

SOLACE GLOBAL

LATEST

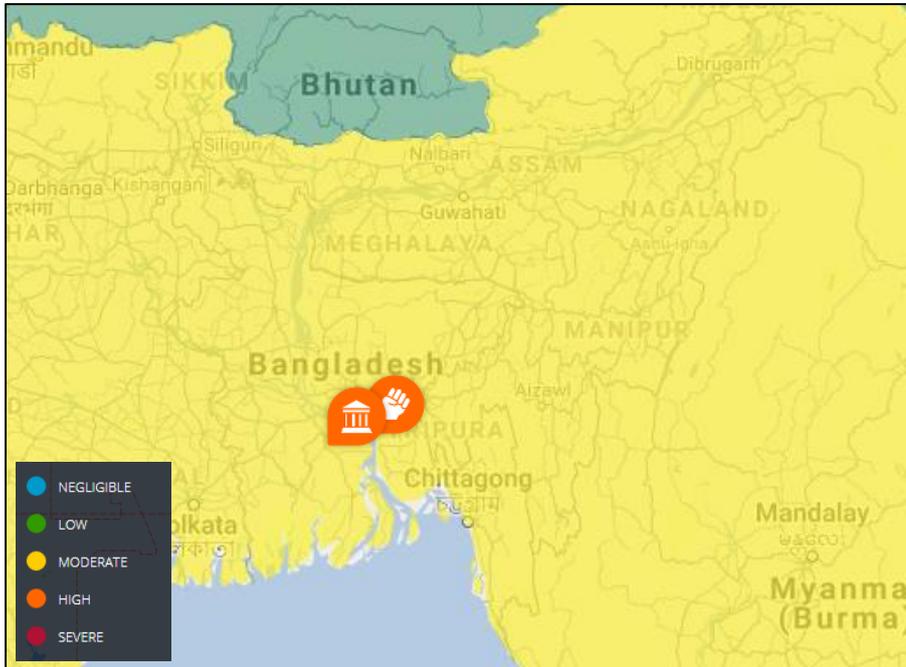
TRAVEL ADVISORY





ELECTION FORECAST • 21 NOVEMBER 2018

Bangladesh General Election 2018



KEY EVENTS

-  **Bangladesh:** Moderate travel risk
-  Risk of violence: **HIGH**
-  Political Risk: **HIGH**

Urban Centres: Anticipate heightened security, avoid all political gatherings in the build up to 30 December General Election

BANGLADESH: URBAN CENTRES (MODERATE)



KEY POINTS

- Bangladesh is set to contest their general election on 30 December following the decision by the Bangladesh Electoral Commission to defer the date by a week, allowing more time for the main opposition parties to prepare for the polls.
- The 2014 election was marred by violent clashes throughout the country after the main opposition boycotted the vote over allegations of fraud and corruption.
- Unrest is likely in urban centres in the coming weeks leading to localised clashes between political supporters and security forces. Travellers in Bangladesh should stay up to date with local news sources and avoid all protests due to the risk of violence.

SITUATION SUMMARY

The Bangladesh election look set to go ahead after the Bangladesh election committee partially met demands issued by several opposition political groups who had previously boycotted the polls. Opposition parties had requested a longer deferral from the election committee, to prepare for the up and coming elections and that the current parliament was dissolved and replaced with a special cabinet over the voting period, following allegations that the ruling Awami League Party would use their position to try and influence the election results. While the demands were only partially met, it appears that opposition groups will take part in this election with opposition politicians starting to register as candidates.

Fears that the 2018 election would result in a major deterioration of the security environment, such as was experienced in 2014, have been allayed by the current participation of the main opposition groups in the political process however, existing tensions are likely to lead to major unrest in urban centres. On 14 November, 32 people were injured when supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and security forces clashed in Dhaka as supporters accompanied a BNP candidate to pick up their election nomination papers. Travellers should anticipate an uptick in political demonstrations and rallies in the coming weeks as political parties start campaigning and should take precautions to avoid all such gatherings.



ELECTION FORECAST • 21 NOVEMBER 2018

SOLACE GLOBAL COMMENT

The main opposition group, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), boycotted parliamentary elections in 2014 following a change in regulations that allowed the ruling Awami League to remain in power during the election cycle. In previous election cycles parliament has been dissolved and a special cabinet is appointed to oversee parliamentary duties. The BNP withdrew from the election process over the alleged corruption and fraud in the ruling Awami League and fears they would use their position within government to influence the results of the up and coming election. Several other opposition parties joined them meaning that the 2014 elections were largely uncontested with only 144 out of the 300 parliamentary seats having more than one candidate.

Supporters of the main opposition groups accused the government of diminishing the democratic process and called for widespread demonstrations. Twenty-one people were killed on polling day following clashes between opposition group supporters and the security forces leading to further protests throughout the country and widespread clashes between political opponents. The military were subsequently deployed, and curfews were imposed on several neighbourhoods in an effort to quell the unrest. Following the widespread unrest, several opposition leaders were subsequently arrested and imprisoned for their involvement in mobilising support for the countrywide demonstrations.

The political situation in Bangladesh has remained tense since 2014, with the 2018 election identified as a potential flashpoint for a further deterioration in the security environment. However, the subsequent involvement of the main opposition groups highlights that, at present, parliamentary seats will be contested by multiple politicians, leading to a more transparent and fair political process. There remains a risk that opposition parties will still boycott the elections if further requests to dissolve the parliament are not met.

SECURITY ADVICE

HIGH POLITICAL RISK



- Consider minimising movement on, and immediately after, the 30 December due to the credible threat posed by clashes between demonstrators and security forces.
- Travellers should avoid all election-related gatherings due to the risk of violence. Consult local media, in country contacts and Solace Global Alerts for details of any planned or ongoing demonstrations in your area.
- Significant traffic disruption is likely near such rallies, especially in major urban centres, on major routes and around key transport and business hubs. Plan routes circumventing areas prone to unrest, alternatively allow additional time if travel through affected areas is unavoidable.
- Anticipate heightened security at public venues, at rally locations and in the vicinity of election-related venues. Exercise vigilance around protest areas and polling stations; follow all official directives.
- Carry personal identification documents at all time in case you need to transit through a checkpoint.



Solace Global remains available to provide the full range of Travel Risk Management services to clients.

Solace Global is also able to provide comprehensive crisis management, in-country journey management, tracking, response, and evacuation services.

For further details please contact +44 (0)1202 308 810 or email risk@solaceglobal.com