

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

## Election Manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League- 2008

### **NINETH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS-2008**

#### **A Charter for Change**

Bangladesh achieved its independence thirty eight years ago through the supreme sacrifices of thirty lakh Bengalis, three crore displaced people and half a million abused and tortured women. Today, the country stands at the crossroad of history. After a seven year period of misrule and emergency, there is going to be a free, fair and peaceful election to parliament on 29 December 2008

Bangladesh Awami League is proud of its glorious leadership in the liberation war and its upholding of the core principles of nationalism, democracy, secularism, and an equitable society free from exploitation. It may be recalled that the architect of our independence, the greatest Bengali of all time, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was the founder of our Party. Under the bold leadership of Bangabandhu, difficult but successful steps were initiated to reconstruct the war-devastated country and to build a prosperous Bangladesh. But all of a sudden the dastardly assassination of the Father of the Nation, members of his family, and some colleagues on 15th August 1975, and the subsequent killing of four national leaders inside the Dhaka Central Jail on 3rd November, 1975 transformed Bangladesh into a country of military rule and autocratic governance.

The military government and the political parties formed in the cantonment in the aftermath of this change destroyed the spirit of the freedom struggle and the promise of a secular, democratic, equitable and prosperous Bangladesh. The rape of the democratic constitution, rehabilitation of war criminals and religious fanatics, criminalization of politics and promotion of militancy, institutionalization of corruption, and the sway of black money and muscle power overtook the Post-Bangabandhu governments.

The people of Bangladesh were, however, only temporarily defeated but not vanquished and the heroic struggle of the people and the martyrdom of many resulted, after 21 long years, in the formation of a government by the daughter of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina through the power of the ballot exercised on 12th June 1996.

#### **Achievements of Bangladesh Awami League (1996-2001)**

A glorious chapter replete with successes was written during the five year rule of Awami League from 1996-2001. In only five years, Bangladesh attained self sufficiency in food production. Prices remained within the purchasing capacity of the people. Inflation came down to 1.59 percent.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

Meanwhile, the growth rate of the economy increased to 6.2 percent. The treaty on the water sharing of the river Ganges, the peace accord in Chittagong Hill Tracts, recognition of 21st February as international mother language day, election to the UN Security Council, sub-regional cooperation through the formation of D-8, BIMSTEC and the Association for Asian Parliamentarian for Peace (AAPP) bestowed on Bangladesh a new position of prestige and importance in the global arena.

Various initiatives taken for alleviation of poverty resulted in the reduction of poverty from an annual average of .50 to 1.50 percent, while the human poverty indicator came down from 41.6 percent to 32 percent. Achieving growth of 56 percentage points in the UN Human Development Index (HDI) in five years was a record. Increase of literacy rate to 65 percent, formulation of an education policy and the removal of session backlogs in educational institutions were significant achievements in the educational front.

Incredible success was also achieved in the electricity and power, and transport and communication sectors. In only five years, production of 1,800 megawatt of electricity raising the total output to 4300 megawatt, increase in gas production and exploration, completion of the Jamuna Bridge; construction of 62,000 kilometers of paved and unpaved roads and building of 19,000 bridges and culverts vastly improved the country's overall infrastructure.

Internal savings increased from 14.7 percent of national income to 18 percent over the five year period and the rate of investment increased from 20 percent to 23.1 percent. During the Awami League rule, 1 lakh 22 thousand small and medium size industries were established. Millions of job opportunities for the unemployed were created through facilitating private investment. One community clinic for every six thousand people was established at government initiative. Withdrawal of taxes and duties on medical equipment encouraged setting up of clinics and hospitals in the private sector. By abolishing monopoly in the mobile telephone sector and making mobile phones available to everyone at low prices and increasing access to information technology by reducing import duties, the Awami League government made it possible for Bangladesh to enter the digital age.

Rule of law and establishment of human rights were ensured by repealing the infamous indemnity ordinance, bringing to trial the killers of Bangabandhu and the four national leaders and by establishing the Law Commission. The Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) was formed to establish good governance in the country. A progressive women's development policy was also formulated. In the parliament, the Prime Minister's Question hour was introduced and the Parliamentary Committees were activated and strengthened by appointing members as chairmen of parliamentary committees replacing the ministers. Necessary laws were passed to decentralize power through establishing a four tier local government system. Various steps were taken to bring back the spirit of the liberation war and the glory of freedom movement and a regeneration of Bengali culture. During the five year rule of Awami League, the country had effectively turned around and transformed itself into a land of immense possibilities. The Awami League's five year rule will go down in the annals of history as nothing short of a golden period.

