

Report on Municipality Election-2015



15 Eskaton Garden Road, Ramna, Dhaka-100
Phone: 8802 9344225-6, 8315807, Fax no: 8802 9330405
Email: info@dwatch-bd.org, website: www.dwatch-bd.org

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

AL	: Bangladesh Awami League
BNP	: Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CBO	: Community Based Organization
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
DW	: Democracywatch
ECB	: Election Commission Bangladesh
EO	: Election Officer
EWG	: Election Working Group
EMT	: Election Monitoring Team
LG	: Local Government
MDG	: Millennium Development Goal
MP	: Member of Parliament
NGO	: Non-Government Organization
PS	: Polling Station
PO	: Presiding Officer
APO	: Assistant Presiding Officer
RO	: Retuning Officer
PO	: Polling Officer
PA	: Polling Agent
RPO	: Representation of the People Order
RAB	: Rapid Action Battalion
BGB	: Board Guard of Bangladesh
STO	: Short Term Observer
UNO	: UpazilaNirbahi Officer
UZP	: UpazilaParishad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Democracywatch would like to acknowledge and extend special thanks to all those who participated in and made the observation of the Municipality election possible. First, we are profoundly grateful to The Asia Foundation (TAF) who gave us the financial support necessary to carry out the Municipality Elections observation activities. We are also profoundly grateful to the Election Commission who has given permission to observe these Elections on mobile basis.

It is worth mentioning that the funding of TAF to remain was a great support for us in observing the Municipality Election which was held on 30 December 2015. Without the generous funding from them, the observation exercise would not have taken place.

Second, we are grateful to our Management and Staff, for their continued support and guidance, and for participating in the observation exercise. We also appreciate the role played by Election Working Group (EWG) Secretariat in planning and implementing the observation exercise. The Secretariat effectively participated in and managed the entire observation exercise.

Third, we acknowledge all our Observers for their dedication and commitment towards the observation exercise. We deeply appreciate our observers for their diligence, commitment, and hard work in monitoring and observing the pre-election environment; and for the identification, recruitment, and mobilization of the observers in their respective Constituencies. Their commitment and hard work of the Observers was instrumental in ensuring an efficient and reliable observation and recording of electoral data on polling day. The data and information collected and compiled by the District Coordinators has significantly supported the compilation of this report.

Finally, we wish to thank the Election Commission of Bangladesh for accrediting Democracywatch to observe the UP Elections and for the support and cooperation we received during the exercise. We particularly wish to thank Democracywatch Election Team for their hard work, support and cooperation during the Municipality Elections.

TaleyaRehman
Executive Director

Democracywatch and Its scope of Observation:

Democracywatch is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan civil society organization that shares a common commitment to free and fair elections, good governance, and the achievement of higher standards of democratic process and practice in Bangladesh since 1995. Democracywatch is registered as an election monitoring organization with the Election Commission Bangladesh (ECB). It has observed all general, bi and local elections since its inception.

Objective of Democracywatch Election Monitoring Program

The specific objective of Democracywatch election monitoring was to ensure the fairness of the electoral process including electoral laws and regulation, voter campaigning, voting process and vote counting. The goal of Democracywatch was to build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process and to legitimize the result of a competitive election.

The organization monitored the Municipality election 2015 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 peoples' all-out participation, especially women and new voters in the electoral process.
- Ensure free, fair, meaningful and participatory election

Municipality Elections: The Legal Framework

Article 11 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provides that 'The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed, and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured'. Article 59(1) of the Constitution states that, "Local Government in every administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law."

Local government elections were always held on a personal basis but the Government of Bangladesh, for the first time in its history, decided to conduct local bodies' election on a political party basis. For this purpose, they amended the Local Government (Municipality) Act-2009 on 21 November 2015 to remove legal barriers to conduct Municipality elections on a partisan basis.

Municipality Elections 2015: The Key Aspects

Election Administration: Similar to parliamentary elections, the municipality election 2015 conducted by the ECB. It recruited Returning Officers (ROs), Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) and other polling personnel from administration and provided training to them. The selection of polling stations and the provision of security at the polling stations were also managed responsibility of the ECB.

