

Monitoring Report of the 7th Union Parishad Election - 2003

Edited by
Taleya Rehman



7 Circuit House Road
Ramna, Dhaka – 1000.
Tel: 8802 9344 225-6, 8802 9330 405
Fax: 8802 8315 807
E-mail: dwatch@bangla.net
Web: www.dwatch-bd.org

Published by:**Taleya Rehman**

Executive Director
Democracywatch
7 Circuit House Road
Ramna, Dhaka – 1000
Bangladesh
Phone: 880 2 9330405, 9344225-6
Fax: 880 2 8315807
Email: dwatch@banpla.net
web: www.dwatch-bd.org

Editorial Team:

Mostafa Sohel
Md Nurun Nabi Jugol
Mr Khaliduzzaman Khalid
Mr Mashudul Haque
Mr Rezaul Haque Rafel
Mr Adnan Khalid
Ms Shormin Haque
Mr Shamim Al Mamun

Date:

April 27, 2003

Acknowledgement

Democracywatch played an important role in the last UP elections in Bangladesh. We hope our work contributed to a great extent in holding a free and fair election. Although most of our work concentrated on the Election Day itself, there were several projects to increase voter awareness leading up to the election that we carried out with considerable success.

We also organized local events on awareness campaign, which eventually contributed to elections. We organized discussion meeting, Rally and Observer training in 20 districts.

However building NIPOM was our greatest success. NIPOM comprised of 8 members, working in many areas of Bangladesh with different aspects social political.

As part of NIPOM we placed 6060 well trained observers throughout the country on Election Day. Our election team worked relentlessly to recruit recruited the observers, to trained them, for ensuring that they carry out their duties efficiently on the Election Day. 720 Union co-coordinators carried out most of the training and managed all reporting and financial tasks. At our headquarters in Dhaka we maintained a 12-hour control center where many of our volunteers worked tirelessly to collect the thousands of reports, which were being faxed from each centre.

Our election team at Democracywatch consisted of ten permanent workers who joined on the Election Day. They worked very hard for a fortnight and I wish to convey my heartiest thanks to them without their dedication and hard work we could not carry out our duties.

During this operation we held a number of Press Conferences in which many leading journalists were present. Due to our transparency and efficiency we received excellent coverage of our work in the print as well as the electronic media.

I would like to thank the Election Commission for carrying out successfully the 7th local govt. election, other members of NIPOM for their help and assistance, (Danida), the NGO Bureau cooperate I also thank all the returning officers who have given cooperation to all our observers I own a special thanks to all of them for performing their duties so well without any hope of financial gives. They did it as their national duty.

Finally I would like to thank DANIDA for helping us to carry out a very important task for our nation and also in having trust in NIPOM.

Taleya Rehman
Executive Director

Brief profile of *DEMOCRACYWATCH*

Introduction

Democracywatch a trust registered in 1995, which later became an NGO in July 1997. As an NGO it is working to establish a democratic culture through promoting democracy and good governance in Bangladesh. It endeavors to achieve this through research, training and various activities to establish transparency and accountability of the government and also by presenting the institutions of mature democratic countries through Democracy Festivals. Democracywatch emphasizes on education and awareness building among the young adults and women in the society. By giving youths an all-round education it hopes to shape the leaders of tomorrow. Democracywatch also works on various human rights issues, which are fundamental components of true democracy.

Goal

The goal of Democracywatch is to be an active and sustainable organization fulfilling its mission effectively towards establishing a democratic culture, rights and values, which are essential for good governance.

Objectives

- To educate and create awareness about democracy and human rights
- To establish good governance and a true democratic culture in the society
- To impart education and leadership qualities among youths for strengthening democracy.

Vision

Vision of Democracywatch is a society, where people are able to exercise their democratic rights at all spheres of life irrespective of their socio-cultural, gender and political identity.

Mission Statement

Democracywatch is a development organization working to promote and strengthen democracy and good governance by creating awareness about rights and values through research, training for leadership, advocacy and mobilization of media to fight against injustice and human rights violation.

Chapter – 1

Introduction

Union Parishad Election 2003 was 7th and the largest local government election in countries history. The election started on January 25 and ends on March 16, 2003 consecutively in 4,234 unions out of 4492 unions. A number of 61,515,806 (six crore fifteen lakh fifteen thousand and eight hundred six) voters have made this election a history for Bangladesh.

