

GUIDELINES FOR FOREIGN ELECTION OBSERVERS

These Guidelines are intended to provide the foreign election observers a broad overview of the electoral management system of Bangladesh, procedures for accreditation as observer and a code of conduct to be followed by them. Vital information about Bangladesh, a sample Application Form for accreditation, a Pledge Form and a list of important telephone numbers have been annexed to the main write-up. Bangladesh Election Commission hopes that the guest observers would find this booklet handy and useful. Should they need any further information, they may contact the relevant persons mentioned in the list at Annex IV.

A. COUNTRY BRIEF OF BANGLADESH

Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971 following a nine-month liberation war. The country has bravely faced many calamities and has been marching ahead in achieving the millennium development goals. The micro credit concept pioneered by Dr. Muhammad Yunus as a tool for poverty alleviation and extensively used by the Grameen Bank earned them the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006.

Land and People

Bangladesh is the lowest riparian of the three mighty rivers entering its borders after traversing through several countries. The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna together constitute one of the largest basins of the world, of which only 7% area falls within the Bangladesh territories. During the rainy season covering the months from June to September, the country witnesses heavy rainfall. About one-third of the land in Bangladesh goes under water every year and this is what local people call normal flooding. For generations, people living in those areas have adjusted their way of life to the hydrological cycle and the annual event is taken for granted as part of their life. In some years, abnormal floods are triggered by high volume of upstream river flows accompanied by intensive local rainfall. The intensity and duration of floods vary from place to place and year to year.

The country has an extensive coastline of 710 kms at the southern end of the delta stretching from east to west. The coastal zone of Bangladesh is located to the north of a funnel-shaped shallow stretch of the Bay of Bengal. The coastal environment is dominated by huge river flows, strong tidal and wind actions and tropical cyclones and their associated storm surges.

Being basically a floodplain, Bangladesh consists of extremely low and flat land. The low-lying topography, funnel shaped coast exposing the land to cyclones and tidal surges and seasonal flooding have particularly made the country vulnerable to climate variability. The sea level along the Bangladesh coast is rising at about 3 millimeters a year and the sea surface temperature is also showing a rising trend. Concerted action would be needed at national and international level to combat the menace of climate change.

The occasional natural calamities, though causing temporary hardships, have never been able to damage the pristine beauty of the countryside or dampen the resilience of its people. In the south, the 100 km long unbroken sandy beach of Cox's Bazar is reported to be the longest in the world while the natural mangrove forests in the southwest of Bangladesh, known as the Sunderbans, have been declared as a world heritage site. The scenic beauty around the hills in the Chittagong Hill Tract districts is timeless and breadth-taking. The water bodies, called in

Bengali language *haors, baors and beels*, in the north-east of the country are precious assets of the country. These water bodies account for a large share of the natural capture fisheries and provide a habitat for a wide variety of aquatic vegetation and birds.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world, inhabited by about 140 million people on a meager 147570 sq. km of land. However, it is a homogenous country with an overwhelming majority of people having the same race, language, religion and cultural heritage. They live in harmony and peace along with the members of the minority communities.

System of Government and Elections

At independence, Bangladesh started its journey with a unitary and parliamentary system of government. In 1975, it switched over to a presidential system and reverted back to parliamentary system again in 1991 through two constitutional amendments. Of the three traditional branches of government, the legislature and the executive, depend fully or in part, on elections for their composition and legitimacy. According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, all legislative powers of the Republic are vested in the National Parliament. The Parliament consists of three hundred members elected from single member constituencies. In addition, forty-five seats are reserved exclusively for women members who are elected by the members of Parliament. The tenure of Parliament is for five years unless dissolved sooner.

Since independence, parliamentary elections have been held eight times leading to formation of eight successive governments. In 1991, elections were held under an interim administration and a democratically elected government took office after a lapse of about a decade. Through a constitutional amendment carried out in 1996, the system of Non-Party Care-Taker Government (CTG) was introduced to hold the National Assembly polls. Such a government would come into being on assumption of office by the Chief Advisor upon dissolution of the Parliament and its term would expire on assumption of office by the new Prime Minister. The idea of a CTG emanated primarily from a desire to hold parliamentary polls under a neutral administration. There has been peaceful transfer of power in 1996 and 2001 as a consequence of countrywide national elections held under the aegis of the CTG. Unfortunately for the country, persistence of a self-defeating and confrontational political culture has been hampering the full flowering of democratic political systems. Elections for constituting the 9th Parliament were scheduled for January 22, 2007. This election was postponed due to countrywide agitation against holding of election on the basis of a faulty voter list and large-scale politicization of public officials who are traditionally engaged on temporary basis for management of the polls. In these circumstances, emergency was declared in the country on January 11, 2007 and a new caretaker government was installed with a promise to hold a free and fair election at the earliest opportunity.