## Corruption and Misgovernance of BNP-Jamat Alliance Government

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

## Bangladesh in a critical state

The five-year misrule of the BNP-Jamat alliance government did away with all the promises generated by the Awami League government. The situation in Bangladesh became grim both politically and economically. There was a phenomenal rise of terrorism. An assassination attempt was made on the Leader of the **Opposition Sheikh Hasina on 21st August, 2004** ostensibly under government tutelage that resulted in the murder of 24 party leaders and workers, including a women leader **Mrs. Ivy Rahman**. BNP-Jamat Alliance and its criminal cronies killed 21,000 leaders and workers of the Awami League including former Finance Minister and Member of Parliament, **SAMS Kibria**; labour leader and Member of Parliament, **Ahsanullah Master**; Advocate **Monzurul Imam** and **Momtazuddin**. Hundreds of thousands of Awami League supporters and members of the minority community became victims of political vengeance of the BNP-Jamat alliance.

Criminal syndicates were organized under the patronage of the infamous Hawa Bhaban combine. Thousands of women and girls became victims of rape. Teachers, students, journalists, intellectuals, women and children, businessmen – no group of people could escape the clutches of the fascist forces. People's lives became absolutely insecure. With support from the government, extreme communal militancy was born and serial grenade and bomb attacks and murders turned Bangladesh into a haven of extremist terrorism. Meanwhile, extra-judicial killings became a norm, and the rule of law disappeared. Bangladesh was then being described as a failed state.

During the five year rule of the BNP-Jamat alliance, prices of food and other essential commodities rose beyond the reach of the common people. Commodity prices increased by 100 to 200 percent. Inflation increased from 1.59 during Awami League rule to over 10 percent during the BNP-Jamat alliance government. On the other hand, the average growth rate of 5.6 percent achieved during the Awami League rule declined to 5.1 percent. Though the population increased by more than one crore, food production decreased to 2 crore 61 lakh tons from the 2 crore 68 lakh tons annually produced during Awami League rule.

Poverty levels again increased to 45 percent and the population planning stagnated. Income disparity between the poor and the rich increased. During the last seven years, an additional one crore twenty lakh people slipped below the poverty line. Both domestic and foreign investment decreased. Though BNP-Jamat combine came to power on the slogan of jihad against corruption, criminalisation and corruption became the policy of the government. Under the leadership of the son of the Prime Minister, criminal godfathers became extremely influential. The Hawa Bhaban became a parallel centre of state power and the source of all corruption and militancy.

The incredibly high levels of corruption and misuse of power by the Ministers of the BNP-Jamaat alliance; the members of Parliament and the leaders and workers of the alliance as well as a very politicised administration drove Bangladesh to the top of the list of the world's most corrupt nations, where it remained for five successive years.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

Governmental corruption, inefficiency and mismanagement led to failure in development. The power crisis became unbearable but the government failed to add a single megawatt of electricity to the national power grid during its entire five year term. In the power sector alone, Taka twenty thousand crore was misused or stolen. Due to the extreme shortfall in the production of power, education and agricultural sectors faced an acute crisis. When farmers took to the streets demanding uninterrupted power supply at Kansat, some twenty of them were shot and killed.

An all-pervasive stagnation prevailed in the education, health, communication and women's development sectors. The alliance government politicized the administration, police, armed forces, judiciary, universities, public service commission, and all other government and many non-governmental organizations. Hundreds of civil, military and police officers were dismissed from service or given forced retirement. At the same time, irregular appointments and promotion were given to corrupt and inefficient personnel who were party loyalists. Leakage of public service examination question papers became a norm to facilitate recruitment of party cadres.

The constitution was amended and the retirement age of the judges of the appellate division of the Supreme Court was extended by two years with the ultimate objective of appointing a party loyalist who would then serve as the Chief Advisor of the Caretaker government. By appointing inefficient and corrupt people as judges, the prestige of the judiciary and its status as a bastion of fairness and justice were destroyed. BNP-Jamaat alliance government made the Parliament ineffective and destroyed all democratic institutions. The opposition members of Parliament were not allowed to speak, the permanent committees ceased to function effectively, and democratic practices were trampled under brute majority enjoyed by the then government.

