bangladesh <i>Krishak Sramik.</i>	3
Bangladesh Workers Party.	3
National Awami Party (Muzaffar).	2
Independents.	32
	330

* Including the 30 seats reserved for women.