Democracywatch has been observing all national and local elections, by-elections and re-elections from its inception in 1995. In Bangladesh, party-line politics highly depends on the party influence among the local government representatives. Political parties having strong hold in the local level can easily control. This is why local government election observation is important.

Democracywatch observed UP elections 2003 in Bangladesh. We apprehend that the scope for abuse in the coming electoral process is high and manipulation may hinder the fairness of holding a free and neutral election under a political government. While the issues of the local government and the debates on it are the common discussion of public, eventually Union Parishad Election becomes crucial. These make Democracywatch concern about monitoring the upcoming UP election. A number of 6,060 observers and 720 union coordinator observed in 6100 centers in 675 unions in the UP elections in 20 districts under Democracywatch network.

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 UP election 2003 to achieve the following objectives:

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

Organizational Structure for Election Monitoring

Democracywatch is a non-partisan and credible organization at all levels. The election observation network involved a young and efficient monitoring group supported by the national secretariat located in Dhaka. The network involves 20 partner organizations and Democracywatch representatives for election monitoring. The organization recruited 20 district coordinators and 720 union coordinators.

Democracywatch Election Observation Plan

Democracywatch election observation program included, amongst other things, recruitment, training and mobilizing 6,060 stationary observers in 6100 polling stations for the Election Day. Similarly 20 other partner organizations had been directly involved as associates of Democracywatch for election monitoring. The Partner organizations are Gontaybbya society, Bagerhat, Alokon, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, Development Project for People and Environment (DPPE), Banderban, PRODIP, Dinajpur and Manikgonj, Swapno Shahajjyo Shangstha, Jessore and Norail, Jagoroni Janokollyan Shangstha, Chapainababganj, SOHAC Gazipur, Northern Aids Information Center (NAIC), Khaja Smiriti Pathaghar (KSP), ASEA, Human Needs Development Society (HNDS), Unity for Social Foundation (USF), Rajshahi, Nilachal, Nilphamari, Bionmoni, Khulna, Fairway Development Organization (Bramonbaria), Unnayan Dhara, Jhinaidah, Masum Krira Chakra, Maherpur, Chuadanga and Mahmud- Nabi Jumma, Bogra, MM Zaman ,Khulna and Mr Mahmud Democracywatch Mymensingh office.

Relation with NIPOM

With the objective of monitoring the UP elections 2003, 8 organizations formed an association entitled Nirbachan Porjobekhon Moncho (NIPOM). The Executive director of Democracywatch Taleya Rehman was selected as Convener by the other organizations. From NIPOM a working committee also has been formed. With the guidance of the leaders the working committee chalked out and designed the observation methodology, observation forms and observation manual. Democracywatch, a partner of this coalition co-operated with them satisfactorily including organizing press conferences and sometimes coordinating the media.

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Democracywatch Activities on Election Monitoring

Public Awareness on election

The Democracywatch activities plan included a public awareness strategy that was implemented throughout the project period. This included voters meetings, motivational meetings to highlight the non-partisan role of election observers, discouraging electoral fraud and promoting a friendly environment in all the polling stations. The organization distributed posters in 20 districts.

Rally

Democracywatch conducted 20 rallies before the elections in 20 districts, to demand fair electoral process in UP. The Partner organizations, activists and observers of Democracywatch conducted these rallies.

Discussion Meeting on importance of UP elections

Democracywatch also organized a number of 20 discussion meetings in 20 districts on the importance of UP elections. Local journalists, NGO activists, Lawyers, UP Chairman and members were present in these discussion meetings.

Training on Election Monitoring

Democracywatch held a comprehensive election monitoring training program all over the country. The organization conducted 20 TOT (Training of Trainers) in 20 districts. In this training a number of 720 coordinators participated. In addition the organization also conducted 100 trainings where 6090 observers participated.

Oath for neutrality

Democracywatch has conducted training on UP observation, but at the same time the observer's took oath for ensure his neutrality and determination to complete this work successfully.

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Monitoring Process

Area of Observation

Democracywatch observers observed UP elections in 20 districts. The names of the districts are Manikgonj, Mymensing, Gazipur, Narayangonj, Bramonbaria, Rajshahi, Chapai Nababganj, Bogra, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Banderban, Khulna, Bagerhat, Jessore, Norail, Jhenaidah, Maherpur and Chuadanga (Attached list of observed Unions).

