



ELECTION BULLETIN 2008

BANGLADESH HINDU BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN UNITY COUNCIL (BHBCUC)

Bangladesh Parliament Election, Dec 29, 2008

List of Minority Candidates

Party Name	Candidate Name	Constituency	Total
Bangladesh Awami League	Bir Bahadur Yoo Soi Singh	Bandarban Hill Tracts	14
	Dhirendra Chandra Debnath	Barguna - 1	
	Dipankar Talukder	Rangamati Hill Tracts	
	Jatindra Lal Tripura	Khargachhari Hill Tracts	
	Manoranjan Shil Gopal	Dinajpur - 1	
	Nani Gopal Mondal	Khulna - 1	
	Narayan Chandra Chanda	Khulna - 5	
	Promod Mankin	Mymensingh - 1	
	Ramesh Chandra Sen	Thakurgaon - 1	
	Ranjit Kumar Roy	Jessore - 4	
	Sadhan Chandra Majumder	Naogaon - 1	
	Shri Biren Sikder	Magura - 1	
	Sukumar Ranjan Ghosh	Munshiganj - 1	
	Suranjit Sengupta	Sunamganj - 2	
Bangladesh Jaker Party	Pradip Kumar Mutsuddi	Khagrachhari Hill Tracts	1
Bangladesh Kalyan Party	Tapan Kumar Mitra	Pirojpur - 1	2
	Subhashish Samaddar	Barisal - 1	
Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League	Advocate Manmohan Debnath	Habiganj - 2	1
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	Goutam Chakrabarty	Tangail - 6	6
	Goyeshwar Chandra Roy	Dhaka - 3	
	Nitai Roy Chowdhury	Magura - 2	
	Maitri Chakma	Rangamati Hill Tracts	
	Saching Pru	Bandarban Hill Tracts	
	Samiran Dewan	Khagrachhari Hill Tracts	
Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal	Khagendra nath Ghosh	Satkhira - 4	5
	Nityananda Sarker	Satkhira - 2	
	Bikram Basudeb Basak	Kishoreganj - 1	
	Ranjan Kumar Dey	Bagura - 5	
	Haradhan Chakrabarty	Feni - 2	
Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal	Sri Birendra Nath Saha	Natore - 1	1
Bangladesh Workers Party	Bimal Biswas	Narail - 1	1
Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh	Alo Rani Aich	Rangamati Hill Tracts	4
	Nepal Krishna Das	Khulna - 6	
	Bidur Kanti Biswas	Khulna - 5	
	Bhudeb Chakrabarty	Kurigram - 2	
Communist Party of Bangladesh	Lina Chakrabarty	Dhaka - 19	2
	Montu Ghosh	Narayanganj - 5	
Gana Forum	Biswajit Kumar Ganguli	Faridpur - 3	3
	Ranjit Kumar Sikder	Chittagong - 15	
	Ujjal Bhowmik	Chittagong - 12	
Jatiya Ganatantrik Party	Tapan Chakrabarti	Chittagong - 8	1
National People's Party	Arunshanti Chakma	Khagrachhari Hill Tracts	1
Pragatishil Ganatantri Dal	Nayan Dutta	Netrokona - 2	3
	Proggabir Chakma	Khagrachhari Hill Tracts	
	Sudhir Kumar Hajra	Dhaka - 1	
Samajtantrik Dal of Bangladesh	Biren Chandra Shil	Gaibandha - 1	1
Independent	Ashok Kumar Gupta	Barisal - 1	9
	Barrister Albert Barai	Barisal - 2	



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Dhirendra Nath Saha	Narail - 1	
K S Mong	Bandarban Hill Tracts	
Rajnit Kumar Barai	Barisal - 2	
Richard R Freser	Gazipur - 5	
Tapan Kumar Chakrabarty	Bhola - 1	
Ujjal Kanti Chakma	Khagachhari Hill Tracts	
Ushatan Talukder	Rangamati Hill Tracts	
Total Minority Candidates		55
Total Candidates		1538

Temple Demolished

‘They are taking the chance of election’