The Election Commission was turned into a loyalist organ and election engineering was resorted to so that the BNPJamaat alliance could win the election due in January 2007, and permanently enjoy power. Disregarding the constitution and the judgment of the Supreme Court, a voters list was prepared which added 12.3 million fake voters. Three hundred party loyalists were appointed as Upazilla election officers. Stealing of people's voting rights and election engineering were taken to such a level that the whole electoral process lost its credibility.

## Caretaker Regime (October 2006-November 2008)

The BNP-Jamaat alliance government faced strong resistance from the public while trying to transfer power to loyalists. At the very end of their rule, they killed 70 leaders and workers of Awami League throughout the country. In its effort to come back to power, the BNP-Jamaat combine began implementing its blue print. Violating constitutional provisions Begum Zia's puppet President Iajuddin Ahmed formed a Caretaker government appointing himself as Chief Advisor. Chief Advisor Iajuddin could never rise above party interests and four of his Advisers resigned in protest against his indecision and duplicity. He failed to create conditions for a free and fair election and faced people's resistance. At a critical juncture, on 11 January 2007, Emergency was declared in the country. Prof Iajuddin admitted his guilt and resigned from the position of Chief Advisor. With popular support, a new Caretaker government was formed

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

under the leadership of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed with behind the scene support of the armed forces. Under the Emergency political activities were banned for an indefinite period.

Meanwhile, the tenure of the present Caretaker government has crossed nearly two years. The government has been ruling the country with various limitations, weaknesses, lapses as well as some successes. This government has separated the judiciary from the executive, reformed the Election Commission, Public Service Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission etc. Another positive step taken by this government was the preparation of a voters' list with photograph. Our armed forces have earned people's admiration for accomplishing this task with great efficiency. The caretaker government has also reformed the electoral laws and procedure.

The forthcoming parliamentary elections have created an opportunity for the re-establishment of democracy and inspired hopes for rapid socio-economic development mainly by providing good governance and people's participation. In this context Bangladesh Awami League declares its election manifesto with the promise of change by making our dear motherland a country free from hunger and poverty, illiteracy, corruption and militancy. We believe that the right to vote and the right to food hold the key to the alleviation of poverty.

## Our Promise, Work Programme and Declaration

### Awami League's Vision 2021

Awami League is committed to freeing Bangladesh from its current state of crisis and building a country whose citizens are able to live prosperous and happy lives. The year 2021 will mark the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, while the year 2020 will be the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We envision a democratic system where people choose their government freely and get services from it without hassle, enjoy freedom from fear and intolerance, live with dignity; where every citizen is assured of social justice, environmental protection, human rights and equal opportunities; and where the rule of law and good governance flourish. We envision a liberal, progressive and democratic welfare state. Simultaneously we envision a Bangladesh which by 2020/2021, will be a middle income country where poverty will be drastically reduced; where our citizens will be able to meet every basic need and where development will be on fast track, with ever-increasing rates of growth. Towards that goal, Bangladesh Awami League will frame a strategy paper, at the core of which will be the promise of change. This strategy paper will contain both mid-term and long term plans.

Bangladesh Awami League is placing before the nation the following set of election promises, work schedule and declaration in the light of its Vision 2021, and in the context of problems the country is facing as well as the existing global financial crisis. This election manifesto has been prepared keeping in mind the 31-point election reform program of

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

15th July 2005, the 23-point common minimum program of 14 Party Alliance on 22nd November, 2005 and the experience and realities of the past seven years. Considering the existing politico-socio-economic crisis, five subjects have been given priority:

## Five Priority Issues

1. **In The Face Of Global Financial Crisis, Maintenance Of Economic Stability And Control Over Commodity Price Hike**
  - a. **Commodity Price Hike:** Measures will be taken to reduce the unbearable burden of price hike and keep it in tune with the purchasing power of the people. After giving the highest priority to the production of domestic commodities, arrangements will be made for timely import to ensure food security. A multi-prong drive will be made to control prices along with monitoring the market. Hoarding and profiteering syndicates will be eliminated. Extortion will be stopped. An institution for commodity price control and consumer protection will be set up. Above all, price reduction and stability will be achieved by bringing equilibrium between demand and supply of commodities.
  - b. **Global Financial Crisis:** It is necessary to urgently form a task force which will devise a policy to save Bangladesh from global meltdown, develop a comprehensive information center, continually monitor national and global situations and provide prompt advice to help take necessary decisions. Necessary steps would be taken for investment promotion, energy security, retaining and enhancing domestic demand, safeguarding value of money, assisting exports and continuing export of manpower.
2. **Effective Action against Corruption:** Multi-pronged measures to fight corruption will be put into place. Powerful people will have to submit wealth statement annually. Strict measures will be taken to eliminate bribe, extortion, rent seeking and corruption. Strong measures will be taken against those having unearned and black money, against loan defaulters, tender manipulators, and users of muscle power in every stage of state and society. State or private monopoly will be broken up. Discretionary power of officials will be curtailed. To establish peoples' right, citizens' charter will be introduced in every department. Opportunities for corruption will be eliminated or minimized through widespread computerization.
3. **Power and Energy:**
  - a. A comprehensive long term policy on electricity and energy will be adopted. Economic usage of oil, gas, coal, hydro power, wind power and solar energy will be ensured. Big and small power generation stations, coal extraction, and oil and gas exploration will be given priority. Under a three year crash program quick implementation of ongoing and under consideration power generation stations, import of electricity from neighboring countries, arranging 100/150 megawatt gas turbine projects on urgent basis, and the reactivation of the past AL initiatives for constructing 10, 20 and 30 megawatt power stations will be undertaken. A schedule for repair, maintenance and overhauling or salvaging of old power stations will be made to increase and stabilize power production. Supply of gas and LPG will be increased. The Rooppur Nuclear Power Project will be

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

implemented. In the next three years or by 2011 power production will be increased to 5000 megawatt and by 2013 it will be further increased to 7000 megawatt.

- b. Priority will be given to exploration and exploitation of oil and new gas fields. Arrangements will be made to supply gas in the north and western regions of the country. Supply of gas and LPG will be significantly increased.
  - c. A Coal Policy will be formulated safeguarding national interest. Special initiatives will be taken to ensure economic use of the coal available so far and also to develop coal-based power plants. Priorities will be given to the exploration and exploitation of new coal fields and other mineral resources.
4. **Elimination of Poverty and Inequity:** The following strategy and aims will be followed for socio-economic development.
- a. The main strategy of poverty reduction will center on bringing vibrancy in agriculture and rural life. Social safety net will be extended for the ultra-poor. By 2013 poverty level and proportion of ultra-poor will be brought down to 25% and 15% respectively. At present there are 65 million poor people in the country. This number will be reduced to 45 million by 2013 and will further come down to 22 million in 2021. In order to achieve this objective, among other steps will be the revival of previously adopted projects such as "one house, one farm", rural housing, ideal village and returning homes. The number of recipients of old age allowance and destitute women allowance would, at the least, be doubled. Employment Banks will encourage young entrepreneurs by supplying necessary capital. Revision of the just formulated PRSP will be undertaken after a thorough evaluation within six months of assuming office.
  - b. Employment guidelines: A comprehensive employment guideline will be formulated aiming at poverty reduction, solving unemployment problem and making citizens' lives meaningful. The core components of the guidelines will be:
    - i. Creating employment opportunities in rural economy
    - ii. Providing credit and training for self-employment
    - iii. Creating employment opportunities for wage-labour in industries
    - iv. Promoting sub-contracting arrangements between big and small & medium scale industries and
    - v. Providing special training arrangements for facilitating export of labour.The number of unemployed people in the country, estimated at 28 million, will be reduced to 24 million by 2013 and will be further reduced to 15 million by 2021.
5. **Establishment of Good Governance:**
- a. Terrorism and religious extremism will be controlled with iron hand. Trial of war criminals will be arranged.
  - b. Genuine independence and impartiality of the judiciary will be ensured. Extrajudicial killings will be stopped. The judgment of the Bangabandhu murder case will be made effective and the retrial of jail killings will be held. Trial of real criminals responsible for the grenade attack of the 21st August, 2004 through proper investigation will be arranged. Rule of law will be established, The Human Rights Commission will be strengthened and made effective, and an Ombudsman will be appointed. Human rights will be strictly enforced.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