Observation Methodology

This report based on the observation of Democracywatch observers (6060) supported by partner organizations, 720 Union Coordinators, 20 district coordinators, and many staff of National office. In addition 50 mobile observers comprising Executive Director, Coordinator, Programme Officer, Assistant Program officers, Internees and Volunteers of Democracywatch were deployed to supervise and coordinate the whole process. The Union coordinators supervised all the stationary observers at each center. Someone was deployed for check back in regular basis to confirm the presence of our observers in different unions.

All the observers went to their designated centers with NIPOM observation forms. The stationary observers were on duty from 8 am till 4 pm. generally these observers were not allowed to remain at the counting. All the monitoring report forms were counter-signed by the Presiding Officers / Magistrates.

An overall election monitoring report was received from the field, and also by fax, mobile, and telephone. Some incidents were reported from the mobile observers directly and most of the reports came as a completed checklist comprising 51 questions. The staff of Democracywatch collated the data, checked with the observers and then made data entry for writing the report.

Stationary Observation Form

The Democracywatch observers used checklist, which called stationary observation form. This form comprising of 51 questionnaires that duly filled up by the observers. The observers oversee the basic information of union, Security arrangements, election materials, election environment, electoral process, election code of conduct and counting process.

Data entry and analysis

The Democracywatch observers filled up the stationary forms and send it to the Union coordinators. Union coordinators used another forms and consolidated it properly. Then they send it to National office. The staff of the national office put entry in computer in every individual observer form. After this process a group of workers report the incidents and facts of the UP elections.

Accreditation of Democracywatch observers

Permitted by the Election Commission, Democracywatch received accreditation cards for both stationary and mobile observers in each polling station of the country. Democracywatch observers received 6100 cards across the country. They observed the opening of the poll and the complete voting process. Some of them observed counting process. There are some instances where Democracywatch observers were not allowed to enter the polling station in spite of having proper accreditation cards.

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Election Observation in UP

Democracywatch has been observing all the parliamentary elections, re-elections, by-elections and local elections since 1996. In the endeavor to observe the Union Parishad Elections 2003 Democracywatch deployed 6060 observers using its network of partner organizations in 20 districts. Meanwhile these observers observed 6060 centers in 675 unions of 107 thanas. The observers collected election reports in three phases. They observed pre-poll circumstances in some areas and all observers were engaged on the Election Day and our network NGOs were also involved in post election observation. Also, Democracywatch mobile teams visited different places to check the presence of the stationary observers and the overall environment of the unions during elections.

In these UP elections a number of 21,376 chairman candidates contested for 4,223 seats. The number of candidates was 137,909 for 38,052 posts of ward member, and for 12,684 reserved seats for women, a number of 39,419 women candidates contested. It is also mentionable that a number of 61,515,806 (six crore fifteen lakh fifteen thousand and eight hundred six) voters were registered to cast their votes at 39,372 polling centers and 155,749 polling booths were prepared for these elections.

Pre-election phases

Although the project was only for the Election Day observation, our local network NGOs did pre-election observation in some areas, which was a part of the comprehensive election-monitoring plan for these Union Parishad Elections 2003. Democracywatch started observation 7 days before the election. Following are the major focus issues of Democracywatch monitoring during the pre-election phase:

1. Violation of electoral code of conduct
2. Election related violence
3. Candidates running from within the jail
4. Role of election officials

1. Violation of electoral code of conduct

Observers reported that most candidates in almost all unions violated the rules and regulations imposed by the Election Commission. The incidents of violations included improper use of motor vehicles, blocking of roads for meeting, positioning of elaborate gates, holding big marches, writing graffiti on walls and using many microphones at a time. Some Chairman candidates spent huge amounts of money on their campaigns.

2. Election related violence

The organization also tracked the election related violence from the print media. A group of skilled personnel scanned the news on a daily basis and made their reports. According to their reports in the first 5 days of the elections 9 people were killed and 1174 were injured due to election clashes. In 12 days during the election a number of 16 people were killed and 2236 people were injured. After 33 days a number of 55 people were killed and 5722 people were injured. Finally, during 51 days of the election period 80 people died and 7029 were injured.

3. Candidates running from within the jail

Our observers and media watch report says that a total of 77 candidates contested, including 55 for chairmanship, from 23 districts. 31 of them were arrested during the joint force clean heart operation. Out of the remaining 46 candidates 8 of them were suspected killers, 21 arrested for arms cases and 17 were arrested on other charges.