Hindu Worship's places at Keraniganj, Dhaka were demolished by communal quarter. Victims told that the perpetrators are taking the chance of forth coming election. The Hindu minorities are living life under threat. One of the perpetuator was "Rajakar" during 1971. One Hindu lady said: In 71 the Rajakar had hijacked my grandfather, now they are trying to grab our property. The daily Janakantha on 8th December 2008 reported that: Hindus at Keraniganj, Dhaka are in panic due to repression and assault on women. Land grabbers looted belongings of the temple and demolished the 200 hundred years' old building on 5th Dec 2008 illegally. Police took theft case only, instead of looting & vandalism. Looters looted valuable articles and demolished the temple house at Raskhit Para, Shakta Union within Keraniganj Upazila of Dhaka District and hanged their sign board.

Name of the victims:

1) Ms. Durapati Mondal, 85 wife of Late Shashi Mondal 2) Jharna Rani Sarkar, 45 3) Madhabi Bhattacharjee, 52.

Name of the perpetrators:

1) Salauddin sultan, 40 son of Hajee Md. Seraj 2) Md. Shajahan, 42 son of late Abdul Rahim Bepari 3) Md. Latif, 50 son of late Abdul Rahim Bepari 4) Md. Raisuddin, 42 son of Late Rafique Uddin 5) Md. Liton, 35 son of Hajee Md. Momtazuddin and about 20 unknowns.

It is alleged that on last Friday afternoon the perpetrators attacked the minority inhabitants of the deity's property. Men fled but women tried to resist and was injured. The hoodlums looted the house and demolished the temple. Describing the incident Mrs. Durapati Mondal states: "I came this house as wife of late Shashi Mondal seventy years ago. This temple was dedicated for Shiva by a registered deed No.2735 dated 25th August 1945 by the then Zemindar Devendra Kishore Raskhit in the name of 1) Aditya Bhattacharjee, 2) Gopal Bhattacharjee, 3) Shidesh Bhattacharjee, 4) Radha Raman Majumdar and 5) Dinesh Bhattacharjee." Since then the Hindus were performing Shiv Puja. Ms. Rekha Bhattacharjee lodged First Information Report at Keraniganj Police station and Police took case against those perpetrators under bailable section of Bangladesh Penal code instead of proper section of law (Keraniganj PS case No. 05/313 dated 07.12.2008 under section 143/447/379/428/506 of BPC).

William Gomes

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www.persecutionbd.org

12/12/2008



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indiainfo.com

Bangladeshi leaflets ask voters not to elect Hindu candidate

Monday, December 15, 2008 11:12 [IST]

Dhaka: Leaflets asking Muslims not to elect a Hindu candidate have been distributed in a northern constituency of Bangladesh in the run up to the Dec 29 general election, a media report said Monday.

Three types of leaflets distributed in Thakurgaon-1 constituency ask people not to vote for Ramesh Chandra Sen, the nominee of the Awami League (AL) because he is a Hindu. Voters have been asked to elect Mirza Fakhru Islam, nominee of the rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), The Daily Star [newspaper](#) reported.

The leaflets - one containing verses from the Quran and their translation, the other a [parody](#) of a popular song and another a few short Bangla verses - bear the name of Bangladesh Muslim League presidium member M. Shamsul Haque. He is currently the vice-president of Thakurgaon Sadar BNP committee.

The party Haque belongs to was powerful during the Pakistan era, but has not had mass support in Bangladesh since the 1971 separation.

Election Officer Mohammed Saiful Islam told The Daily Star that the distribution of the leaflets "is not a violation of electoral rules since any Muslim League candidate is participating in the election from this constituency".

However, Sen said the leaflets had an appeal beyond party lines and were meant to exploit Muslim religious sentiments.

One of the leaflets, titled "Al-Quraner Bani" ([teachings](#) of the Quran), [quotes](#) different verses and clearly asks Muslims not to cast their vote for a non-Muslim candidate. It also says that Islam does not accept the idea of secularism.