- c. The on-going reform programme of the Election Commission and electoral system will continue. The Parliament will be made effective and the government will be made accountable for all its activities. Wealth statement and source of income of the Prime Minister, members of cabinet, Parliament members and of their family members will be made public every year. Except for some specific subjects related to the security of the state, Parliament members will be allowed to express differing opinions.
- d. Use of religion and communalism in politics will be banned. Security and rights of religious and ethnic minorities will be ensured. Courtesy and tolerance will be inculcated in the political culture of the country. Militancy and extortion will be banned. Awami League will take initiative to formulate a consensual and unanimous charter of political behavior.
- e. Opportunities will be created for the expatriate Bangladeshis to take part in national reconstruction and their right to franchise will be ensured. Special initiatives will be taken to attract expatriate's remittance in productive investment. A consultancy network will be developed to fruitfully use expatriate's talents.
- f. Administration will be free from politicization and will be pro-people. Efficiency, seniority and merit will be the basis of appointment and promotion in public service. Administrative reform, right to information and e-governance will be introduced. A permanent Pay Commission will be set up for civil servants.
- g. In order to provide security to every citizen of the country, police and other law and order enforcing agencies will be kept above political influence. These forces will be modernized to meet the demands of the time. Necessary steps will be taken to increase their remuneration and other welfare facilities including accommodation.
- h. Rangpur will be made a new administrative division.

## Other Important Programs

1. **Local Government:** Union, Upazilla and District Councils will be strengthened through decentralization of power. District Councils will be transformed into centres for implementation of programmes on education and health and all other development plans, and programmes, and for maintenance of law and order. Every union will be made the headquarter for development and administration of the area and be developed as a planned rural township. And every Upazilla headquarter will be developed as an industrial growth centre and a planned township.

The power and sphere of responsibility of City Corporation and municipalities will be enhanced; the standard and quality of civic facilities will be improved.

2. **Agriculture And Rural Development:**
  - a. Our main aim is to ensure "food for all" by taking all possible measures and to make Bangladesh self-sufficient in food by 2013. Subsidy for agricultural inputs will be enhanced and availability of inputs will be made easier. The amount of agricultural loan will be increased and the lending procedure simplified. Incentives will be provided for development of rural warehousing. Fair price

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

for all crops and agricultural products will be ensured. Efforts will be made to attain self-sufficiency in the production of fish, milk, egg, livestock and salt. Efforts will be directed to exporting surplus products after meeting domestic requirement.

- b. Loan for share croppers will be made available, employment facilities for farm labourer will be created and they will be brought under rural rationing system.
  - c. Appropriate measures to face the challenges of globalization will be taken, including developing commercial agriculture, use of genetic engineering methods and development of non-agricultural sector in villages. In order to increase agricultural production, special emphasis will be placed on modernization of agriculture, innovation of technology and expansion of facilities for research in agriculture.
  - d. Village development will include provision of urban facilities and distribution of Khas land among landless farmers. Efforts will be taken to ensure that lease of khas ponds/haors is given to genuine fishermen. All land records will be computerized and a land reform commission will be formed to ensure increased production and social justice in the distribution of land and water bodies.
  - e. Measures will be taken to reclaim land in the coastal areas.
3. **Environment and Water Resources:** An integrated policy and plan will be formulated to protect the country from the adverse effects of global warming; to create pollution free environment and to save water resources. Projects will be undertaken for river dredging, water conservation, flood control, prevention of river erosion and protection of forestry. Attempts will also be made for restoring and maintaining ecological balance. Initiatives will be taken to implement the Ganges barrage project to expand irrigation facilities, prevent salinity and to solve the problem of scarcity of sweet water in the Sundarban region.

Effective regional and international co-operation will be sought for environmental protection and development of water resources. Modern scientific methods will be adopted to prevent water and air pollution and in the disposal of waste.

4. **Commerce and Industry:**
- a. Short, medium and long term plans will be made and implemented for poverty reduction, efficient management for quick industrialization that can provide employment, speedy expansion of stock market, maintenance of law & order and discipline, elimination of bribe and corruption and administrative difficulties, avoidance of political influence, creation of an investment friendly environment and a competitive market system, adoption of innovative technology, and provision of infrastructural facilities that are able to attract entrepreneurs and expand domestic market.
  - b. In order to encourage investment by local and foreign entrepreneurs and expatriate Bangladeshis, the ONE-STOP facility will be made effective by simplifying legal and procedural formalities. Measures will be put in place to protect indigenous industries.
  - c. Development of IT industry, strengthening of RMG and textile sectors and expansion of food processing, pharmaceuticals, leather, chemical products,

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

toys, jewelry and furniture industries will be given priority. Special initiative will be taken for alternative use of jute and to make jute industry viable. Small and handicraft industries and agro-based industry will be encouraged and will be given all cooperation in the expansion of markets at home and abroad. Expansion in tourism sector, increase in labor export, and investment of remittance received from expatriate Bangladeshis in productive sectors will be ensured.