Announcement of Election Schedule: On 24 November 2015 the ECB announced the schedule for 234 municipalities on December 30, 2015. As per schedule mayoral and councilor aspirants collected and submitted the nomination papers by December 3 and the ROs scrutinized the applications between 5 and 6 December 2015. The Withdrawal of candidacy was allowed till 13 December 2015.

The Code of Conduct for Campaign Period: Promulgated in 2010, the electoral code of conduct (including revisions since promulgation) for the Municipality elections mainly focus on two issues: (i) Behavior during the nomination period and (ii) Behavior during campaign period.

During the time of submission of nomination papers, a candidate cannot organize any rally, or conduct any showdown; also they are not to be accompanied by more than 5 persons at any time. Moreover, they are not to organize a rally using any kinds of vehicle or bring out a procession using torch. On the other hand, the Codes for campaign period contains multiple measures aimed at ensuring a level playing field, including the level of participation of political leaders and parties, as well as attempting to minimize clashes and conflicts between candidates to ensure peace and order. It also makes provisions to ensure that the incumbent party does not misuse its office to gain an unfair advantage during the campaign. The uses of religious institutions, circuit houses and other government establishments have also been banned for campaign purposes. Some features of the code of conduct are below:

- Candidates (Mayor) use name/identity of a political party or party leader while campaigning;
- Candidates or someone on their behalf, cannot donate or promise to donate money to any institution (mosque, madrasa, educational institutions, orphanage, temple, club, etc.) during the campaign period;
- Candidates cannot use government establishments (circuit house, bungalow, rest house, offices etc.) for campaign purposes or night stay/accommodation;
- Campaign materials (posters, leaflets, handbills) can only be hung; these must not be put on vehicles, walls, electric/telephone poles, trees, government offices/establishments, other standing objects;
- Candidates cannot use color posters during the campaign;

- Campaigns cannot use paraphernalia depicting a candidate in anything other than a normal pose (poses not legally acceptable include: praying, wearing a garland of flowers, leading a procession, etc.);
- Candidates cannot organize processions that utilize trucks, buses, motor bikes, trains or any other vehicles. Torch processions are also banned;
- Candidates cannot build archways/gates specifically constructed and hung with campaign materials;
- Candidates or their supporters must not use shirts, jackets, fatua, etc. with the candidate's photograph, symbol, or slogans;
- Campaigns that utilize lighting or decoration with electricity are prohibited.

The most important provision of the code of conduct is that the Commission can cancel the candidacy of any person for violating the code of conduct.

Methodology of the Observation:

As a part of its core mandate, Democracywatch planned to observe general electoral activities of candidates i.e. Submission and Scrutiny of nomination papers, Electoral Campaign, Election-Day, and, Use of Children and Adolescent in different electoral activities during campaigning and Election-Day in the municipality elections 2015 by deploying both long-term observers (LTOs) and short-term observers (STOs). Following the announcement of the election schedule of ECB, Democracywatch deployed 11 LTOs in 11 Municipalities to observe both general observation and observation on involving children and adolescent in pre-election, election-day and post-election period. Appointed LTOs got training on pre, post and election-day observation with a set of checklists prepared by DW election monitoring cell in 11 Municipalities (Saidpur, Hakimpur, Birampur, Badarganj, Pabna, Ullapara, Magura, Muktagacha, Narail, Jessore and Tangail). Two major aspects covered in LTOs Checklists, one is general electoral activities i.e. submission of nomination papers, scrutiny and appeal of the nomination papers, violations of the code of conduct during campaign period and election-day, election violence and the other is Use of children and adolescent in electoral campaign and election day.

In each of the municipalities, a statistically significant number of Short Term Observers (STOs) were deployed. Democracywatch prepared and trained 233 STOs for observing election-day. In accordance with Democracywatch deployment policy, the locations of observers in polling stations were assigned using a random sampling technique from the complete list of polling stations prepared and gazetted by the ECB (see the table-2). All observers received a full day's training, with many observers having previous experience in observation activities. Democracywatch election day observation activities were comprehensive, covering: (i) Preparation and opening of the polling stations; (ii) Voting operations and procedures; (iii) Closing and counting; and (IV) Voting environment in and outside of the polling stations.