4. Role of the election officials

A positive aspect reported by the long-term 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. It is also mentioned that a number of 1868 returning officers, 39372 presiding officers, and 155749 assistant returning officers carried out their responsibilities properly.

Election Day observation

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 Manikganj, Narail, Jessore, Bagerhat, Dinajpur, Chapainabaganj, Nilphamari, Gazipur and other places, exercising their franchise without fear or intimidation.

Observers were the witnesses of a record turnout of over 87% of voters. Long queues were seen in most polling stations ally over the country even before the polling began at 8 am. The voters maintained discipline despite having a long wait.

Election environment

Almost all the centers we observed had a festive environment the voters were enthusiastic wherever we went. Many voters came a long distance to vote. Outside the polling stations the environment 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.

Environment of the Polling Station

| SL No | Questions | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Was the polling station situated at a pre-determined place? | 99.00 | 1.00 |
| 2 | Was all Election official's present in time? | 100.00 | - |
| 3 | Were ballot boxes sealed in presence of the Candidate's agent? | 99.42 | 0.58 |
| 4 | Was the polling started at scheduled time? | 100.00 | - |
| 5 | Was the voter list free from objection? | 98.26 | 1.74 |
| 6 | Did the candidates or their representatives use vehicles for voters? | 94.88 | 5.12 |
| 7 | Were the voters obstructed when they came polling station? | 99.17 | 0.83 |
| 8 | Were the inside of the polling stations and the specified area of the polling station free from poster and leaflet? | 95.82 | 4.18 |
| 9 | Were all polling agents present in polling station? | 95.59 | 4.41 |
| Total | | 98.01 | 1.99 |

This analysis based on Democracywatch reports of 6060 checklists.

Polling process

Democracywatch observers have seen the polling process in 6060 centers. They observed elections in 720 unions under 107 Thanas of 20 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. Here is a chart for detail:

Polling process of the Polling Station

| SL No | Questions | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Did the sign exist behind the ballot papers by the election officials? | 100.00 | - |
| 2 | Did the secrecy of polling booths exist? | 79.12 | 20.88 |
| 3 | Were the Election officials neutral and free from influence? | 98.60 | 1.40 |
| 4 | Voters who were present in the boundary did they cast their vote? | 93.80 | 6.20 |
| Total | | 92.88 | 7.12 |

This analysis based on Democracywatch reports of 6060 checklists.

Democracywatch observers noticed the following irregularities:

In Kalochoranpur union of Jhenaidah clashes took place between the supporters of rival candidates. There were no incidents of undue influence or intimidation except a few. We found a group of terrorists stuffing the ballot boxes in front of voters and election officials the centers of bakri and panami under Harisankarpur union in Jhenaidah district. On another day of the election supporters of rival candidates in Calicharionpur union engaged themselves in clashes. In Nayonabad govt. primary school under Khagkanda union of Narayanganj a sub inspector was seen to be stuffing ballot boxes. Similar incidents happened in Buripota union at Meherpur District. In the same union, a miscreant, named Helal, created panic among the voters with a toy pistol. Police arrested him. There was only one door for 4 booths in Maharchara union Bhavan center under Anowara Thana of Chittagong district. Due to that problem voters faced difficulties to cast their vote peacefully. The same type of incident happened in Gosinga union of Gazipur. Even the presiding officer couldn't find his seat. There were no secret booths in number 5 and 6 in Dholadia Govt. primary school under Gazipur District.

A lot of irregularities and inconsistencies were found in the voter list under different centers at Botiaghata union in Khulna district. This also happened in Deula Govt primary school center under Pachonda union in Tanore Thana of Rajshahi. In every polling station a lot of people with motorbikes without registration numbers have been noticed. Whenever they came to know about Observers they left. In Dariapur Primary School Center under Gouripur Union of Mymensing district most of the female voters didn't cast their vote due to inadequate booth for women. In this center police charged lathi on voters due to lack of discipline in voters queue at once. But later on the situation was become normal.

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 pachani Madrasha Center under Kagkanda Union of Naryanganj district the stamp for ballot boxes were broken. In Kagkanda center of Narayanganj our observers saw that there were stamps without handle, which were used in the electoral process. In vitartake Sabria Dhakil Madrasha Center of Gazipur, only one stamp was used for all voters, which eventually delayed the voting process. Even the authority didn't use indelible ink properly. The presiding Officer of Pitolganj Pachimpara Mostofa-E- Sunnia Dakhil Madrasha Center under Rupganj of Narayanganj complained that he received inadequate materials from the Election Commission. The polling agent of Kharera Mohammadia High School center of Bramanbaria districts also complained about the lack of election materials.