- d. Assistance will be provided for expansion of small, medium and cottage industries. Special incentives will be given to weavers, blacksmiths and clay potters. Weaving industry will be given protection and silk, benarasi and jamdani villages will be set up.

## 5. Human Resources Development

- a. Education and Science: In order to ensure human resources development, the highest budgetary allocation will be given to education, science and information technology sectors. An education policy meeting the needs of the time will be framed keeping these in view. Net enrollment at primary level will be increased to 100% by 2011 and by 2017 the country will be rid of the curse of illiteracy. Improvement in the quality of education, depoliticisation of educational institutions, and ensuring a higher salary scale for teachers will be ensured. A permanent Pay Commission and a separate Service Commission will be instituted for teachers. Education up to graduation level will be provided free of cost in phases.
- b. In order to encourage female education the opportunity for free education along with scholarship will continue.
- c. Educational institutions will be rid of terrorism and session backlogs. Science and technology education will be especially encouraged. Madrasa education will be reoriented to develop productive skills and knowledge for the real world. Scope of science education and research will be expanded. Particular care will be taken in cases of disadvantaged pupils.
- d. More government secondary schools will be set up in the capital in phases. The govt. secondary schools located at every district headquarter will be developed and expanded and government. Secondary schools will be established at every Upzilla headquarter in phases.
- e. Information and communication technology: The potentials of ICT sector will be realized. Software industry and IT services will be developed by providing all possible assistance to talented young people and interested entrepreneurs. This measure will increase export and promote employment opportunities. Our vision is to make Bangladesh digital in 2021. IT education will be made compulsory at secondary level by 2013 and at primary level by 2021. The task force on ICT that was established during the Awami League rule but rendered ineffective by the BNP-Jamat Alliance will be reactivated. High-tech Park, software technology park, ICT incubator and computer villages will be set up at suitable locations in the country.
- f. Welfare of the disabled: The Disabled Welfare Act passed by Awami League in 2000 will be updated and implemented. Special steps will be taken to

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

facilitate education, employment, movement and communication of the disabled and to enhance their social dignity.

## 6. **Health and Family Welfare:**

- a. In order to ensure health facilities to every citizen of the country, the health policy of the erstwhile Awami League government will be reevaluated and adjusted according to the demands of the time. In the light of this policy, 18000 community clinics, established during Awami League rule, will be commissioned. Nutrition to children and mothers' welfare will be ensured. The Population Policy will be updated. And accordingly birth control and reproductive health care will be ensured.
- b. The arsenic problem will be tackled and measures will be taken to supply pure drinking water for all by 2011 and to provide sanitation facility in every house by 2013.
- c. An appropriate pharmaceutical policy to bring self- sufficiency in the production of medicines of international standard and to promote their export will be formulated. Concurrently, effective measures will be taken for education in traditional medicine and improvement of the quality of traditional medicine.

7. **Empowerment of Women and Child Welfare:** In order to ensure women's empowerment and equality in rights and opportunities, the Women Development Policy formulated by Awami League in 1997 will be revived. The number of reserved seats for women by direct election in the Parliament will be increased to 100. Necessary measures will be taken for appointment of women in senior posts in the administration and in all spheres of employment. Strictest legal measures will be taken to stop oppression of women. Discriminatory laws against the interest of women will be rectified.

8. **Welfare of Children and the Juvenile:** Child labor will be gradually abolished in all sectors. Use of children in political and other activities through coercion or enticement will be prohibited. In keeping with the UN convention on children's rights, adequate measures will be taken for developing their physical and mental capacity and for their nutrition and entertainment.