SL	Name of Municipality	District	Division	LTO	Total Number of observed Polling Stations
1	Syedpur	Nilphamary	Rangpur	1	9
2	Hakimpur	Dinajpur		1	9
3	Birampur			1	9
4	Badarganj	Rangpur		1	7
5	Pabna	Pabna	Rajshahi	1	10
6	Ullapara	Sirajganj		1	9
7	Magura	Magura	Khulna	1	7
8	Narail	Narail		1	9
9	Jessore	Jessore		1	9
10	Tangail	Tangail	Dhaka	1	5
11	Savar	Dhaka		0	78
12	Kishoreganj	Kishoreganj		0	19
13	Karimganj			0	6
14	Bhairab			0	27
15	Kuliarchar			0	8
16	Iswarganj			Mymensingh	0
17	Muktagasa	1			8
18	Fulpur	0			8
19	Gouripur	0			7
20	Madarganj	Jamalpur		0	7
21	Dewanganj			0	9
22	Nakla	Sherpur		0	12
23	Srevardi			0	7
Total		14	4	11	286

(Table-1: Democracywatch's Election Observation Mapping)

Observation of the submission of Nomination Paper and scrutiny:

A total number of 123 councilor candidates including reserved seat interviewed with DW LTOs during submitting their nomination papers. Among them, 79 were female and 44 were male candidates. They along with 5 supporters submitted their nomination paper to local election authority following the electoral code of conduct. They didn't face hazards during nomination paper submission except in Jessore Municipality where 8 councilor candidates of Jessore including 3 female candidates alleged against electoral officials. 74 candidates mentioned electoral official were skilled and received their papers lawfully. 20 candidates had doubt about skills of electoral officials. Besides, rest of candidates told them unskilled. In addition to 8 candidates were not aware of electoral rules and faced challenges in submitting their nomination papers. Three candidates of Jessore were prevented from submitting their nomination paper by pro-government candidates.

Campaign Period Observation:

The LTOs of Democracywatch gathered information about collection and submission of nominations, scrutiny and appeals of nominations, violations of code of conduct as well as election related violence and abuse of children and adolescent.

Throughout the campaigning period, Democracywatch observed a significant number of violations of the code of conduct both by mayoral and councilor candidates in all 11 Municipalities. Most of those violations were minor or small scale in nature; however, only lack of enforcement encouraged to create an environment where the rules were regularly flouted. On the other hand a number of candidates were found to have had their campaign activities restricted by law enforcement authorities without any reason. Despite this, most campaigning has been undertaken within a peaceful atmosphere, with the improved security situation significantly since the schedule of the election was announced.

Code of Conduct and Its Violation by Candidates during Campaigning

In municipality election 2015 all of the candidates violated the rules of election commission Bangladesh. Mayoral candidates and both of the councilor candidates (general and Reserved) of DW observed their campaign posters on wall, tree, electric poll, rooftop of houses.

All candidates in 11 Municipalities used loud mike before and after 2.00pm and 8.00pm for their campaign and conducted electoral rally more than once a day simultaneously in different parts of their respective territories.

Voting Environment in and outside of Polling Station

Observers saw electoral campaigning materials of candidates within 400 yards in 51 polling stations out of 286 polling stations observed. They found 110 polling stations were not suitable for aged, pregnant, differently able and sick to enter easily. There were tensions raised in adjacent areas of 55 polling stations. In addition to, observers saw long queues in 23 polling stations at 12.00pm out of 286 Polling Stations. Polling personnel asked for NID from 13 voters in 2 polling stations of Tangail, 7 voters in 6 polling stations of Pabna and 5 voters of one polling station in Ullapara. 13 voters in Muktagasa, 21 voters of 3 polling stations in Tangail, 6 voters in Syedpur, 3 in Hakimpur and 8 in Birampur could not find their polling booth easily. There was not presence of agent of all candidates in 76 Polling Stations and few of agents were in polling booth without ID cards in each of the polling stations. Some people forcefully entered polling station and stamped seal on the ballot papers and intimidated voters in Abalpur Government Primary School Polling Station in Magura. Besides, 45 Polling stations out of 286 postponed voting activity for a while because of violence. Polling officers of 65 Polling stations said that they didn't get training remaining polling personnel got one day training on election activities.

Use of Children and Adolescent in Electoral activities:

Candidates (Mayor and Councilor) mainly used following activities.