Election Management: Bangladesh Election Commission

The primary responsibility of holding the stalled 9th Parliamentary election rests with the Bangladesh Election Commission. The CTG is to provide all necessary assistance to the Commission in performing its assigned tasks. The Commission also needs the support of a number of public sector agencies, private institutions, civil society and non-Government organizations, media and, above all, the political parties and the voters.

The legal and institutional framework for the electoral management is provided by the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Republic and the various laws and rules made under those provisions. The Commission is mandated to discharge the following functions:

- i hold election to the office of the President of the Republic
- ii hold election of members of Parliament
- iii delimit the constituencies for the purpose of elections to Parliament; and
- iv prepare electoral rolls for the purpose of elections to the office of President and to Parliament.

Additionally, the Commission has to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by the Constitution or any other law. It is to be noted that conduct of elections to various local bodies and conduct of referendum are done under specific provisions of the relevant laws.

The Election Commissioners are appointed for a term of five years by the President on such terms and conditions as may be determined by him except that they can only be removed from office in like manner and on the like ground as a judge of the Supreme Court. The number of Commissioners has varied from Commission to Commission from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 5. The present Commission constituted on February 5, 2007 consists of 3 Commissioners.

The Commission is an independent constitutional body in the exercise of its functions and subject only to the Constitution and any other law. The Election Commission has a full-fledged Secretariat under it to render all assistance to execute the decisions and orders of the Commission. The Secretariat, in its turn, is assisted by a moderate field establishment. There are 9 Deputy Election Commissioners, 83 District Election Officers and 505 Upazila/Thana Election Officers posted respectively at the Divisional, District and Upazila/ Thanas. Their main functions are to maintain liaison with the next higher level of hierarchy and to provide support to the many activities carried out by the Secretariat in fulfilling the mandate of the Commission. The permanent staff of the Secretariat consists of around 2006 persons. For conducting the parliamentary polls, the Commission needs to mobilize around half a million polling staff while for conducting the upazila polls the requirement is about one hundred thousand more staff. These figures do not contain the number of persons drawn from the law enforcing agencies deployed to ensure peaceful poll environment.

Electoral Reforms: Preparation of Voter List

It is a mandatory responsibility of the Commission to prepare appropriate and correct voter list of all voting age population prior to holding of election to the Parliament. Till the election to the eighth Parliament, voter list has been prepared by following what may be termed as traditional method. Under this system, a large number of enumerators are deployed to collect data on voters in the prescribed form through door to door visits. Each statement is verified by a supervisor who has to certify to the effect that the entries have been verified or corrected after house to house visit. A draft electoral roll is thereafter prepared on the basis of the statements and published by the Registration Officer after verification of entries to the extent of at least ten percent through house to house visit by an authorized officer together with a

notice inviting claims or objections. After disposing of the claims and objections, the Registration Officer publishes the final electoral roll in the print form.

This system, however, has always been suspect of many malpractices. The enumerators and their supervisors were paid very poorly for such an arduous task as door to door visit. There is also a widespread practice of voters to register at more than one place, generally at their current work places and at their home addresses, though the legal provisions strictly prohibit registration in more than one place. This led to undesirable duplication of enrolment opening the floodgate for malpractices during polling.

In response to the demands for holding credible, free and fair elections, the reconstituted Election Commission considered a number of options for preparing a trustworthy and generally acceptable voter list. It finally decided to go for voter listing with photographs by using the latest computer-based technology. It was also decided to use the same database to execute a National Identity Card (NID) program as it did not require any extra time for the effort. In carrying out the joint voter registration and NID program, the Commission made a blending of the traditional system with the new technology. Basic data is collected by the traditional enumerators through door to door visits following which the voter is required to pay a visit to the designated registration center on the appointed day for data entry and giving his photograph and fingerprints. The task was challenging not only in terms of its enormity but also in terms of logistics. It involved reaching 80 million people, an overwhelming majority of them living in the rural areas and in many cases in inaccessible areas, and then asking them to come to the registration centers to give their photographs and fingerprints. Serious doubts were expressed by knowledgeable quarters if the women, particularly the purdah-observing ones, would at all be willing to give their photographs and the poor and the disadvantaged would ever make it to the registration centers. The size of the voter population required the laying out of an operational plan that involved procurement of 10,000 laptops, web cameras, finger print scanners and other equipment and accessories that are not available off the shelf, mobilizing 3,11,078 data collectors, 1,04,025 data entry operators, 62,069 supervisors, 5,708 Assistant Registration Officers and a good number of technical managers and proof readers. Mobilizing such a huge manpower and procuring the enormous number of equipment and accessories within a tight time-frame was not something out of the ordinary.

