



Report on Municipality Election-2011

Democracywatch

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Date: 8 February 2011

Introduction

Democracywatch has been observing all national and local elections, by-elections and re-elections from its inception in 1996. In this connection the organization observed Municipality Election-2011, which was held on 12, 17 and 18 January 2011. The organization recruited about 60 observers on the Election Day monitor election situation of Municipality Election supported by The Asia Foundation.

Objectives of Democracywatch election monitoring

The specific objective of Democracywatch election monitoring program is to ensure the fairness of the electoral process and to build public confidence in the elections.

The organization monitored the municipality election to achieve the following objectives

- To encourage large-scale participation of voters in the election by building confidence on the electoral process.
- To detect election fraud, manipulation and irregularities
- Deter irregularities, intimidation and undue influence in election.
- Ensure people's all-out participation, especially women and new voters in the electoral process.
- Ensure free, fair, meaningful, and participatory election.

Organizational structure of election monitoring

Democracywatch is a non-partisan and credible organization at all levels. The election observation network involved a young, educated and trained group supported by the National Secretariat located in Dhaka. The network involved local partners who have been doing this work for a long time.

Democracywatch Municipality Election Observation Plan

Democracywatch election observation program envisaged among others, recruitment, training and mobilizing of 60 observers for observing 12 Municipality for the Election Day.

Similarly 7 other partner organizations had been directly involved as associates of Democracywatch for Municipality election monitoring. The partner organizations were TUS in Sadar and Muktagach Municipality at Mymensingh, CRS in Madarganj Municipality and SPK in Jamalpur Sadar Municipality, Vorsa in Brammanbari Sadar and Rac Bangladesh in Kuliarchar of Kishoregonj, Adhikar Foundation in Daudkandi of Comilla, SRB in Feni Sadar and Saver, Dhamrai in Dhaka, Singra in Natore and Kaliakar in Gazipur District of Democracywatch.

Democracywatch directly recruited 60 Mobile observers of 12 municipalities in all over the country. Among them there was 12 Focal person 5 staff of Dhaka Office was involved in monitoring.

Observer Training

Democracywatch took comprehensive 3 observer's training session at Mymensing, Natore and Dhaka. Training Sessions were conducted by a group of professional trainers of Democracywatch.

Following topic were discussed in this training sessions

- An introduction, which briefly describes the formation of the organization and its principal and goals.
- A concise historical perspective, which explains the significance of the election monitoring.
- An overview on the evolution of nonpartisan election monitoring efforts.
- A description of the responsibilities of various election officials.
- A code of conduct and guideline for observers
- A description of the activities undertaken by observers before and during the Election Day and the details involved in election manuals.
- Election data and information collection system of Democracywatch.
- A mock election procedure is followed so that observers are aware of all the steps they should scrutinize.



DW officials conducting a training program at Mymensing

In addition Democracywatch also briefed about the Election Working Group's plan and reporting system to the observers.

Voter Guide line Distributions

The Democracywatch activities plan included a public awareness strategy that had been implemented throughout the project period. This included voters meet, motivational meetings to highlight the non-partisan role of election observer discouraging electoral fraud and promoting a friendly environment in all the polling stations. The organization produced and distributed one voter guide line in 12 Municipality in 8 districts.

Election Day Monitoring

A total number of 60 trained observers from Democracywatch observed 132 polling stations out of a total of 279 in 12 Municipalities election held was on 12, 17 and 18 January 2011.



Democracywatch Observers observe the election at Savar Municipality.

Democracywatch observers reported that there were large numbers of voters present in all polling stations. Many female voters were seen with their children implying a safe environment. The voters maintained discipline despite having to wait for long hours. The polling officials and law enforcing agencies also played a positive role during the election.



Observer talking to the elderly voters at Dhamrai Municipality

According to Democracywatch observers, the election was free, fair and peaceful. Effective steps by the EC, Efficiency of law enforcing agencies; Comprehensive monitoring by the observers added an extra value to this election. This election has already gained much credibility among all sectors.



DW Observer observe the election at Singra, Nator

According to Democracywatch some of the following reasons made this election different:

- Both the major candidates (AL & BNP) maintained friendly relation till the election
- The role of Election Commission was effective from starting the election
- Election irregularities were very few
- A large number of women voters participated in the election process

Due to the above reasons the election was held in peaceful manner. Democracywatch appreciated the role of Election Commission and all concerned, in holding this municipality election peacefully.

Election Materials and Environment:

According to observers the election material was adequate in all polling centers. But the quality of indelible ink was not up to the mark-according to voters.



DW Observer talking to the women voters.

Performance of Law Enforcing Agencies

The performance of law enforcing agencies was satisfactory. Adequate police, battalion Ansar and VDP were assigned in all the polling centers. In addition Police, BGB and Magistrate were seen on mobile duty in the polling areas.



DW observers interviewing law enforcing agencies on the Election Day at Savar.

Democracywatch observers found some irregularities in some centers, which are as follows:

SL	Name of Municipality	Name Of Centre	Specific Incidents Reported
1	Madarganj, Jamalpur	Mirza Kashem Model Primary School	No incident was reported. Polling held peacefully. But the place and position of the center was not good.
2	Mymensing Sadar	Nasirabad Govt Girls High School	This Center was too small to use as a polling center
3	Muktagacha, Mymensing	Nizamuddin Municipality Govt. Primary School	This center was not friendly for disable and senior voters.
4	Dhamrai , Dhaka	Ideal School	Voting was comparatively slow due to lack of space
5	Dhamrai, Dhaka	Aengaon Govt. Primary School	Infrastructure was not supportive for a polling center.
6	Muktagacha	R.K High School	Two booths set up in a small room. The voting process was comparatively slow. Too much crowding may generate irregularly.

Counting Process

At the end of the polls, the counting process began which was open and transparent in all Municipalities. The Presiding and Assistant Presiding Officers, polling officers in the presence of different party agents completed the counting. In some polling stations Democracywatch observers were permitted to observe the counting process along with the Presiding officials.

Recommendations to Bangladesh Election Commission

Although the election was generally free and fair but a few more steps would make it perfect

- Democracywatch believes that Election Commission and local administration should maintain close coordination in conducting an election.
- If the numbers of women's booths are increased in each center, the voting process would be easier, as women take longer time to cast vote.
- Election Commission should arrange long term training for the presiding officers and polling officers.

- Special booths for disabled and aged should be set up in the centers preferably on the ground floor.
- More information to the voters to be given at the centers.
- Polling stations should be located closer to the voters.
- Election Commission and Election monitoring organizations should arrange Civic Voter Education Campaign at National level to let people know about the role and responsibilities of voters.
- District Election Office and Upazila Election office should arrange candidate consultation meeting on election activities and role of candidate's behavior.
- Given the importance of the political party agents' roles in the polling stations and lack of skill and understanding, it is strongly suggested that they must be well trained on their role and activities on Election Day.