- A. Campaign period.
- B. Election-Day

Use of Children and Adolescent in Election Campaign period by Candidates:

Each of the candidates in 11 municipalities observed by DW LTOs used children and adolescent in their electoral campaign i.e. begging vote, miking, distributing leaflet, and conducted rally during campaign period from 13-28 December 2015.

Candidates (Mayor and Councilor) of Municipality election-2015 got 15 days (13-28 December 2015) for their campaigning. During this time, DW observers found significant number of incident of use of children and adolescent in campaigning. DW election observation checklists covered 6 different aspects of using Children and Adolescent in election. Those were use of Children and Adolescent in begging votes in favor of Candidates (Mayor, General and Reserve councilor), use of them in campaigning of candidates i.e. Leaflet/Handbill distribution, Conduct Procession, Loud Miking, Participate in Street Meeting, use them during School Time/Play Time/ Leisure Time in electoral activities, injuries of Children and Adolescent during campaigning period, use of places of Educational Institution/ Violation of Academic Environment of Educational Institutions during electoral campaigning.

Maximum number of candidates used children and Adolescent in begging votes during campaign period. 90 incidents of this type were found in 11 municipalities observed by DW LTOs though no child was injured during campaign period. More importantly, each of the candidates responded that they are, aware of child rights and, not using child and adolescent in electoral activities but DW LTOS found many incidents of using children and Adolescent in campaigning activities of candidates. 23 incidents of using educational institutions by candidates for campaigning and 26 incidents found in using Children and Adolescent during school Time/Play Time. Besides, 32 incidents of distributing leaflet and handbill occurred during campaign. See Table-2

Table-2: Use of Children and Adolescent in Electoral Campaign

Name of Municipality	District	Use of Children and Adolescent begging votes in favor of Candidates (Mayor, General Reserve councilor)	Use of children and adolescent campaigning of candidates (Mayor, General Reserve councilor) i.e. Leaflet/Handbill Distribution, Conduct Loud Participate in street meeting	Use of Children and Adolescent by candidates (Mayor, General Reserve councilor) during School time/Play time/Leisure time in electoral activities	Candidates (Mayor, General Reserve councilor) awareness on not to use of Children and Adolescent in electoral activities	Injuries of Children and Adolescent during campaign period	Use of places of Educational Institution/ Violation of Academic environment of Educational Institution during electoral campaign
Syedpur	Nilphamary	10	5	2	0	0	3
Hakimpur	Dinajpur	5	3	2	0	0	4
Birampur		8	2	3	0	0	2
Badarganj	Rangpur	7	3	3	0	0	1
Pabna	Pabna	8	2	3	0	0	2
Ullapa	Sirajganj	5	2	2	0	0	1
Tangail	Tangail	9	3	2	0	0	2
Magura	Magura	10	4	3	0	0	3
Narail	Narail	10	4	2	0	0	2
Jessore	Jessore	12	5	2	0	0	2
Mymensingh	Muktagacha	6	3	2	0	0	1
Total		90	32	26	0	0	23

(Table-2: Use of Children and Adolescent in Electoral Campaign)

B. Use of Children and Adolescent on Election-Day by Candidates:

Democracywatch observed use of children and Adolescent in electoral activities on election-day in 23 Municipalities of Nilphamary, Dinajpur, Pabna, Sirajganj, Tangail, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Kishorganj, Jessore, Narail and Dhaka Districts which covered 4 Divisions of Bangladesh. DW LTOs and STOs following a set of checklists covering 6 specific categories related to use of children and adolescent in electoral activities by candidates in 286 Polling Stations (See the Table-3).

According to Checklist questionnaire, we setup six categories (Voter slip distribution, Easy access in Polling Stations, Working as a Polling Agent, Begging vote, Food serving for Polling Agents and Leaflet distribution) of children uses in election campaign. We found minimal use of children and adolescent in electoral activities in Tangail (One incident) while it was the highest in other 22 respective candidates in 180 Polling Stations out of 286 of 23 Municipalities. Candidates used children and Adolescent in distributing leaflet and begging votes adjacent to 184 and 133 Polling Stations respectively on election-day. Though candidates didn't deploy children and Adolescent as a polling agent but used them to serve food and snacks for polling agents in 45 polling stations out of 286. Besides, children and Adolescent had easy access in and outside of polling stations including polling booths in 54 polling stations out of 286 of DW observed Municipalities.