Source: [IANS](#)

BHBCUC, USA urged Secretary General for Minority Security

On Friday, the 24th of October, a two member delegation of *Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist & Christian Unity Council, USA* met with Mr. David, Marshall, and a Human Rights Officer representing the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. The delegation urged him to make a recommendation to the Secretary General that he express concern about the minorities' right to franchise and security around the election period. On Monday, the 27th of October another memorandum addressed to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was handed to his protocol officer for Bangladesh Affairs, Ms. Bresson, in which the same request was made.



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USCIRF Hearing on Bangladesh Election **Thrust was to prevent a repetition of atrocities** **of 2001**

USCIRF held its 3rd public hearing on Bangladesh on Dec 4, 2008 at Washington D.C. As can be understood from the language it used in its Press release -- “The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is holding a public hearing to focus attention on Bangladesh’s upcoming national elections. Bangladesh’s last national elections, in October 2001, were followed by numerous reports of violence against members of religious minority communities, particularly Hindus.” --, the main thrust of the hearing was to prevent a repetition of the atrocities of 2001 election period and afterwards.

The Witnesses or Speakers at the Hearing were: Chair of Bangladesh Caucus in the US Congress Hon. Congressman Joesph Crowley, the US Ambassador to Dhaka Hon. James F. Moriarty, Mr. Peter Manikas, Regional Director for Asia Programs, National Democratic Institute, Ms. Kimber Shearer, Deputy Director for Asia Programs, International Republican Institute, Distinguished Professor of Politics & Economics at the State University of New York, Dr. Sabyasachi Ghosh Dastidar, Professor Shapan Adnan, National University of Singapore, professor Ali Riaz, Illinois State University and Mr. Asif Saleh, Founder and Executive Director, *Drishtipat*.

Ambassador Moriarty defended Bangladesh Government, expressed firm hope that the election would be held, reflecting the U.S. policy terming the country as a “moderate Muslim majority country” with the “Bengalis practicing a unique form of religious syncretism.” However, he also said the following at the end of the statement “...Yet there are those who would like to end this tradition of moderation and tolerance – and that is a matter of grave concern.” And, when the commissioners *asked* him a series of highly pointed questions about the status of the minorities, rise of militant Islam, the role of *Jamaat-e-Islami* and the security of the minorities in the forthcoming election, he still gave patent answers but through his tone of voice, hesitations, etc. at least acknowledged that those were problems but still, like an ambassador, expressed high optimism about the prospect of a bright democracy in the “Muslim Majority Bangladesh.” Speaking about the indigenous people of CHT, Professor Swapan Adnan said that, “even with democratic governments under political leadership, the CHT is effectively under the control of the military and no major decisions can be implemented without its consent. The local military commanders outrank their counterparts in civil administration..” He did not hide the plight the indigenous peoples but he did not list the incidents of atrocities. The only Witness/Speaker who spoke about the plight of the minorities in every detail was Professor Dastidar. Citing his own research as well as other’s including Bangladesh Census reports, he began by saying that since the partition, 49 million Hindu minorities from Bangladesh has vanished. Professor Dastidar described the situation as being “anti-Hindu apartheid” citing the case of their denial of access to the positions of power and prestige and the retention of the “anti-Hind/racist” black law, the Enemy Property Act. Having done that he made a set of 17 specific recommendations to correct the existing deplorable situation in which the minorities shave to live in Bangladesh.

The *U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom* (USCIRF), had in the past held to Public Hearings (2004 and 2006), sent the honorable commissioners to Dhaka to investigate in person, and included Bangladesh in its Watch List for the past three consecutive years.

WOMEN GANG RAPED WHILE RETURNING FROM TEMPLE

The daily Sangbad, 8th December 2008: Gournadi Correspondent (Barisal): Police arrested two Night guards on the allegations of gang-rape of Hindu women while she came to a chanting of Hindu religion in a temple. This happened at Gournadi Upazila Torki Bandar at Barisal District of Bangladesh. Police informed that, after the religious festival while the women was going back to her home, she was caught near Torki Bandar High School in a solitary place by 3 night guards along with two unknown perpetrators. They tied her hand and mouth with cloths and raped her one after another. In one stage the victim cried loudly. Local people then came to her rescue. The rapists tried to flee away, but people caught hold of night guards 1) Kanchan Bepari, 35 and 2) Feroz Sikdar, 28 and handed them over to police. The victim lodged First information report (FIR) against five rapists at Gournadi Police station.