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.

Lack of light around the polling centers

Lack of lighting was noticed around the polling centers in Phulidi High School under Boktarpur union at kaliganj upazila of Gazipur district, which made it difficult for the voters to see. In Haridas Govt Primary School center under Chandona union in Khosba Thana of Bramanbaria lack of lighting was noticed around the polling center, which also made difficult for the voter to see. Lack of light was also noticed in some polling centers in Manikganj.

Vote rigging

Some people impersonating real voters cast votes in Puisari union of Chittagong and Araihasar upazilla of Narayanganj. 3 persons were arrested for casting false votes. In Ramgopalpur union of Mymensing, Narendrapur union of Jessore, the observers reported Joipur union of Narail false voting. According to our observers of Cox's bazar and Banderban, huge numbers of false votes have been cast. Ukhia, Jaliapalong, Islampur, Eidgaon, Islamabad and pokkhali union were clearly affected by false voting. At least 100 false voters were arrested in Diknagar Thana in Jhinaidah. In Haramia union under sandip Thana in Chittagong, a number of 27 false voters were arrested. In Manushmara Govt Primary School under Panchopukur Union, sadar Thana of Nilphamari district, a number of 9 false voters were arrested. In Changmari center of Panchopukur union of Nilphamari, 15 false voters were arrested. In Khatampara Primary School Center under Ramnagor Union, in Pathkumari Primary School Center under Kundupukur union, In Kawniapara primary School Center Under Gorgram Union, In Darowani High School and Barghoria Center under Sonarai Union, Mursod Gorgram Forkania Madrasha under Khoksabari Union of Nilphamari district, 15 false voters were reported.

Under aged voters

Democracywatch observers saw many under aged voters in many polling stations. In Joypur Government Primary School center under Joypur Union of Narail we found many under aged voters. Same thing happened in Ukhia, Jalia palong union. In Angurtiar chala Primary School center under Vaosal Mirzapur Union of Gazipur, Galla primary School Center under bhadaul union of Rajshahi, Dighnagor, Manohorpur and Sarodia Union of Jhinaidah were seen many under aged voters which may have affected the polling process.

Clashes and Postponements of Polling

Several irregularities were observed in some polling stations. Intimidations by the terrorists were reported from some places of Jhenaidah, Dinajpur, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Bagerhat. In Baroipara registered primary school of Umedpur union under Sailokupa thana of Jhenaidah district, activists of two rival candidates were suspended from the polling station between 12:30 pm to 1 pm. Afterwards, polling started peacefully through the influence of the local administration. In Enayetpur High school under Dholoi union of Hathazari thana in Chittagong a similar incident happened. Due to this the polling was postponed for 1 hour (from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm). Polling started again with the help of local administration.

In Uttor Haripur Bottala Center at haripur union in Sandip thana of Chittagong district, a group of supporters of a candidate snatched a ballot box. In naikedia center at pokkhali union in Cox's Bazar, a group of terrorists snatched the ballot box from the presiding officer and OC of Moheskhali thana after the polling. The terrorists also looted nine arms from them. In Bilaichndri Primary School under bilaichandri union of Dinajpur, 12 people were injured due to clash of the supporters of two rival groups. In Golbari Govt primary School at Mulghar union of Fakirhat Thana in Bagerhat, the presiding officer took 261 ballots in his custody. He refused to give clarification for that. Then the voters were angry and beat him. Due to this reason the polling was stopped for a while. The Deputy Commissioner came over and quickly managed the situation. The polling started peacefully again. Police arrested the presiding officer. In Soshidol Primary School Center under Shasidol Union of Comilla, due to clashes between supporters of two rival member candidates polling was suspended for half an hour. Later on polling was started again. At that time a group of supporters gave money to women voters in the same centers. In Manusmara Primary School under panchopukur Union sadar Thana of Nilphamari district, due to clashes between the supporters of two rival Chairman candidates at least 5 people were injured. In Tupamari Primary School under tupamari Union of Nilphamari district, presiding officer didn't supply any information to observers for unknown reasons. In Changmari Center under Panchopukur Union of Nilphamari district someone offered money to voters. That was marked clearly as undue influence in the electoral process.