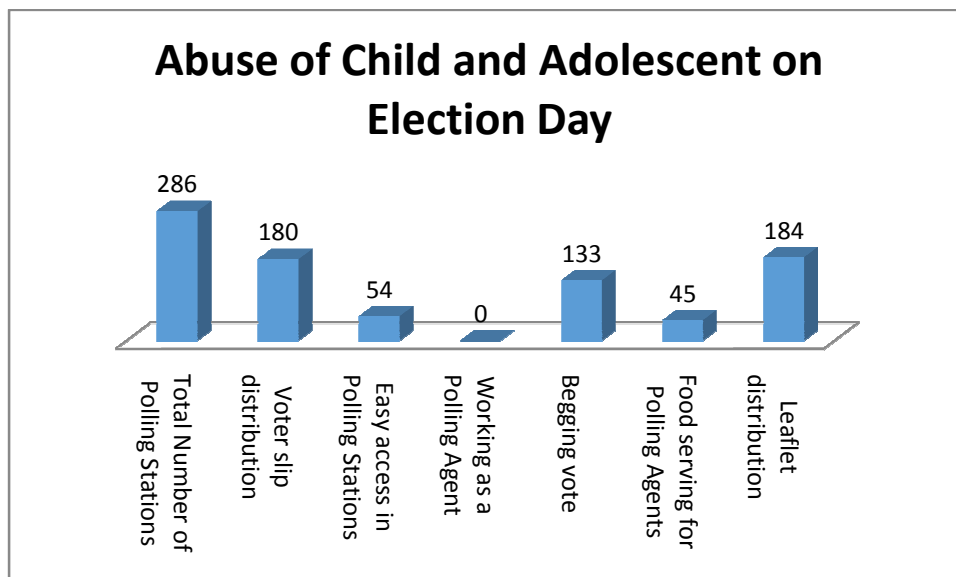


Table-3: Abuse of Child and Adolescent in Election Day

Municipalities	District	Total Number of Polling Stations	Voter slip distribution	Easy access in Polling Stations	Working as a Polling Agent	Begging vote	Food serving for Polling Agents	Leaflet distribution
Syedpur	Nilphamary	9	5	0	0	0	0	4
Hakimpur	Dinajpur	9	1	0	0	7	1	8
Birampur		9	1	0	0	7	1	7
Badarganj	Rangpur	7	7	3	0	6	2	7
Pabna	Pabna	10	6	6	0	0	0	2
Ullapa	Sirajganj	9	4	0	0	3	0	1
Tangail	Tangail	5	0	1	0	0	0	0
Magura	Magura	7	5	2	0	0	0	7
Narail	Narail	9	6	2	0	4	0	9
Jessore	Jessore	9	6	2	0	9	7	9
Savar	Dhaka	78	50	15	0	45	30	45
Kishoreganj	Kishoreganj	19	12	2	0	4	0	9
Karimganj		6	5	2	0	4	0	6
Bhairab		27	14	2	0	4	0	9
Kuliarchar		8	6	2	0	4	0	7
Iswarganj		7	4	2	0	4	0	4
Muktagasa	Mymensingh	8	8	0	0	8	4	8
Fulpur		8	7	2	0	4	0	7
Gouripur		7	5	2	0	4	0	6
Madarganj		7	6	2	0	4	0	7
Dewanganj	Jamalpur	9	7	2	0	4	0	7
Nakla	Sherpur	12	9	3	0	4	0	9
Srevardi		7	6	2	0	4	0	6
Total		286	180	54	0	133	45	184

(Table-3: Abuse of Child and Adolescent in Election Day)

Voting Environment outside and inside of Polling Station in Election Day**Election Day observation**

To observe the situation at the opening and closing of polling stations on the Election Day of the 2015 Municipality Elections, DW observers were present from 07:15 am onwards at their designated polling stations and beginning from the opening of the polling station, they used prescribed observation checklist to closely monitor the electoral process and to provide a strong civil society presence and voice on the credibility of the elections. The DW observers provided real-time reports back to DW control room throughout the day, where their responses were aggregated into a database to provide a comprehensive view of issues relating to inclusiveness and the credibility of the process undertaken as described in the proceeding sections.