## 9. **Youth and Employment:**

- a. A comprehensive employment policy will be developed setting targets for employment enshrining
  - i. Agricultural employment,
  - ii. Off-farm activities in rural areas,
  - iii. Self-employment and income generating activities,
  - iv. Urban service employment, v. wage employment in industry,
  - v. Employment in infra-structure development,
  - vi. Employment abroad and necessary training for it and
  - vii. Employment of youth and students.
- b. An employment guarantee scheme will gradually be made effective to provide 100 days employment to one youth per family. All citizens able to work will be registered. A project will be undertaken for young men and women with HSC degrees for appointment in the "national service" for two years.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

## 10. Communication and Infrastructure

- a. Appropriate policy and project implementation will be undertaken in transport, road building, housing, and port development and construction sectors. An extensive road network in each district will connect villages, unions, upazillas and the district headquarter.
- b. Appropriate measures will be taken to construct the Padma and Karnaphuli bridge/tunnel, Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane express way, and expansion and modernization of the railway.
- c. Rail and road connection with neighboring countries under the Asian Rail and Highways schemes will be established.
- d. Dredging of every big and small river will be undertaken and measures will be taken to maintain their navigability throughout the year. River routes will be improved and river transportation system will be modernized to facilitate safe and cost effective transportation of cargo and passengers.
- e. Construction of deep sea ports and modernization of Chittagong and Mongla ports and opening them up to all of Asia will be taken up.
- f. Bangladesh Biman will be restructured to enable it to operate on commercial & profitable basis. Aviation services in the private sector will be encouraged. Modern airports of international standard will be constructed to facilitate air transportation linking Bangladesh with the world.
- g. Telecommunication facilities will be extended upto rural villages. All Upazilas will be brought under internet communication system in the next five years.
- h. Railway will be given importance and new rail lines will be installed as it maintains communication link with the capital and provides cheaper transportation.

Underground railway, mono or circular rail and navigable river route around Dhaka will be constructed to solve the public transportation problem and traffic jam in the capital.

## 11. Labor Policy:

- a. National labour policy will be reevaluated and corrected. Discrepancy in wages between male and female workers will be removed. National minimum wage will be refixed and a permanent wage board will be formed. To meet international demand, tradewise training will be given to produce and export skilled manpower. As per ILO convention, the right to trade union will be granted.
- b. Rationing system will be introduced for all labourers including garment worker, ultra poor and rural landless farm labourer, as special consideration.

## 12. Freedom Struggle and Freedom Fighters:

- a. Continuous efforts will be made for the realization of the dream and commitment of liberation war. Dignity and status of the freedom fighters, who are the greatest sons of the nation, will be restored. And in state recognition of their contribution to the nation, steps will be taken to increase their alliance, particularly of the distressed freedom fighters. Arrangements will be made to provide them old-age subsistence allowance and free health care service. Quota in jobs and educational institutions for the children of freedom

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

fighters will continue. As honourable citizens, the freedom fighters will be given the privilege of travel by rail, bus, and river free of cost.

- b. Construction of the Victory Monument in the Suhrawardy Udyan will be completed according to the original plan. Special work programme will be undertaken all over the country to preserve the memory of the war of liberation and to portray its real history. All over the country, slain field and mass graves of the liberation war period will be identified, the names and identities of the martyrs will be collected and memorials in their honour will be built.

## 13. Religious Minorities, Disadvantaged People and Underdeveloped Areas

- a. Terrorism, discriminatory treatment and human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous people must come to an end permanently. Security of their life, wealth and honor will be guaranteed. Their entitlement to equal opportunity in all spheres of state and social life will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to secure their original ownership on land, water bodies, and their age-old rights on forest areas. In addition, a land commission will be formed. All laws and other arrangements discriminatory to minorities, indigenous people and ethnic groups will be repealed. Special privileges will be made available in educational institutions for religious minorities and indigenous people. Such special privileges will also apply for their employment.
- b. The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord will be fully implemented. More efforts will be directed toward the development of underdeveloped tribal areas, and special programmes on priority basis will be taken to secure their rights and to preserve their language, literature, culture, and unique lifestyles.

## 14. Freedom of mass media and information

- a. The freedom of all types of mass media and flow of information will be ensured. Initiatives will be taken for community radio services, besides national radio network.
- b. Investigation and trial of assassination of all journalists will be made expeditiously and the real criminals will be given exemplary punishment. Persecution and intimidation of journalists will be stopped. All false cases against them will be withdrawn.
- c. Discrimination in distribution of advertisements on partisan consideration shall be discontinued, and development of the newspaper as an industry will be aided.

## 15. Defence

- a. Bangladesh Awami League will keep the armed forces above all controversies with a view to building it up as a patriotic, brave, efficient and invincible force. The defence system will be improved for the security of the people and the country. A National Defence Policy will be formulated.
- b. The principle of competence, merit, fitness and seniority will be strictly followed for recruitment, appointment and promotion. Autonomy, as consistent with the Constitution, will be granted in matters of internal discipline, administration and management. Welfare oriented projects will be undertaken for the members of the defence forces.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

- c. Steps will be taken so that our defence and the police forces can participate more widely in the U. N. Peace-keeping Force and make further contribution to international peace.