Perpetrators set fire a temple

Daily Protom Alo, 29th October 2008: Some hooligans on Tuesday night during celebration of Dewali (Kali Puja) at Kandi Union of Bagmara village within the Peergacha Upazila of Rangpur district in Bangladesh attacked causing severe damage to deities. They also set fire in temples. Worshipers protested and tried to prevent the miscreants. Two worshipers were injured and admitted to local Health Complex. Local people caught two perpetrators handed them to police. It is reported that, while Hindu devotees celebrating Diwali in Kali temple with lighting, some unruly mob under the leadership of Ashraf Ali (22) of Paharipara village attacked the temple abruptly and a "Laksmi" a Hindu deity was demolished. The attackers assaulted the two devotees namely 1) Joyanta Kumar (25) 2) Kalipada (55) severely while they were trying to resist. At one stage the attackers set on fire on the temple and as a result some portion of the temple was burnt. Ashraf Ali (22) and Kina Meah (20) are in police custody.

Ensure Safety of the Minorities during Election: BHBCUC, USA leaders to Consul General



On Friday, 21st Nov 2008, BHBCUC, USA met with the Honorable Shamsul Haque, Consul General, Bangladesh Consulate, New York and gave him a memorandum. For details, please visit www.bhbcuc-usa.org & click news icon



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Election Monitoring Cell of BHBCUC

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◆ **What this Cell will do?**

Collect, disseminate information & publish election bulletin. Any information about pre & post election will be gathered and will be published as bulletin.

Please forward all Election info to: unitycouncilusa@gmail.com

Mailing address: 86-51, 91st Street. Woodhaven. NY 11421. Fax: 914-779-3228



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The Daily Star

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Election 2008: Defenders of the minority vote

Naeem Mohaiemen

AT a seminar last week discussing the newly formed National Human Rights Commission, it was pointedly asked why it had no minority members. The chairman had no reply for us, but the question kept percolating in the room. In another air-con room a week later, the Awami League unveiled its election manifesto. Section 18.1 pledges to improve the condition of minorities, adivasis, indigenous people, and dalits, by removing discriminatory laws, forming land commission to protect their land, creating job opportunities, etc. Section 18.2 talks about implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. Those who recall the abrupt volte face of the AL-Khelafot Andolon alliance of December 2006, or who are distressed at the alliance presence of JP which inserted "Islam as state religion" into the constitution, will remain cautious. But while guarded, we may still hope for an incremental shift in political parties' commitment to minority rights. Historically, minority communities have been perceived to vote for the AL (if only because the other parties are increasingly hard-line on religion). This was manifested in 2001, when Hindu voters were prevented from voting in many areas. After the BNP-Jamaat victory, BNP-allied local gangs attacked Hindu villages. According to press reports at the time, the southwestern and southern part of Bangladesh (popularly known as the 'Hindu belt') was worst affected.

Meghna Guhathakurta, in a forthcoming essay (Journal of Social Studies No. 121 January-March 2009), describes a visit to Bhola, one of the worst affected districts: "Among the atrocities committed were charging into households, attacking men, women and children with sharp knives and weapons, in certain cases threatening with guns, terrorizing women and children by beating and chasing them and in certain cases raping and attempting rape. Looting of Hindu households and sometimes Muslim households which sheltered Hindus took place throughout the night and in waves since most householders had fled in terror and their houses were left unguarded." According to research done by a rights NGO, based on the National Democratic Institute (NDI) data-set, the 1991 and 2001 Bangladesh election results could have been different given the razor-thin margins by which many seats were won, and the huge number of minority voters that were prevented from voting in those very seats. Out of 300 constituencies for parliament seats, there are 71 where minority voters are significant (ranging from 11% to 61%) and 50 where they are visible (5-10%). According to the 2001 Population Census, the Hindu population was 11,379,000 -- 9.2 per cent of the total.