Poll Opening: During the opening, DW observers reported that 93 percent of the polling stations opened on or before 8:10 am. While in 8 percent of the polling stations were reported to be open by 8:10 am. DW observers reported that preparations prior to the commencement of voting were generally adequate: as reported by the presiding officer.

Voting Operations: Following the opening, DW observers provided information on voting operations on Election Day by sending their responses against the questions set in their designated checklists. As observed during opening, security seals were attached properly on all ballot boxes in most of the polling stations.

Election environment: Almost all the centers we observed had a festive environment the voters were enthusiastic wherever we went. Many voters was come a long distance to vote. Outside the polling stations the environments in most places were extremely peaceful. There were not seen any tension despite the presence of large number of voters, particularly female voters with their children. But a very few incidents marred the polling process for a while in a few centers.



Polling Process: DW observers has observe the polling process in 286 Polling stations. They observed elections in 23 municipalities of 14 districts. The observers saw most things directly related to the polling process. The observers have checked the official seal by the election authority, secrecy of the polling booth, neutrality of election officials and many other things related to elections.

Role of the election officials: A positive aspect reported by the mobile observers that most of the election officials performed their job properly. Democracywatch believes that they have done a great job for building public confidence in the electoral process. According to Democracywatch observers most of the polling station opened in time. In most polling stations all over the Country the presiding officers and polling officials were present and approached their tasks diligently although a lack of training was sometimes apparent while discharging their duties. In dealing with Democracywatch observers they were so cooperative and willing to help. In a few instances the Presiding Officers did not allow our observers to oversee the voting and counting process.

Voter Turnout: Democracywatch observers reported that there were large numbers of voters present in front of all polling centers. Many female voters were seen with their children, implying a safe environment. Minority voters belonging to religious minorities were seen in all polling stations such as Jessorer, Narail, Pabna, Magura, Nilphamari and Mymensingh and other places, exercising their franchise without fear or intimidation. Observers were the witnesses of a record turnout of over 70% of voters. Long queues were seen in most polling stations all over the country even before the polling began at 8:00 am. The voters maintained discipline despite having a long wait.



Polling Materials: The polling materials such as ballot paper, ballot box, stamp, and other materials related to elections were adequate. Most of the presiding officers expressed their satisfaction in this regard. But a few made complaints about it. In some places like Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Pabna, Sirajganj, Tangail presiding officers complained about the low quality of indefinable ink. Voters faced some difficulties due to this.

Polling Agents: Democracywatch observers reported the presence of a considerable number of polling agents appointed by the candidates. Some party agents appeared to be untrained and had no knowledge of what they were supposed to do. These agents often lacked reporting forms and did not understand the complaints procedure but some were certainly brilliant.

Election Camps: The election camps were seen in most of the polling stations. The camps were helpful to the election officials and voters to run the activities smoothly.

Polling Station/Booth Accessibility: DW observers reported that the access to the polling stations were generally good (easily accessible) for the old, disabled, the visually impaired and those who required extra assistance to cast their vote.

Security arrangements: The security arrangements in polling stations were generally adequate and created confidence among the voters. In every places the police, Ansar, Women Ansar, VDP and some BGB (Border Guard of Bangladesh) performed their duties honestly and dedicatedly. According to our observers the law enforcement agencies were more or less neutral.

Observers' Access: DW applied for accreditation for 233 observers. After scrutinization, the Election Commission Bangladesh (ECB) approved 233 applications, however then only issued 208 cards and 15 vehicles strikers. DW 20 observers were not allowed to observe counting.

Democracywatch observers noticed the following irregularities in Election Day on 30 December 2015.