The Election Commission entrusted this challenging task to the Bangladesh Army. The process that had begun with pilot-testing at Sreepur in July, 2007 has been successfully completed by them on schedule. Electronic database for more than 80 million people has been created and similar number of national identity cards issued in less than 11 months. In a large measure, this voter registration project owes its success to the fruitful partnership between the Bangladesh Army and the Election Commission. Through this partnership, the Commission not only had access to a highly disciplined and experienced set of professionals but also to a resource base long before it could procure its own equipment and accessories.

In the process of computerized registration, the project has trained more than one hundred thousand young men and women as data entry operators who would constitute a technical pool to be used by the country towards developing its ICT infrastructure in the near future. The registration process has also brought more than 80 million people of this country face to face with the computer technology, many of whom have not seen this instrument in their life time. Never before in the history of Bangladesh had such a mobilization of people and their exposure to a new technology on such a large scale taken place. The possession of national

identity card has given a sense of empowerment and belonging to the disadvantaged and marginalized people of the country, particularly women.

The computerized database is an essential first step towards ensuring a free and fair election not only for the forthcoming 2008 election but for many elections to be held in the future. Information collected in respect of all eligible voters all over the country are stored in a central database for annual updating with facility for decentralized use at the district and upazila levels.. This new approach would be considered a landmark in the management of elections in Bangladesh where getting a trustworthy voter list had remained elusive in the past.

Electoral Reforms: Amendments of Laws

The Election Commission has also carried out reforms of very fundamental nature in the electoral laws to facilitate institutionalization of democratic process. It involved dialogue with 16 political parties in three successive rounds. Opinion of senior editors and journalists, various professional groups, civil society and non-Government organizations and many other stakeholders were also earnestly sought. The Commission has largely succeeded in amending the basic law relating to election management, namely, the Representation of People Order, 1972 and two other rules relating to registration of political parties and their code of conduct during polls. The reforms have concentrated in the areas of qualification and disqualification of candidates, limiting election expenditure, code of conduct during poll period and registration of political parties. The dialogue with the political parties has been a very pleasant and unique experience for the Commission where participants discussed freely and frankly relevant issues and came to a consensus on most of them. The registration of the political parties with the Commission provides an institutional framework through which a sound working relationship would develop between them.

Electoral Reforms: Delimitation

Another mandatory task accomplished by the Commission is the delimitation of the electoral constituencies. The relevant law requires such delimitation after each census. However, only minor adjustments were made to the constituencies following the release of the censuses in both the early 1980s and the early 1990s. The 2001 Census Report was published only in 2007 making it obligatory on the part of the Commission to carry out the task prior to holding of elections by December, 2008.

Because only minor changes to the boundaries had been made in the last 24 years, the existing constituencies varied dramatically in population. The Commission decided to do a thorough job and used the geographic information system as the basic tool for the exercise. In the span of six month's time, it closely scrutinized the boundaries of all 300 constituencies with reference to the principles to be followed for delimitation and redrew the boundaries of 133 constituencies. Delimitation is indeed a very sensitive task and despite some adverse criticism, it successfully completed the task on time and the upcoming polls would be conducted on the basis of these changed constituency boundaries.

Electoral Reforms: Translucent Ballot Boxes

Another important decision taken by the Commission for ensuring free and fair election is the introduction of translucent ballot boxes. The use of translucent boxes will prevent the recurrence of many traditional malpractices. Since the ballots inside these boxes are visible from outside, it will not be possible to place filled up boxes at polling booths or take away half empty boxes to be filled later on by tricking polling agents or election observers. Moreover, each box is numbered and can be tracked through computer program centrally. In case of takeover of a polling station, the miscreants may not be able to seal the boxes as prescribed as they may not get the plastic strings that are also serially numbered or they may not be able to lock them up without training.