These statistics do not count other religious minorities, or ethnic minorities. If we look at the intersection between religious and ethnic minority in Jumma people of Chittagong Hill Tracts, we find these were areas with lowest voter turnout. According to analysis of NDI data by Rahman & Ahamed (Daily Star, Dec 12), there were 850 centres where voter turnout in 2001 was less than half of total registered voters. Of these, 87 centres were in Cox's Bazaar, 49 in Bandarban, 67 in Rangamati, and 36 in Khagrachari. In addition, around 87 centres with less than 50 per cent turnout were in Cox's Bazaar-3. There were 35 polling centres where voter turnout was as low as or lower than 10 %. Of these, 18 were in Rangamati, 8 in Khagrachari, 5 in Cox's Bazaar-3, and 2 in Bandarban. Looking at specific constituencies in 2001, Rahman & Ahamed (Daily Star, Dec 13) zero in on Bagerhat-4 where 12% voters are religious minority and Khulna-5 where 40% of voters are religious



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minority. Looking at the NDI data, there is clear evidence of violence which resulted in Hindu-majority polling centres being closed, Hindu voters staying away from polls, as well as manipulation of vote counting to exclude the Hindu vote. In both constituencies, a Jamaat-e-Islami candidate was declared the winner. As a result of the tremendous pre- and post-election violence directed at minorities in 2001, this has become an area of specific interest for international election observers in 2008. Local human rights defenders are doing outreach to make sure minority voters do not get intimidated. But so much more is needed, including a public commitment to this from the Election Commission and other administration. In India's West Bengal, Trinamool and Left Front compete with each other to woo the minority vote (in their case, the Muslims). Of course this is practical politics -- West Bengal has a 27% Muslim population, and there is no law like Bangladesh's Vested Property Act that creates downward pressure on their numbers (in fact the Muslim voter numbers have gone up with each elections). In Bangladesh, as the Hindu population is going down due to VPA, politicians think the minority vote does not have to be respected, nor do many worry about ensuring that these voters can enter polling booths safely. A call to protect minority rights must come from the majority. I place my hope on ordinary citizens, the silent majority, the secular Muslim. We can and must defend Bangladesh's secular core, starting with the minority vote.

In a petition filed to the High Court in November 2001 (Writ 6556 of 2001, Ain o Salish Kendra vs. Government of Bangladesh, judgment pending as of 2008), a list of 391 incidents of violence or intimidation against minorities in different villages were documented from newspapers of September-October 2001.

<p>Dhaka Division (112 incidents):</p> <p>Faridpur (13) Dhaka (12) Rajbari (2) Madaripur (1) Tangail (8) Narshingdi (3) Gazipur (11) Munshiganj (6) Narayanganj (3) Kishorganj (5) Netrokona (6) Sherpur (11) Jamalpur (10) Shariatpur (11) Mymensingh (3) Gopalganj (7)</p>	<p>Rajshahi Division (50 incidents):</p> <p>Serajganj (11) Pabna (6) Dinajpur (9) Nabobganj (1) Rajshahi (12) Naogaon (3) Ishwardi (1) Panchagarh (2) Bagura (1) Natore (4)</p>	<p>Khulna Division (97 incidents):</p> <p>Jessore (18) Shatkhira (10) Khulna (13) Bagerhat (31) Kushtia (1) Narail (14) Magura (2) Jheniadah (5) Chuadanga (3)</p>
<p>Barisal Division (61 incidents):</p> <p>Jhalokathi (8) Patuakhali (13) Bhola (12) Ferozpur (3)</p>	<p>Sylhet Division (4 incidents):</p> <p>Moulvi Bazar (3) Sylhet (1)</p>	<p>Chittagong Division (67 incidents):</p> <p>Chandpur (6) Comilla (22) Feni (11) Chittagong (16) Laxmipur (2) Cox's Bazar (7) Noakhali (2) Khagrachari (1)</p>

Naem Mohaiemen (naem.mohaiemen@gmail.com) has written about minorities for Ain o Salish Kendra and Drishtipat.