Name of Municipality	Specific Incidents Reported
Dewanganj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling station was closed between 8.40am and 9.30am because of ousting BNP candidate agents from performing their duties in polling booth by AL supporters in Char VorpurMollapara Government primary school polling station. • Law and order enforcement agency arrested a AI supporter when they rushed to invade and capture Dewanganj Girls High School polling station at morning 9.10am
Jamalpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling has been finished at 11.00 o'clock at Jamalpur Municipality
Narail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged and differently able voters faced challenge to franchise because of polling station was 3rd floor at Technical school and college polling station. • Mobile court convicted 4 agents for begging votes into the polling booth at Technical school and college polling station and gave 6 months jail at 11.00 o'clock. • LohagoraUpzila Chairman FyzurRahmanlitu along with his activist captured 400 ballots and sealed for AL candidate Jahangir Biswash at 2.55pm in Technical school and college polling station.
Tangail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI supporters captured BinduBashini Polling station and rigged vote for their candidate
Karimganj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI supporters invaded Karimganj pilot high school polling station and at 12.00 o'clock. 3 Supporters of independence candidates was injured during incident.
Jessore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling has been finished at 12.45pm at Institute school, MM college, AbdusSamad Memorial School, MN khan Bed college polling station in Jessore Municipality
Syedpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AL candidate SakhawatHossain and his supporters attacked and captured Muslim High School at 1.30pm. Police 24 round opened fire to take control over.
Dhamrai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI candidate KabirMollah along with 200-250 supporters entered Abdul Shobhan Model High School station at 12;45pm • Supporters and Agent of AL candidate ousted BNP and Independent candidates agents from Faisal Kindergarten polling station at 12:30pm

Counting Process

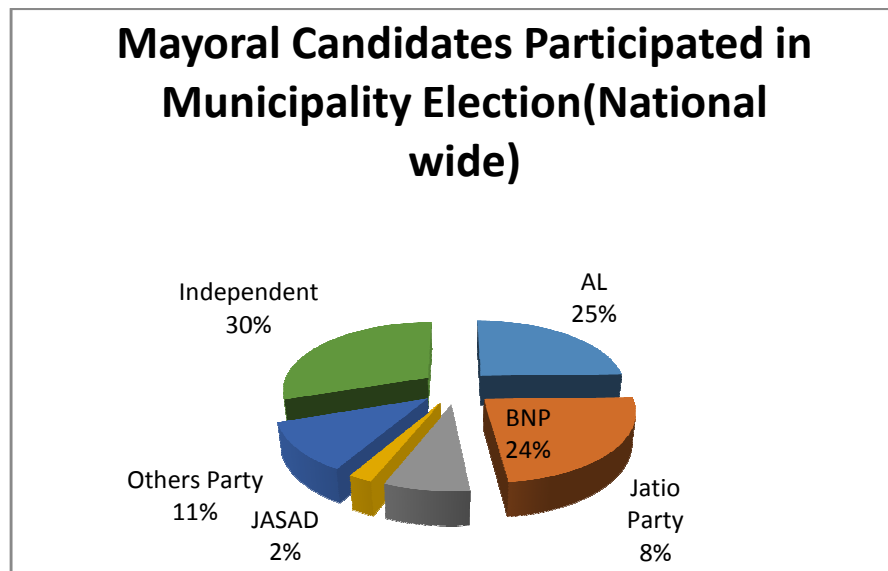
At the end of the polls, the counting process began which was open and transparent in all Municipalities. The Presiding and Assistant Presiding Officers, polling officers in the presence of different party agents completed the counting. In some polling stations Democracywatch observers were permitted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



Mayoral Candidates Participated in Municipality Election-2015 (National wide)

Local government elections were always held on personal basis but Government of Bangladesh, for the first time in its history, decided to conduct local bodies' election on political party basis. For this purpose, they amended Local Government (Municipality) Act-2009 in 21 November 2015 to remove legal barrier to conduct Municipality Election on partisan basis.

A total number 943(app) Mayoral candidates contested in municipality election-2016 over all Bangladesh out of 233 Municipalities. Among them Bangladesh Awami league (AL) 233, Bangladesh Nationalist Party 222, Jatio Party (E) 74, JASAD 21, Independent 285 and Others Party 108.



Party Symbol Based Result: 9th Municipality Election held on 30 December 2015. In that election AL got 176 Mayoral, BNP 19 Mayoral, Jatio Party 1 Mayoral and Independent 25 Mayoral.

Print Media Monitoring (Pre-election, during election and post-election)

Democracywatch has also tracked the election related violence scanning the election related news and reports from the print media entitled with the five national dailies which are i:e Ittefaq, ProthomAlo, BangladeshProtidin, Daily Manabjamin, and Daily Star from 20 November 2015 to 31 December 2015.

