



Electoin Monitoring Working Group

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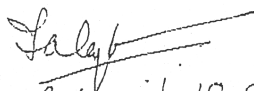
EMWG Preliminary Observations: Election 2001

The Election Monitoring Working Group (EMWG), comprising of twenty-nine nongovernmental entitles, in a debriefing session highlighted their preliminary election monitoring findings.

There is a strong consensus that the Election 2001 has been relatively peaceful and fair - arguably the best conducted in the history of this nation. The enthusiastic participation of women voters is clearly evident across the country. The outcome can be attributed to voters' increased awareness and maturity regarding their rights and responsibilities, and a strong commitment from the Election Commission, the Election Observers, Administrative and Security personnel to create and implement a level playing field for all the candidates. In addition, strategic decisions including restrictions on vehicular movement, banning of mobile telephones have greatly diminished violence and disturbances.

The election nevertheless has been affected by isolated incidents of violence, vote rigging, and leading to closure of several polling centers. Voting irregularities have been prone during the lunch period. In addition, women voters in particular have experienced long delays in casting their votes, primarily due to proportionately less number of polling booths.

The lessons learned from the Election day observations includes: (a) citizens of Bangladesh have demonstrated their strong belief and love for a peaceful and democratic means of electing its representatives, and that the politicians have to accept the verdict; (b) women's participation in the electoral process has become a strong force to be reckoned with; (c) a collective effort of the government and the civil society can yield high dividends in administering a free and fair elections; and (d) improvements in election administration and monitoring is a continuing process, and there are many lessons to be learned from the Election of 2001.


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