Media

The electronic and print media play a vital role in mobilizing public opinion in Bangladesh. Economic, social, political, religious and cultural issues are raised in the media and these are passionately discussed and debated in different forums. Media also takes the pain to unearth information to the general public that are not ordinarily accessible to them.

The Commission, in its turn, tries to maintain a good working relationship with the media and try to feed them as much information as it considers necessary. The Commission also takes care to see that the state-owned newspapers and electronic media provide balanced and objective news coverage of contesting candidates. In this behalf, clear guidelines have been prepared recently for strict adherence by all concerned.

Election Observation

The Election Commission encourages both domestic and foreign observation of polls to ensure their neutrality and fairness. The existing Guidelines have recently been reviewed by the Commission and two separate Guidelines have been issued, one for the international and the other for the domestic observers. Both domestic and foreign observers are permitted to watch the polling processes and their sponsors are expected to submit written reports soon after the conclusion of the poll.

Civil Society

The presence of civil society is very strongly felt in the domain of electoral process in Bangladesh. In addition to a large number of local civil society organizations, quite a few foreign entities also operate like civil society. The Asia Foundation, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute are a few notable examples. These societies carry on election observation work, substantive research on improving the electoral process and institutional and legal framework and hold seminars and workshops for educating the concerned people for improving the electoral system and methods. They also arrange interregional workshops for exchange of views among officials of concerned organizations.

NGOs

Non-governmental Organizations assist the Commission in creating voter awareness, particularly sensitizing the disadvantaged women, tribal people and members of minority communities about their voting rights. Like the civil society, they also engage in election observation and monitoring.

Though conduct of polls is the sole responsibility of the Election Commission, it is not possible for the Commission to accomplish the task alone. It needs the whole-hearted cooperation of all concerned operatives. In the past, the Commission has received the help and support of a multiplicity of organizations and expect to get such help in the future. The Commission works for the people to ensure their voting rights and it is their unwavering support that keeps the Commission going.

B. ACCREDITATION OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS

The following procedures shall be followed for accreditation of foreign observers.

a) Application Procedure:

- I. Foreign observers intending to observe the forthcoming elections need to apply to the Commission in the prescribed form annexed to the Guidelines. Filled out forms may be sent to the Commission either through e-mail (pro@ecs.gov.bd) or by fax (880-2-9129773). Local offices of foreign diplomatic missions or of regional groups or international organizations may forward the applications directly to the Commission by special messenger or mail.
- II. Applications received through e-mail or fax or locally shall be scrutinized by the Secretariat of the Commission and forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs for clearance with a simultaneous copy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Home Affairs shall convey its clearance directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under intimidation to the Commission.
- III. Subject to clearance by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will instruct the concerned Mission abroad for issuing the necessary visas. In case of necessity, it may also instruct the Airport Immigration to issue “on arrival” visas.
- IV. Observers intending to travel from countries, where currently there are no Bangladeshi Missions, should send their application forms directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who shall then send these to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Election Commission for further necessary action.

b) Grant of Visa:

- I. Election observers will be granted tourist visas. The validity of visas for long term observers would be for two months while for short term observers the period would be three weeks.
- II. Immigration officials at the Zia International Airport would mark the “Election Observer” seal on the passports of the observers.

- III. Observers traveling from countries where Bangladesh has its diplomatic missions will have to obtain visas prior to their journey. However, in exceptional cases, “on arrival” visas may be arranged.
- IV. Observers traveling from countries where Bangladesh does not have any diplomatic mission will have to obtain their visas from the neighboring Bangladesh Missions or follow the procedure as detailed at BIV above.

c) Airport Help Desk:

An Airport Help Desk would be set up by Airport Immigration 10(ten) days prior to the actual date of polling for reception and assistance to incoming observers and journalists.

d) Observation Cell:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs would run an Observation Cell to coordinate with all concerned agencies for processing of visas and other related matters.

e) Foreign Journalists:

- I. Foreign journalists intending to cover the forthcoming polls would have to follow the same procedures for obtaining visas as in the case of the observers.
- II. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting will open a Media Center with all modern facilities for transmitting news and messages by the foreign journalists.
- III. Upon arrival at the airport, the Airport Help Desk will arrange to establish their contact with the Media Cell who in its turn will contact the Election Commission for providing them with identification cards and stickers for vehicles and other necessary documents.