A group of skilled personnel scanned the news on a daily basis and made their reports on pre-election campaign, role of election commission, role of political party, role of candidature, voter behavior, Election Day and post-election day. According to the report of the monitoring and observers total of 3 people were killed and 271 (app) injured in pre-election campaign and 2 people were killed and 50 (app) injured in Election Day. The report is based on the organization's own monitoring and reports from the five leading national newspapers also said that a total of 6000 (app) people were arrested.

The report mentioned defeated candidates intolerant mentality, altercation between supporters of the rival candidates, bid the capture vote centers, previous political conflicts, stopping the election at the eleven hour, uncontrolled attitude of the winning candidates, Violence occurred during election campaign, political clash and attack on winning candidates family members. Supporters and establishing supremacy in the areas as the reasons behind the violence.

The report mentioned that the violence took place between supporters of two rival candidates and between the supporters of winning and defeated candidates, clash occurred to snatch ballot box, police men's baton charging and opening fire to stop violence.

Overall Observation

- Local government elections were always held on personal basis but Government of Bangladesh, for the first time in its history, decided to conduct local bodies' election on political party basis.
- Majority Candidacy was influenced by political party. as a result social leaders and acceptable candidate let out from election.
- 5.11% Mayoral candidates were attended in each municipality in 8th Municipality election in 2011. 4.03% mayoral candidates were participated in each municipality election election-2015.
- Information gap about Election related issues between ECB central office among Local and District. For that reason local and district office faced challenges.
- ECB and local election offices monitoring system was very poor in 9th Municipality Elections.
- Democracywatch deployed a number of some women observers to observe the elections. As they came from a different union, they had to leave the polling station

early in order to return home. Due to this consequence the women observers could not observe the counting process.

- In order to ensure comprehensive monitoring Democracywatch selected some hard to reach unions where the risk of manipulations are high. It is difficult and expensive to travel there from one to another union. Due to resource constraint we could not provide our observers adequate support to observe those places.
- Usually all the public transports remain closed on the Election Day. As the observers have to monitor a different union apart from his/her residence, they always have to travel on the day. Sometimes the observers experienced problems to return home.
- The Presiding officers, Assistant returning officers and members of law enforcing agencies receives poor honorarium to conduct the elections, which is not encouraging and indirectly affects the election process.
- In 9th Municipality Election 1.6% women candidates of Mayoral position participate out of 234 Municipalities. 0.56 women candidates general seat participate out of 2193 seats. 2.73% women candidate participated in reserve seats out 234 municipalities. And Municipality Election 8.12% Minority candidates of Mayoral position participate out of 234 Municipality.

Recommendations

- 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 polling stations 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.
- Strong implementation and monitoring of Wall Writing Act-2012 by ECB.
- Deploy female polling officials for all female polling booths
- Allow stationary observation and allow at least one observer in the counting room.
- Strong monitoring Children couldn't attend the pre-election, during election campaign period and Election Day by ECB. .

Democracywatch

Fact sheet of 9th Municipality Election-2015

Date of Election	: 30 December 2015
Last date of submission of nomination paper	: 3 December 2015
Scrutiny date of Nomination paper	: 5-6 December 2015
Last date of withdrawal	: 13 December 2015
Number of Municipality	: 234
Total Mayor Candidates	: 923
Total Male Mayor Candidates	: 908
Total Female Mayor Candidates	: 15 (AL-6 BNP-1, NPP: 5 & Independent: 3)
Total Counselor (General)	: 8,950
Total Counselor (General)- Female	: 50
Total Counselor (Reserved and General)	: 2000
Total Voters	: 7,162,396
Male Voters	: 3,586,356
Female Voters	: 3,576,040
Total Polling Station	: 3582
Total Polling Booth	: 21,571
Presiding Officers	: 3582
Assistant Returning Officer	: 21,571
Polling Officers	: 42,142
Returning Officer	: 234
Assistant Returning Officer	: 702
Number of Election officers	: 66,768
Political Party	: 20 Parties
Winner for Uncontested Mayor Candidates	: 8 Mayors
Law in forcing agency(Police, BGB,RAB, Anserand VDP)	: 117,304
Voter turnout of Election Day	: 72.93%
Violence of Pre-Election	: 3 Killed 271 injured (app)
Violence of Election Day	: 2 Killed and 50 injured(app)