

Election to Parliaments of Bangladesh

by Osman Ghani Khan

Among the elections to the seven parliaments of Bangladesh, the election to the 5th Parliament dated February 27, 1991, under the interim government headed by Chief Justice Shahabuddin was 'free and fair', and perhaps the best of elections in the country.

ELECTION is the process of filling up political positions by votes. Parliamentary election in Bangladesh is held for a term of five years, on the basis of adult franchise.

The Parliament has 300 general seats for direct election, and there are 30 seats reserved for women to be filled by indirect election.

The seventh election was held on June 12, 1996 under a caretaker government headed by a retired Chief Justice Mr Habibur Rahman, with a team of advisers constituted according to the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Going backwards election to the Sixth Parliament was held under the BNP regime under parliamentary form of government on February 15, 1996.

Some comments of the Time magazine, dated Dec 7, 1987, Bangladesh Blow by Blow, regarding the May 7, 1986 election are quoted below.

... He has been trying almost since the day he seized power in a military coup in 1982 to transform himself into a legitimate democratic leader.

In an editorial titled "Nomination Hiccups", The Daily Star, dated January 16, 1996, stated "Simmering dis-

content and outbursts have marked the ruling BNP's nominations of candidates for certain constituencies of the next parliamentary polls. From Narayanjan to Nilphamari, from Shariatpur to Sylhet to Rajshahi the intricate feud has been manifest, sometimes in an ugly form.

There were wide reports about 'rebellion in BNP', etc on the nomination issue published in the Janakantha dated January 12, 1996, January 13, 1996, January 11, 1996, January 16, 1996, January 18, 1996. Reports were also published about 'violence' and 'Hartal' etc. in The New Nation, dated February 11, 1996, The Daily Star, dated February 2, 1996, Janakantha, dated February 11, 1996, Feb. 13, 1996, February 6, 1996.

Violence also occurred during election of the seventh Parliament on June 12, 1996, for which by-elections were arranged by the Election Commission for 27 constituencies with a large number of polling centres.

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It may be mentioned that during the term of the 5th Parliament, 144 members of three major opposition parties, the AL, Jamaat-e-Islami and the BNP, submitted resignation through the leaders of their parties to the Speaker of the Parliament.

They all absented from the Parliament up to the date of its dissolution - on November 24, 1995. Some details of their boycott of the Parliament may be found in the Article "Mass resignation - opposition parties seek to boycott Parliament in Bangladesh" by the Speaker, Shaikh Razzak Ali, MP, published in The Parliamentarian, the journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth, July 1995 LXXVI No. 3, page 184.

published in the Holiday dated July 5, 1996, told a tale of largescale rigging and ballot-stuffing, Mr Kazi Zafar and Mr Monirul Huq Chowdhury of the JP, and Mr Shamsul Huq, AL candidate for a seat in Comilla district, had also their tales to tell.

Such spectacular defeat of notables indicated that winning a parliamentary seat is not easy. It was also demonstrated that name of a party is not necessarily above the qualities of the contesting candidates, their knowledge and fund of experience.

The elections to Bangladesh Parliaments have taught us some lessons. One lesson learnt from the results of all the elections to the seven Parliaments is that in spite of all inadequacies of democracy, the people in general ultimately vote for the right person.

People such as Minic are trying to pick up the pieces - both mental and physical - left by the civil wars that torn through the Balkans over the past five years.

One mother, Mira, is staying with her four-year-old daughter Natasha, who suffers from cerebral palsy. With the help of a physiotherapist, Natasha is struggling gamely to improve her walking.

At home it was very difficult," says Mira. "We were stuck in our apartment because it was too dangerous to go out."

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Children Learn to Live with Scars of War

Tim Weaver writes from Igalo, Yugoslavia

The Dayton peace agreement has brought hope to Bosnia and surrounding regions, where people are picking up the pieces of lives and lands torn by conflict.

