

Historic landslide win for BNP



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia smiles as she responds to a query during a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

Time for unity, not division: Khaleda

Don't disrespect portraits or take law in own hands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday appealed to the people to help combat terrorism in the country and not to take law in their own hands.

India looks forward to working with new govt

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday said it looked forward to working with the newly-elected government in Bangladesh.

Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party yesterday appeared heading for a crushing election victory over immediate-

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Debacle for AL, bags 62 seats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League has suffered a major debacle, as the BNP stormed to a landslide victory in the country's eighth general election held Monday.

With unofficial results of 282 constituencies emerging at the end of the day, it was clear yesterday that the electorate had meted out a punishing defeat to the immediate-past ruling party of Sheikh Hasina. Results of 16 constituencies will be announced following repolling in 90 centres. Election to one constituency was not held following death of a candidate two days before the polls.

Failure to redress deteriorating law and order, and unbridled corruption among other issues have inflicted the worst electoral setback on the more than 50-year-old party, said political analysts.

The BNP candidates have bagged 179 seats so far and along with its allies secured two-thirds majority in the 300-seat Jatiya Sangsad. With the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jatiya Party (Nazir) and the Islami Oikya Jote winning in 16, four and two constituencies respectively, the alliance already boasts 201 seats.

BNP Chairperson and leader of the four-party

alliance Khaleda Zia expressed gratitude to the Almighty and thanked the people for the victory. She also called for "restraint, tolerance and good behaviour".

"Do not show disrespect to any picture or shrine, do not misbehave with any person, and do not covet other people's property," she said in a press statement issued yesterday.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Hasina, whose party has so far secured 62 seats, has made allegation of "crude rigging" in the polls.

At a press conference yesterday, she said that she was appalled by the outcome and refused to accept the results but stopped short of detailing any political programme. Any such move, she said, "will be considered later".

However, a large number of media personnel and foreign and local observers have termed Monday's election free and fair. Despite widespread apprehension of violence on the election day, voting was by and large peaceful and marked by a record turnout.

Foreign observers visited several polling stations

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AL rejects election results, alleges 'crude rigging'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League has rejected the results of the October 1 parliamentary elections and alleged 'crude rigging' in the polls.

"There is no question of accepting the results when people have already rejected the same," AL President Sheikh Hasina told newsmen at a crowded press conference at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday afternoon.

Hasina also declared that she would resume movement to help people regain their right to franchise. She said people's aspirations were not reflected in the results, as there has been conspiracy. "I'll meet my party leaders soon and decide the course (of action)."

"I would have regretted had people not cast votes for us. But, today I'm protesting because we're



Sheikh Hasina

deprived of the votes though people had cast those in our favour."

She expressed deep concern at the outcome of the October 1 elec-

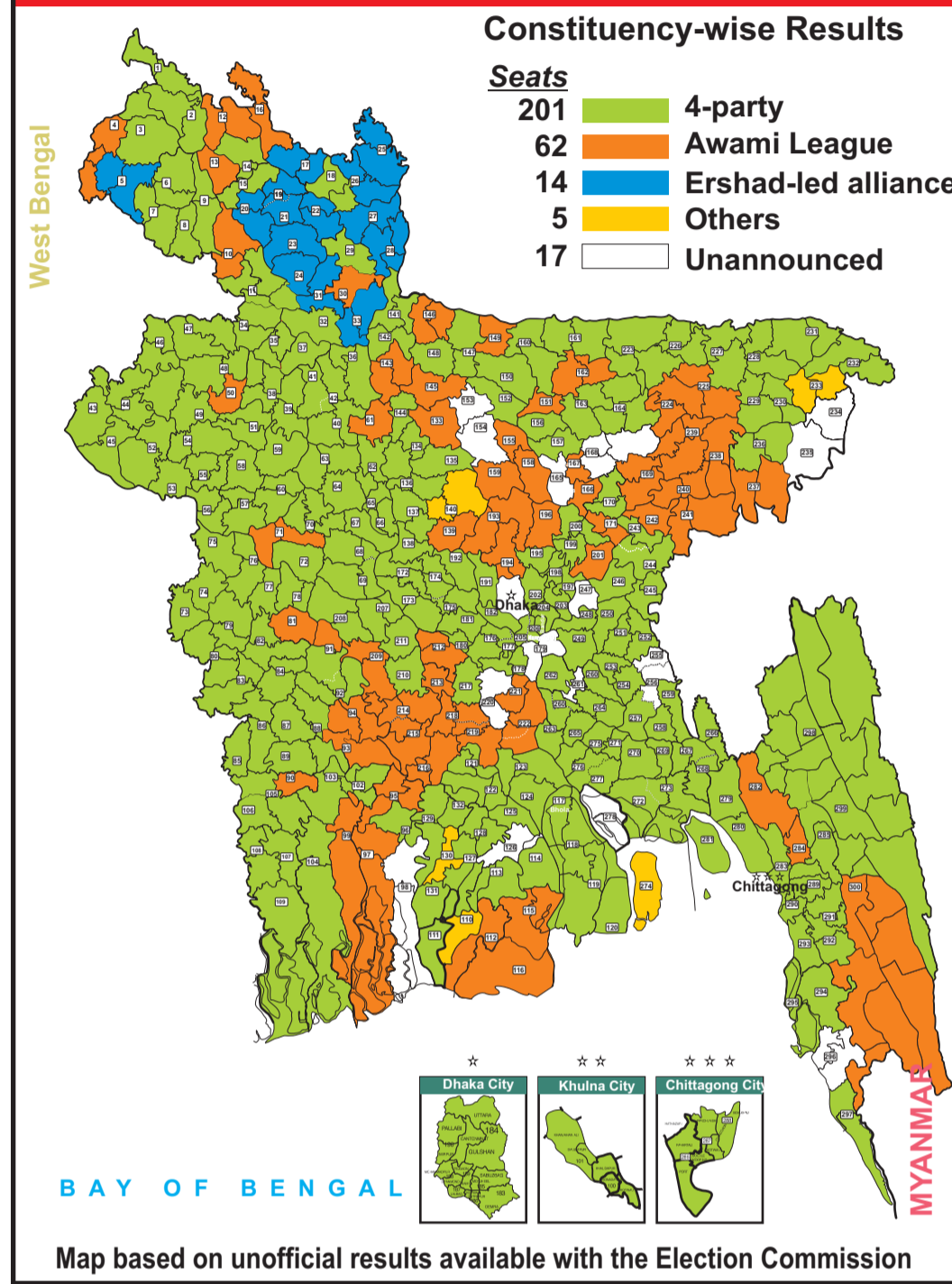
tions, which she feared, would establish a 'terrorist government' in the country. "Those who do terrorism in the name of religion, those who do not believe in the very independence of the country, would now form the government."