f) Security:

- I. Ministry of Home Affairs will instruct the concerned Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to provide the necessary security to the foreign observers and journalists during their visit to different polling stations of the country. The sponsoring organizations of the observers and journalists must provide their itinerary of visits well ahead of time to the Ministry of Home for ensuring the needed service. Bangladesh Government or the Election Commission will not be responsible for any mishap encountered by any such visitor who follows his own program.
- II. A list of all observers and foreign journalists will be sent to the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents by the Election Commission and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

g) Health Care:

Ministry of Health and Family Planning will alert all medical establishments under its control to provide the necessary health care to all visiting foreign observers and journalists should such occasions arise during their visit to different polling centers throughout the country.

C. CODE OF CONDUCT

International election observation is conducted by intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations and associations in order to provide an impartial and accurate assessment of the nature of election processes. Much, therefore, depends on ensuring the integrity of international election observation and, all who are part of these missions, must subscribe to and follow this Code of Conduct.

Respect Sovereignty and International Human Rights

Elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The rights of citizens to vote and to be elected at periodic, genuine elections are internationally recognized human rights, and they require the exercise of a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Election observers must respect the sovereignty of the host country, as well as the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people.

Respect the Laws of the Country and the Authority of Electoral Bodies

Observers must respect the laws of the host country and the authority of the bodies charged with administering the electoral process. Observers must follow any lawful instruction from the country's governmental, security and electoral authorities. Observers also must maintain a respectful attitude toward electoral officials and other national authorities. Observers must note if laws, regulations or the actions of state and/or electoral officials unduly burden or obstruct the exercise of election-related rights guaranteed by law, constitution or applicable international instruments.

Respect the Integrity of the International Election Observation Mission

Observers must respect and protect the integrity of the international election observation mission. This includes following this Code of Conduct, any written instructions (such as a terms of reference, directives and guidelines) and any verbal instructions from the observation mission's leadership. Observers must: attend all of the observation mission's required briefings, trainings and debriefings; become familiar with the election law, regulations and other relevant laws as directed by the observation mission; and carefully adhere to the methodologies employed by the observation mission. Observers also must report to the leadership of the observation mission any conflicts of interest they may have and any improper behavior they see conducted by other observers that are part of the mission.

Maintain Strict Political Impartiality at All Times

Observers must maintain strict political impartiality at all times, including leisure time in the host country. They must not express or exhibit any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, political parties, candidates, referenda issues or in relation to any contentious issues in the election process. Observers also must not conduct any activity that could be reasonably perceived as favoring or providing partisan gain for any political competitor in the host country, such as wearing or displaying any partisan symbols, colors, banners or accepting anything of value from political competitors.

Do Not Obstruct Election Processes

Observers must not obstruct any element of the election process, including pre-election processes, voting, counting and tabulation of results and processes transpiring after election day. Observers may bring irregularities, fraud or significant problems to the attention of election officials on the spot, unless this is prohibited by law, and must do so in a non-obstructive manner. Observers may ask questions of election officials, political party representatives and other observers inside polling stations and may answer questions about their own activities, as long as observers do not obstruct the election process. In answering questions observers should not seek to direct the election process. Observers may ask and answer questions of voters but may not ask them to tell for whom or what party or referendum position they voted.

Provide Appropriate Identification

Observers must display identification provided by the election observation mission, as well as identification required by national authorities, and must present it to electoral officials and other interested national authorities when requested.

Maintain Accuracy of Observations and Professionalism in Drawing Conclusions

Observers must ensure that all of their observations are accurate. Observations must be comprehensive, noting positive as well as negative factors, distinguishing between significant and insignificant factors and identifying patterns that could have an important impact on the integrity of the election process. Observers' judgments must be based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis, distinguishing subjective factors from objective evidence. Observers must base all conclusions on factual and verifiable evidence and not draw conclusions prematurely. Observers also must keep a well documented record of where they observed, the observations made and other relevant information as required by the election observation mission and must turn in such documentation to the mission.

Refrain from Making Comments to the Public or the Media before the Mission Speaks

Observers must refrain from making any personal comments about their observations or conclusions to the news media or members of the public before the election observation mission makes a statement, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the observation mission's leadership. Observers may explain the nature of the observation mission, its activities and other matters deemed appropriate by the observation mission and should refer the media or other interested persons to the those individuals designated by the observation mission.