Patchwork peace: the Dayton deal. A map of Bosnia and Herzegovina showing territorial divisions and corridors. Includes a legend for 'Still disputed', 'Srb Republic', 'Croatia', 'Muslim/Croat ceded to Serb', 'Serb ceded to Muslim/Croat', and 'Muslim/Croat Federation'. Numbered points 1-7 mark key locations like Mirkonjic Grad, Brcko, Sarajevo, Gorazde, Mostar, and Prevlaka.

homes attacked and 57 per cent reported having a wounded parent. In Igalo, such children can benefit from psychotherapy. Counsellors encourage their young patients to open up and express their shock, fear and anger, through talking, playing games drawing and other outlets.

To help set up the programme, UNICEF provided \$75,000 and organised specialised training for staff. The

psychiatrists also learned how to manage their own job-related stress. One problem they face is the sense of frustration at not being able to do more to help. Because of this, most children can stay for little more than a month. But this is not enough, says Minic.

Even short-term therapy should last six months. If you open the trauma, you have to be able to close it, and you cannot do that in a month.

Sometimes it is better not to start the treatment at all, especially when the children have lost their parents. There is not enough time for the grieving process to be completed. At first I wanted all the children to stay, and I can ask some to stay longer, but I cannot do that for everyone."

Minic tells of one young girl who came to the centre grieving for a brother who was killed in fighting. The girl had worn black for a year and had not laughed. At the centre, she

learned to live again and to laugh. "But I knew that when she went home, things would return to the way they were."

In nearby Croatia, another UNICEF-assisted programme is using art to help lift the spirits of children who witnessed the horrors of war.

School children in the industrial town of Slavonki Brod, on the border with Bosnia, are creating drama and pictures celebrating peace and tolerance. Their inspiration is the work of a Croatian writer, Ivana Brlic-Mazurancic, who wrote folklore tales of human triumph over evil supernatural forces.

Slavonki Brod suffered extensive damage during the fighting that followed the creation of an independent Croatia in 1991. The locals' former antagonists live just across the River Sava in Bosnia, and the Serb-held region of East Slavonia lies to the east.

The idea of using moralistic fairy tales to impress upon the children that war is not the natural state of affairs is championed by Verica Vukelic, who for 20 years worked for the town's culture fund. She has been helped by her husband, Mato, the town mayor.

He and counterparts from 11 other former front-line towns in Croatia have declared themselves 'defenders of children' as part of a global initiative, launched by mayors and municipal leaders in 1992, to ensure that 'youngsters' needs are met in accordance with the international Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Croatian mayors have stated projects based on various themes. Dubrovnik, for instance, has taken the lead in educating young people about the dangers of land-mines and unexploded devices.

Slavonki Brod's mayor and his fellow civic leaders are driven by the desire to rebuild for the young. He says: "There is no more important thing in the town than the children."

The writer is a freelance journalist currently based in Croatia.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 22nd July (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes)

BTV 3:00 Opening... 7:30 News... 10:00 News... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

CHANNEL V 7:00 News... 7:30 News... 8:00 News... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

STAR PLUS 6:30 Action... 7:00 Action... 7:30 Action... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

BBC 6:00 BBC Newsroom... 7:30 BBC News... 10:00 BBC News... 11:00 BBC News... 11:40 Close down

PTV 8:00 am Tawar Aur Tarpan... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

EL TV 06:00am Dance Dance... 10:00 Music... 11:40 Close down

ZEE TV 6:00 The News... 7:00 The News... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

ZEE CINEMA 9:30 Man Gaya Usta... 11:00 Man Gaya Usta... 11:40 Close down

DD 7 10:30 Jannat... 11:00 Narugest... 11:40 Close down

Close-up of Antakshari on Zee-TV, tonight at 11:30

STAR Sports 6:00 International... 7:00 News... 11:00 News... 11:40 Close down

STAR MOVIES 7:30 Comedy... 11:00 Comedy... 11:40 Close down

SONY ET 8:30am Yandoo Ki Baarat... 11:00 Comedy... 11:40 Close down

JAMES BOND 8:30am Yandoo Ki Baarat... 11:00 Comedy... 11:40 Close down