She, however, evaded a direct reply to a query as to whether her party would join the next parliament. On the question of taking oaths as members of the parliament, Hasina said, "Let the time of oath-taking come first, then we'll see what to do."

Visibly shell-shocked at the electoral debacle her party has just braced for, Hasina turned up at the Sheraton Winter Garden one hour behind the schedule. She said to the local and foreign reporters, "This

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Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Election 2001



GRAPHICS: STAR

Election held in conditions of freedom & fairness

EU-EOMB and UNEAS tell press in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union Election Observation Mission in Bangladesh (EU-EOMB) yesterday said, "We strongly hope that all the political actors will respect the people's choice as reflected in the results announced".

In an initial observation it said, "The Mission considers that the electoral process has guaranteed sufficient conditions of freedom and fairness and represents an important step towards democratic consolidation".

The observation was made at a press conference, addressed by Joaquim Miranda Silva, Chief of the mission. He read out a written

statement at the press conference, held at a city hotel. EU Officials Antonio De Menezes and Charlotte Souibes were also present.

He said there were incidents of minor violence and untoward incidents. Presence of women voters and members of minority community were significant.

"Bangladeshis have shown their strong commitment in furthering democracy in the country, and the electoral authorities, the security forces and the media have contributed to a positive process with a spirit of independence and authority, in challenging circumstances", the statement said.

The statement said, "The

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European Union Observation Mission expresses its strong wish that the confrontation and politically motivated violence be now replaced by dialogue in view of a furthering of democratic process in Bangladesh".

It said Long Term Observers (LTOs) were deployed in 14 regional offices since August 27. During this time, the observers concentrated on the pre-electoral phase, particularly the election campaign and administrative preparations.

On the election day, 72 observers were present in more than one third of all constituencies and more than

A similar tale retold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two dozen ministers, state ministers and some other leaders with the rank and status of minister in the immediate-past Awami League government have been given a sound thrashing in the just-ended general election.

Similarly, 19 ministers and state ministers of the BNP government were defeated in the 7th general election in 1996.

The defeated ministers are Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Engineer Mosharrar Hossain, Abdul Matin Kashru, MA Mannan, Lt. Gen. (ret'd) Noor Uddin Khan, Major (ret'd) Rafiqul Islam, Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, Dr Mozammel Hossain, Zinnatunnesa Talukder, Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Prof. Abu

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Soldiers of misfortune

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Several retired generals and admirals lost the electoral battle on Monday. Three former army chiefs defeated in the polls are General (ret'd) Mustafizur Rahman, Lt General (ret'd) Nooruddin Khan and Maj General (ret'd) K M Shafiullah. All the three contested as Awami League nominees.

Former air force chief Air sVice Marshal (ret'd) Altaf Hussain Chowdhury who contested on BNP ticket from a Patuakhali constituency and former navy chief Rear Admiral (ret'd) M Nurul Islam who was AL nominee for a Narsingdi seat also lost the election.

However, another former army chief, Lt General (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman who contested from a Dinajpur constituency as a BNP nominee won the polls race. Retired

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AL wiped out in its heartlands

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The Awami League has been wiped out in 27 of the country's 64 districts, including four metropolitan cities, in the eighth Jatiya Sangsad election.

The party has also lost dominance in all but three districts in an unprecedented debacle in its 53-year history. A number of its leaders, who had never lost in any elections since 1970, conceded miserable defeats.

In Dhaka division, it has been a major debacle for the AL, as it was the BNP in 1996. None of the 13 Dhaka city and district seats went to the AL. The BNP also won these seats in 1991.

An anti-AL sentiment has eaten into its traditional vote banks even. As a result, a big and organised party such as the AL is now destined to become a weak opposition in the House.

In contrast, the anti-AL votes have made the BNP winners in at least 18 districts. The BNP has also fared very well in most districts.

According to unofficial results available so far, the AL has lost 90 seats it won in 1996. Sixty-nine of these seats have gone to the BNP, 12 to the Jamaat-e-Islami, four to the pro-Nazir Rahman Jatiya Party, two to independent candidates, and one each to the Jatiya Party (Ershad), the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and the Krishak-Sramik Janata League.

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FEMA terms election free, fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) has termed the general election held on October 1 as free and fair.

"The election day was largely peaceful contrary to popular speculation of high incidence of violence. The incident of postponement of polls was relatively few," it said in a post-election statement.

FEMA found the law and order situation on the day well under control except in some polling stations in Bhola, Shariatpur, Madaripur and Comilla districts and few other places.

The alliance also termed the election as an important milestone in consolidating the democracy in

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