Cooperate with Other Election Observers

Observers must be aware of other election observation missions, both international and domestic, and cooperate with them as instructed by the leadership of the election observation mission.

Maintain Proper Personal Behavior

Observers must maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including exhibiting sensitivity for host-country cultures and customs, exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time.

Violations of This Code of Conduct

In a case of concern about the violation of this Code of Conduct, the election observation mission shall conduct an inquiry into the matter. If a serious violation is found to have occurred, the observer concerned may have their observer accreditation withdrawn or be dismissed from the election observation mission. The authority for such determinations rests solely with the leadership of the election observation mission.

Pledge to Follow This Code of Conduct

Every person who participates in this election observation mission must read and understand this Code of Conduct and must sign a pledge to follow it.

ANNEX 1: Vital Statistics of Bangladesh

A. General	
Name of the Country	The People's Republic of Bangladesh
Capital	Dhaka : Area-1416 Sq.Km. Population 12 million (2008 estimate)
President	Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed
Chief Advisor	Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Area	1,47,570 sq.km; Economic Zone-Upto 370.40 km. in the high seas measured from the base line
Boundary	North: India West : India East : India and Myanmar South: Bay of Bengal
Religious Affinity	Islam (88.3%), Hinduism (10.5%), Buddhism (0.6%) and Christianity(0.3%)
Unit of Currency	Taka
Time	GMT+6.00 hours.
Administrative Units	Division: 6; District: 64; City Corporation: 6; Municipality:308; Sub-district (upazila) 481; Police Station: 596; Union: 4498 and Village: 87319
Major Cities	Dhaka, Chittagong. Khulna, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Comilla, Barisal and Sylhet
Climate	Average Winter temp (Max 26.5° C Min 13.9° C). Average Summer temp (Max 40° C Min 21° C)
Monsoon Rainfall	Lowest 453mm. Highest 1733 mm (Average)
Humidity	Highest 99% Lowest 73 %
Main Seasons	Winter (November – February), Summer (March –June), Monsoon (July – October)
Language	Bengali but English is widely used
Principal Rivers	Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Bhahmaputra, Teesta, Surma and Karnaphuli in all 230 rivers including tributaries
Principal Minerals	Natural Gas, Coal, Limestone, Ceramic, Clay and Glass Sand
Principal Crops	Rice, Jute, Wheat, Tobacco, Sugarcane, Pulses, Oilseeds, Spices, Potatoes, Vegetables, Jackfruit, Banana, Mango, Coconut and Tea
Principal Industries	Garments, Jute, Textile, Tea, Paper, Newsprint, Cement, Fertilizer, Sugar, Engineering, Electric cables , Leather, Fish.
Principal Exports	Readymade garments, Jute and Jute products, Tea, Leather and

	Frozen fish and food.
Sea Ports	Chittagong and Mongla.
Airports	Dhaka, Chittagong , Jessore, Rajshahi, Iswardi, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar, Syedpur and Barisal .
B. Social Indicators	
Population	Approximately 158.6 million (2008 estimate); annual growth rate 1.8% (2001-07 average) and density 939 persons per square km (2005)
GNI (US\$ billions)	75
GNI per capita (US\$)	470
Life expectancy at birth (Years)	65.1
Infant Mortality (per 1000 live births)	52
Literacy(percentage of population age 15+)	47
Gross Primary Enrollment (% of school-age population)	103
Male	101
Female	105
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	49.51
Average annual growth of labor force(2001-07)	2.1
C. Economic Indicators	
GDP (US\$ billions)	42.3
GDP (Average annual growth 2006)	6.5
GDP per capita (Average annual growth 2006)	4.8
Export of goods and services (US\$ millions 2007)	13,537
Import of goods and services (US\$ millions 2007)	18,256

Export of goods and services (average annual growth)	25.8 (2006)	
Import of goods and services (average annual growth)	25.2 (2006)	
Percentage of GDP (1997)	25.8	
• agriculture	25.1	
• industry	15.6	
• manufacturing	49.1	
• service		
D. Election-related Data on Parliamentary Polls		
	2001 Election	2008 Election
Number of Districts	64	64
Number of Parliamentary Constituencies	300	300
Number of Voters	7,49,46,364	8,10,58,698
Number of Polling Stations	29,978	35,216
Number of Polling Booths	1,49,288	1,77,107
Voter per Polling Station		2302
Number of Returning Officers	68	66
Number of Assistant Returning Officers	525	586
Number of Presiding Officers	29,978	35,216
Number of Assistant Presiding Officers	1,49,288	1,77,107
Number of Polling Officers	2,98,576	3,54,214
Total Polling Personnel	4,77,842	5,66,537
Number of Registered Political Parties	54 parties contested, there being no system of party registration	32

