

FILE
25X1

[Redacted]

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH: Implications of Parliamentary Elections [Redacted]

25X1

NESA M#86-20084

DISTRIBUTION:

EXTERNAL

- 1 - Darnell Whitt (Pentagon)
- 1 - Dr. Dov S. Zakheim (Pentagon)
- 1 - Captain Robert G. Anderson, USN (Pentagon)
- 1 - Ronald P. Zwart (Pentagon)
- 1 - Captain Edward Louis Christensen, USN, (Pentagon)

1 - [Redacted]

25X1

- 1 - Stephen Cohen (State Department)
- 1 - Herbert G. Hagerty (State Dept)
- 1 - Robert Boehme (State Dept)
- 1 - Robert Peck (State Dept)
- 1 - Charles W. Greenleaf (State Dept)
- 1 - Tish Butler (State Dept)
- 1 - Ron Lorton (State Dept)
- 1 - Emily Hodges (State Dept)
- 1 - R. Grant Smith (State Dept)
- 1 - James P. Covey (NSC)

DATE 6/5/86 **FILE**
 DOC NO NESA M 86-20084
 OCR 3
 P&PD 1

INTERNAL

- 1 - Director/DCI/DDCI Exec Staff
- 1 - DDI
- 1 - NIO/NESA
- 1 - D/NESA
- 1 - DD/NESA
- 1 - C/PPS/NESA
- 2 - PPS/NESA
- 1 - CPAS/ILS
- 1 - C/PES
- 6 - CPAS/IMC/CB
- 1 - DDO/DC/NE [Redacted]
- 1 - PDB Staff
- 1 - NID Staff
- 1 - C/NESA/PG
- 1 - C/NESA/IA
- 1 - C/NESA/AI
- 1 - C/NESA/SO
- 1 - DC/NESA/SO
- 1 - C/NESA/SO/A
- 1 - C/NESA/SO/S
- 1 - C/NESA/SO/PB

25X1

DDI/NESA/SO/PB [Redacted] (4Jun86)

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

4 June 1986

BANGLADESH: Implications of Parliamentary Elections [redacted]

25X1

Summary

The Bangladesh parliamentary elections of 7 May, although tainted by fraud and violence, will provide some legitimacy for President Ershad as he moves toward presidential elections and lifting martial law later this year. Ershad plans to use pro-government forces in parliament to pass an amendment ratifying his actions during four years of martial law. We expect the amendment to be approved; the leftist Awami League failed to gain the necessary seats to block it. The other major opposition party, the centrist Bangladesh Nationalist Party, boycotted the polls and plans to pursue a disobedience campaign. The Army is unhappy that the pro-government party did not win more seats but will continue its grudging support for Ershad. Parliamentary sessions are likely to reflect the chaotic nature of Bangladeshi politics with Ershad's proposals for economic reform and privatization often taking a back seat to political horsetrading and grandstanding. [redacted]

25X1

* * * * *

Ershad was able to pull off the elections after months of wrangling with the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). According to US Embassy reporting, Ershad secured the Awami League's agreement to participate in elections in return for relaxing martial law, moving back the election date, and promising to remain neutral during the campaign. The BNP refused to compromise with Ershad and boycotted the elections, charging that the polls would be rigged by both the pro-government Jatiyo Party and Awami League. [redacted]

25X1

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Pakistan/Bangladesh Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 3 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division [redacted]

25X1

25X1
25X1

NES A M#86-20084

25X1

25X1

Election day was marred by violence and massive vote fraud by the Jatiyo and, to a lesser degree, the Awami League, according to US Embassy and press reports. Bangladeshi officials admitted that 12 were killed in election violence, but press reports claim 20 dead and 500 injured. US Embassy officers reported seeing ballot boxes being stuffed and polling agents kidnaped. Midway through the vote counting, the government stopped reporting results. It later announced that voting for 36 seats would be completed on 19 May because of "irregularities." The US Embassy estimates voter turnout at a maximum of 30 percent. [redacted]

25X1

Winners and Losers

The Jatiyo Party, which Ershad helped organize from smaller parties about a year ago, emerged from the election with a small majority (183 out of 330 seats) (see graphic). US Embassy reporting indicates that Ershad wanted a two-thirds majority so that he would have the necessary votes--220--to pass a constitutional amendment to legitimize the actions of the four-year old martial law regime. [redacted]

25X1

The leftist, pro-Indian Awami League won 76 seats and seven smaller parties allied with the League won a combined total of 21 seats. The fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami party won 10 seats, the conservative Muslim League received four, the leftist National Socialist Party took four, and independent candidates gained 32 seats. The Awami League's showing was better than the last parliamentary election, held in 1979, but below the 111 seats that Awami leader Sheikh Hasina needed to block Ershad's constitutional amendment. [redacted]

