

# LAUNCHING OF THE ASIAN ELECTORAL RESOURCE CENTER (AERC)

CHRONICLER OF ASIAN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY  
ASIAN NETWORK FOR FREE ELECTIONS



## WHY AERC?

The universal human right of suffrage, as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR, Article 21) and emphasized in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, Article 25), is one of the major bedrocks of democracy. This right is exercised through the conduct of free and fair elections. However, many men and women in Asia are still denied this basic right.

There are different levels of democracy in Asia today. There are (a) emerging democracies; (b) consolidating democracies; and (c) stable democracies. Some countries, like China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Laos, have yet to begin their transition, while others, like Cambodia, Burma and Nepal, have fragile democracies that are standing still or at risk of slipping backwards. Even countries with established democratic systems face electoral problems due to factors ranging from racial or religious tensions to the rise of extremism to poor representation and voter apathy.

Although steps taken by several countries in the past decade to strengthen democracy are commendable, the process of democratization in most of Asia has a long way to go, and several areas of concern remain, especially for countries subject to serious questions on the credibility of their electoral processes.

The challenges besetting elections and democracy in Asia are in need of urgent attention, but they can only be addressed when the causes of the problem are identified accurately and well understood.

The Asian Electoral Resource Center (AERC) has been launched to address this need by taking up the role of providing relevant information and offering perspective in understanding the region and the political context of specific countries.



## WHAT IS AERC?

As envisioned, AERC will chronicle the democratization process, specifically concerning elections, in Asia. AERC's goal is to strengthen the capacities and efforts of various democracy and electoral reform stakeholders in the region. It will become a resource for reform advocates, election management bodies, international and domestic election observers, researchers, and individuals seeking to understand the complexities of the electoral systems and processes and how to advance democracy in Asia.

To achieve these goals, AERC will focus its work on six (6) specific components:

## ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN ASIA : A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

AERC will regularly issue a regional situational analysis based on data collected by the center. These analyses will provide a view of ongoing democratic developments in the region and aid in identifying factors that may affect the state of democracy in Asia or in a specific country.



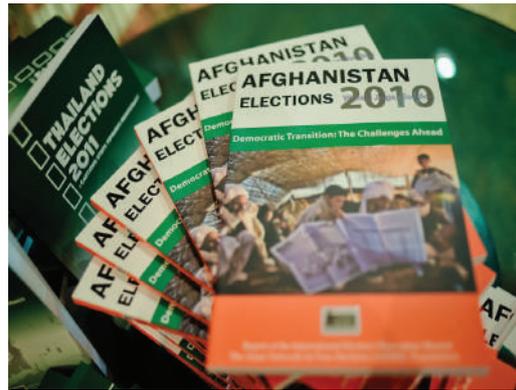
## POOL OF ELECTION EXPERTS

AERC will develop a pool of experts from all over Asia who will be identified and catalogued according to their country and area of expertise. The election experts can assist democratization through sharing of experience and knowledge and by helping to build the capacities of advocates of democracy and electoral reform in Asia. The pool will be made up of individuals who belong to ANFREL's member organizations, academics, former diplomats, and individuals engaged in democracy and election work within and outside Asia.

## ELECTION RELATED DATABASE

AERC will establish an election-related database to serve as the backbone of the resource center. Most significant analyses will be derived from the database. It will offer exhaustive detail about electoral democracy in Asia. Available data will range from basic concepts of democracy and elections to detailed country profiles.

The data sets that will be gathered by country will include, but not be limited to, the following subjects: electoral systems, political parties, campaign finance, legal frameworks, EMB and EOM manuals, civic/voter education, election violence, participation of minority and other vulnerable persons, electoral disputes adjudication, election security, vote counting management, elections and technology, direct democracy, ballot papers, civil society participation, electoral challenges, electoral reforms, and ANFREL country reports, among others.



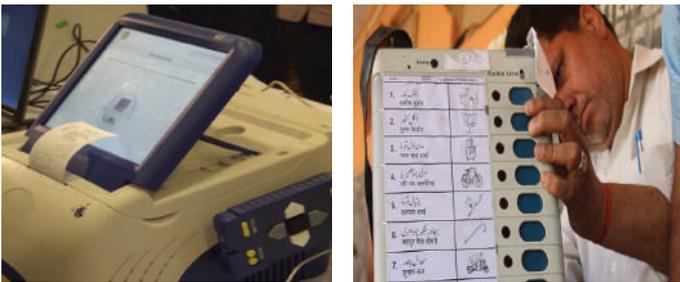
## RESEARCH ON ELECTORAL CHALLENGES

AERC will undertake methodical research on the challenges confronting Asian electoral democracy and publish and update the results periodically.

Priority will be given to democracies that are still very fragile and are in need of urgent attention and support. The results of the research will aid the electoral reform work of these countries

## RESEARCH ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTIONS

AERC, in recognition of the contribution of Information Technology (IT) today, will research and assess the available technologies that can be used in media outreach, election observation, and election management itself. It will also cover the use of technology in the conduct of elections in e-voting machine, smart media, and other related applications.



By identifying these technologies and making recommendations to increase accessibility to information, AERC aims to make electoral processes more transparent and credible.

## E-BULLETIN

AERC will issue an online bulletin on a quarterly basis. The bulletin will include relevant and important updates concerning democracy and elections in Asia.

## MESSAGE TO ANFREL MEMBERS, FRIENDS, AND NETWORKS

ANFREL invites its member organizations and all election and democracy stakeholders to cooperate and support this new endeavor. Your contributions will help assure the success of this initiative.



The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) was established in 1997 as Asia's first regional network of civil society organizations focused on elections and election monitoring. It strives to promote and support democratization at national and regional levels in Asia.

ANFREL is supported by a number of national organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and Thailand.

For more information, you may visit  
[www.anfrel.org](http://www.anfrel.org)

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