## 16. Culture and Sports

- a. The State will provide necessary assistance for preservation of the secular and democratic tradition of Bengali culture as well as further improvement of Bengali language and literature, music, arts and all branches of creative works and fine arts. The International Mother Language Institute Project undertaken by the Awami League Government earlier (1996/2001) will be reactivated.
- b. Creation of social awareness, scientific and liberal outlook will be emphasized with a view to resisting communalism and narrow mindedness.
- c. Laws repugnant to Quran and Sunnah shall not be made. Due respect will be shown to the principles and values of all religions.
- d. Sports: Sports arena and organizations shall be depoliticized. Improvement of management, training and facilities shall be made for enhancing the standards of sports to international levels. Sports and exercise for physical and mental development of the children, the adolescent and the young shall be made compulsory for all education institutions.

## 17. Government and NGO

The non-government organizations shall be free to manage themselves in accordance with their own internal rules subject to compliance with the laws of the country. The NGOs shall not take part in politics. Transparency and accountability of their income /receipts and expenditures shall have to be ensured.

## 18. Foreign Policy

- a. Bangladesh will take an active role in the preservation of world peace. An independent foreign policy will be pursued in adherence to the principles of "Friendship with all and malice towards none." Friendly relationship will be maintained with India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, our neighboring countries, in the context of further strengthening cooperation with all. Regional and sub-regional cooperation will be further strengthened including relationship with the member countries of SAARC, BIMSTEC and D-8.
- b. Development cooperation will be deepened and expanded with the developed countries including USA, European Union, Japan and Canada. Friendly relations will be strengthened with Russia, China and the member states of ASEAN.
- c. Initiatives will be taken for enhancing and deepening relationship with Australia and the Pacific countries.
- d. Fraternal relationship with the countries of the Middle East including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait as well as Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia will be maintained. Solidarity with the Muslim Ummah and economic cooperation within the framework of OIC will be enhanced. Steps will be taken for establishing fruitful relationship with the countries of Africa and South America.
- e. A South Asian Task Force will be formed for meeting the challenge of terrorism and militancy. The image and prestige of Bangladesh will be retrieved and improved in the international arena.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

## Call to the People of Bangladesh

**Dear countrymen,**

You are aware that the activities of the past governments have now placed our dear motherland in a critical state. The people do not wish to return to the days of poor governance of the kind they have seen under the BNP-Jamaat Alliance. The people want a country free of terrorism and corruption; they want a just and progressive society. They want to see Bangladesh move towards steady development and good governance.

Bangladesh Awami League, therefore, wants not only a mere change of power. We are determined to salvage the country from its present critical state and to transform it into a land of real democracy with rule of law, having food security, rapid development and peaceful existence. With this end in view we are presenting our long term vision for the nation as well as an implementable five year work plan with specific targets and strategies.

We believe that the invaluable experience that Bangladesh Awami League gained in administering the country (during the 1996-2001 term) can be utilized with great efficiency, honesty and commitment to take the country forward.

We dedicate our Vision-2021 to the young generation, who are enrolled as voters this year for the first time, with the aim of building a bright future for them. In order to prepare ourselves to face the challenges of globalization in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we want to utilize the immense potentials of our new generation of voters. We have formulated our Election Manifesto and work programme for them.

We believe the successful implementation of this work programme and Vision-2021 depends on our young generations' active participation and involvement in the process.

By implementing this Manifesto with the collective efforts of the entire nation, we will present a bright and successful future to the new generation. We call upon them to participate in this great endeavour of national reconstruction and build a bright future for themselves and as well as successive generations.

**Dear Countrymen**

If Awami League is voted to rule the country, we will bring back peace and trust in your life by reducing the price of daily essentials.

We call upon you to forget past differences and disputes and, in the spirit of our glorious struggle for freedom, work unitedly in this fight for change. Let us put a permanent end to persecution, deprivation, inequity, and mis-governance. Let us construct a just and democratic society and build a happy, prosperous, golden Bengal.

# Greater Washington Awami League (GWAL)

We seek the help and blessings of the Almighty in our endeavours.

Joy Bangla.

Joy Bangabandhu.

Long live Bangladesh.

Greater Washington Awami League