25X1

Sheikh Hasina considered boycotting parliament because she suspected vote tampering prevented her party from winning even more seats, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted] Hasina is now demanding that, in return for the Awami League taking its seats in Parliament, Ershad must restore the suspended 1972 constitution, try the accused killers of four Awami League leaders, and declare Mujib Ur Rahman--the first President of Bangladesh and Hasina's father--as the "father of Bangladesh." [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Constitutional Role of Bangladesh's Parliament

Bangladesh's parliament, called the Jatyo Sangsad or House of the Nation, is a unicameral body consisting of 330 seats. Three hundred seats are popularly elected while the remaining 30 are reserved for women and go to the majority party as bonus seats. According to constitutional amendments passed in 1975, the Parliament is elected every five years, meets twice yearly, and any legislation it passes may be vetoed by the president without any override provisions. A constitutional amendment, however, requires the consent of two-thirds of the members. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

Ershad's Strategy

After getting the new parliament to legitimize his martial law actions, Ershad intends to attain the presidency and then lift martial law, according to US Embassy reporting. We believe he plans to hold a presidential election by November when his term as Chief of Army Staff expires.

[Redacted]

25X1

Ershad recently told US Embassy officials that he will also choose a prime minister in consultation with Jatiyo party members of parliament.

25X1

Ershad also has told US Embassy officials that martial law cannot be completely lifted until his position as president has been secured, either through popular elections or martial law decree.

25X1

Army Concerns

Senior Army officers, who often exercise heavy influence over Bangladeshi politics, have been critical of Ershad's heavy-handed efforts to advance his political goals and make deals with civilian politicians. We believe, however, that the most disgruntled Army officers are too disorganized to take any action against Ershad while others see him, for all his faults, as an adequate protector of the military's interests.

[Redacted]

25X1

[Large Redacted Block]

25X1

Outlook

We expect the parliament to convene sometime in July. To maintain the military's support, Ershad is unlikely to show any flexibility on Sheikh Hasina's key demands for revival of the constitution, trial of the accused killers of Awami League leaders, and honoring Mujib Ur Rahman. He also calculates, probably correctly, that the Awami League will agree eventually

[Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

to take its seats in order to forestall another possible military coup and the potential defection of party members who would be upset at the prospect of losing hard-won seats. The Army will remain suspicious over Ershad's dealings with the Awami League but will probably not move against him except in the improbable event of an Ershad-Awami League alliance. If Ershad dissolves parliament and reimposes martial law, which we consider unlikely, the Army would have few alternatives to continuing support for him. [Redacted]

25X1

We believe Awami Leaguers and independent MP's eventually will go along with the constitutional amendment in return for revival of the 1972 constitution and a timetable for the lifting of martial law. [Redacted]

25X1

Relations between Ershad and parliament will be strained if, as now seems likely, he delays the lifting of martial law until the completion of presidential elections. Probable Jatiyo Party factionalism will hinder Ershad's efforts to build and maintain support for his legislative initiatives. [Redacted]

25X1

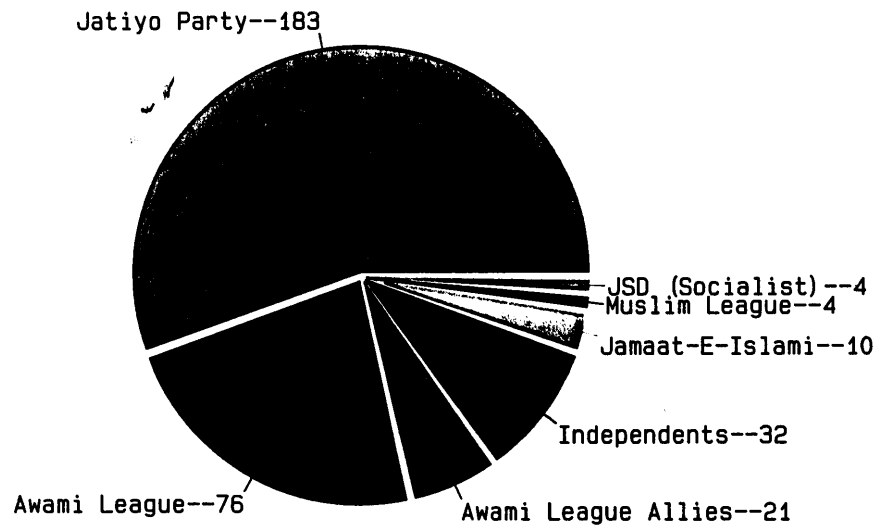
We believe that the BNP, by its boycott of the elections, will gradually lose public attention and become only a nuisance to Ershad once Parliament gets down to business. The BNP has cancelled plans to hold demonstrations to disrupt parliament because of lack of organization and finances [Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

BREAKDOWN OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS



300 of the 330 seats were up for election.
The Jatiyo Party gained the additional 30
seats by winning a majority.