Obstruction of Democracywatch observers

Democracywatch observers were obstructed in some places in Gazipur, Jhinaidah, Bagerhat, Khulna, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Manikganj, Mymensing, Nilphamari, Rajshahi and Naryanganj. A few observers didn't get permission to oversee the whole process. The main cause of this incident was the lack of coordination between the EC and local election administrations. Most of the observers were not allowed to observe the counting process, however some did with the permission of the Presiding Officers.

Security arrangements

The security arrangements in polling stations were generally adequate and created confidence among the voters. In most places the police, Ansar, Women Ansar, VDP and some BDRs performed their duties honestly and dedicatedly. According to our observers the law enforcement agencies were more or less neutral.

Overall Observation

Although the election was generally peaceful, free and fair, there were few irregularities in some places, which may not be considered to affect the whole process.

Overall Evaluation of Democracywatch observers

| Criteria | No of Polling Station | Percent |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Excellent | 4672 | 77.09% |
| Good | 1363 | 22.50% |
| Some irregularities were there, but may not affect the Election Results | 20 | 0.33% |
| Serious irregularities were there, which can affect the Election Results significantly | 5 | 0.08% |
| Total | 6060 | 100% |

This analysis based on Democracywatch reports of 6060 checklists.

Chapter – 5

Trouble faced:

- A few numbers of observers were not allowed to observe the counting process. In some cases election officials insulted our observers, which obstructed the comprehensive observation process.
- Democracywatch deployed a number of 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 hill-tracks places, islands and 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 returning 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.

Recommendation

Democracywatch observed all the elections since 1996. When observing the 7th Union Parishad elections our observers made some recommendation for Election Commission to improve the existing electoral process to ensure free and fair election in the country. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Democracywatch thinks that a strong interaction between local administration and Election Commission should be established.
2. The polling officials should get adequate training to run their activities smoothly.
3. The small ballot boxes, which used in some polling stations, should change.
4. Democracywatch strongly suggest that the number of polling booths for women should be increased.
5. Lack of voter education was seen in almost all polling stations. NGO's and other concerned authorities should take appropriate measures in this regard.
6. The election expenses by the candidates should strictly monitor by the Election Commission.
7. The observer should get inclusive training on Election Monitoring. They should be given training on observation process and report writing.
8. A number of 6060 observers observed the last UP polls, of which many didn't cast their vote. The EC should arrange opportunity for observer voting.
9. The Election Officials, members of the law enforcing agencies related to electoral process could not cast their votes. Election Commission should also take this matter into consideration.
10. The polling agents, who have important role in the polling process, should get proper training to carry out their duties smoothly.
11. The polling stations should be established in a convenient location for the voters.
12. The infrastructure of polling stations should be improved.
13. Process of issuing of the Voter ID cards should develop within a very short time.
14. The voter list should be reviewed and counter checked for the betterment of next elections.

Chapter – 6

UP Election2003: Some Facts and Figure

Some Key Information on UP Election: At a Glance

Number of unions:**4,223**

Number of polling stations: **39,372**

Number of Poling booths:**155,749**

Total number of Voters: **61,515,866**

Total number of Male Voters: **3,13, 44,168**

Total number of Female voters: **3,01,71,698**

Number of Returning Officers: **1,868**

Number of Presiding Officers: **39,372**

Number of Assistant Presiding Officers: **155,749**

Number of Divisions: **6**

Number of Districts: **64**

Total Number of Women contesting candidate: **39,419**

Total Number of Chairman contesting candidates: **21,376**

Total Number of Member contesting candidates: **137,909**

Number of Domestic observers: **40,000** (Approx)

Election Monitoring Team of Democracywatch

1. Mostafa Sohel - Coordinator
2. Md Nurun Nabi Jugal – Program Officer
3. Mr Khaliduzzaman Khalid – Program Officer
4. Mr Mashudul Haque – Program Officer
5. Mr Rezaul Haque Rafel – Program Officer
6. Mr Adnan Khalid – Program Officer
7. Mr Goutam Chandra Mojumder – Program Officer
8. Ms Shormin Haque – Asst. Program Officer
9. Mr Shamim Al Mamun – Asst. Program Officer
10. Mr Mominul Islam Polash - Intern
11. Mr Rajon – Volunteer
12. Ms Sumona – Volunteer
13. Ms Moon – Volunteer