ANNEX: II APPLICATION FORM



Bangladesh Election Commission
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka
www.ecs.gov.bd

Two
Photographs
(Stamp size)

Foreign Election Observation Application Form

1. Name :.....
2. Delegation/Group/Country:.....
3. Passport Details : Number :.....
Date of expiry:.....
4. Nationality :.....
5. Coming from :.....
- 6: Address in Dhaka :
.....
7. E-mail :.....
- 8: Phone (if available) :.....

By signing this application I hereby confirm that I will respect the guidelines issued by the Bangladesh Election Commission for the role of the International Election Observers. And I confirm that the Election Commission has the right to reject my accreditation

Date:

Signature

ANNEX III: PLEDGE TO BE SIGNED BY INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVER

I have read and understand the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that was provided to me by the international election observation mission. I hereby pledge that I will follow the Code of Conduct and that all of my activities as an election observer will be conducted completely in accordance with it. I have no conflicts of interest, political, economic nor other, that will interfere with my ability to be an impartial election observer and to follow the Code of Conduct.

I will maintain strict political impartiality at all times. I will make my judgments based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis, distinguishing subjective factors from objective evidence, and I will base all of my conclusions on factual and verifiable evidence.

I will not obstruct the election process. I will respect national laws and the authority of election officials and will maintain a respectful attitude toward electoral and other national authorities. I will respect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of the country. I will maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including exhibiting sensitivity for host-country cultures and customs, exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time.

I will protect the integrity of the international election observation mission and will follow the instructions of the observation mission. I will attend all briefings, trainings and debriefings required by the election observation mission and will cooperate in the production of its statements and reports as requested. I will refrain from making personal comments, observations or conclusions to the news media or the public before the election observation mission makes a statement, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the observation mission's leadership.

Signed

Print Name

Date

ANNEX IV: IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Sl. No.	Name	Office
Bangladesh Election Commission		
01	Dr. A T M Shamsul Huda Chief Election Commissioner	8115315
02	Muhammed Sohul Hussain Election Commissioner	8122598
03	M. Sakhawat Hussain Election Commissioner	8115796
Election Commission Secretariat		
04	Md. Humayun Kabir Secretary	8115631
05	Md Rafiqul Islam, Phd Joint Secretary	8115480
06	N I Khan Joint Secretary (Law)	8122065
07	SM Asaduzzaman Public Relations Officer	8114176
Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
08	Md. Touhid Hossain Secretary	9562122
09	M. Zulfiqur Rahman Directo General, External Publicity Wing	9562113
10	Tareq Ahmed Director (FSO)	9557029
Ministry of Home Affairs		
11	Md.Abdul Karim Secretary	7160405
12	Maksumul Hakim Chowdhury Joint Secretary (Political)	7164610
13	Md Abdur Rob Hawlader DG-Imigration and Passport	8159878
14	Md Rafiuddin Ahmed Director, Passport and Visa	8159960
15	Airport Emigration Help Desk	8950250
Ministry of Information		
16	Jamil Osman Secretary	7168555
17	Principal Information Officer Iftekhar Husain	7161091
Bangladesh Police		
18	Nur Mohammad IGP	7176677
19	Naim Ahmed Police Commissioner, Dhaka	8316248
20	Police Control room	8616551-3, 8613400 01713373119
Imporatnt Telephone Number		
21	Parjatan Corporation	9899288-91
22	Civil Avation Authority Zia International Airport	8914810-19, 8960002-5
23	Biman Bangladesh Airline	8917400-39
Hotels		
24	Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel	8111005, 8112011

25	Radison Water Garden Hotel	8754507-20
26	Dhaka Sheraton Hotel	8330001, 8358060
27	Hhotel Abakash	8811109, 9899290
Hospitals		
28	Dhaka Medical College & Hospital	8626812, 8626823, 8626812-19
29	BIRDEM	9661551-6
30	Holy Family Hospital	8311721-25
31	BSMMU	8612550-4