



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2012

The Editor/ Chief Reporter

Interim Statement
Gazipur 4 By-election held on 30 September 2012
FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED, LOW VOTER TURNOUT BUT PEACEFUL

Kapasia, September 30, 2012: The Gazipur - 4 by-elections was fundamentally flawed but peaceful and well administered. It is flawed as the election did not fully comply with international standards for democratic elections as well as the national election laws. However, the election was generally peaceful with massive presence of security personnel, and well administered as the Election Commission (EC) deployed some of its highly experienced officials to administer the by-election which was marked by a very low turnout of voters compared to previous elections.

The by-election breached globally accepted standards for democratic elections as it is not fully participatory. The opposition parties including the main opposition party stayed away from the polls making the election non-competitive. This “not-fully-participatory” election deprived the voters of Kapasia of a wider choice of candidates and parties to choose from.

The election did not fully comply with the national election laws as Article 90B (b) (iv) of the RPO states that the political party has “to finalise nomination of candidate by central parliamentary board of the party from the panels prepared by the members of the Ward, Union, Thana, Upazila or District committee, as the case may be, of concerned constituency”. The EC did not enforce this law in connection with nomination of the two political parties - Awami League (AL) and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) - nominated candidates in the by-election which calls the candidacy of the political party nominated candidates into question. The political parties in question have said nothing about compliance of this law. The people are not aware of any such nomination process being followed. Apparently, the EC overlooked this violation. The penalty for this violation [RPO Article 90H (d)] may lead to the cancellation of registration of the offending political party.

The election campaign did not generate much enthusiasm among the voters consequently voter turnout was remarkably low compared to previous elections. According to FEMA observation voter turnout ranged between 5 to 20% at 12 noon in different polling stations. FEMA observers saw no queue of waiting voters at the polling stations except in a couple of cases where less than 10 voters were seen waiting to cast their vote. It seemed that election officials, security personnel, media men and domestic observers together far outnumbered the voters. The absence of opposition participation and the fact that none of the three candidates reside in the constituency are likely reasons for the low level of enthusiasm and low turnout of voters.

Head Office

63/3/1 West Agargaon (2nd Floor), Dhaka - 1207, Bangladesh
Tel.: 88-02-, 8128793, Fax: 88-02-8128793, E-mail: fema@bol-online.com



The election-day was mainly peaceful. Large numbers of security personnel were present in the polling stations and in the constituency. No incidents of violence or clashes were observed on the election-day.

The election was generally well administered at the field level. The Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officer are Election Commission (EC) officials. Recent experience with EC official administered elections (Narayanganj and Chittagong Mayoral polls) is positive. The polling stations FEMA observers visited were located in neutral locations. The polling officials were present. Required election materials were available at the polling stations. Polling agents of all candidates were not present in all the polling stations FEMA observed. Polling agent of only AL candidate was seen in all polling booths.

FEMA observed the following irregularities during the voting process. At the Char Khamer Govt. Primary School and Raniganj High School polling stations more than one polling agent of AL candidate were present in each booth. Article 22 of the RPO allows only one polling agent per candidate per polling booth. At some polling stations the polling officials were seen to have stamped full ballot books and signed the reverse side of the ballot papers thus validating them well in advance. The reverse side of the ballot paper should be stamped and signed only before handing out the ballot paper to the voter, not in advance.

FEMA observed the Gazipur 4 by-polls by deploying 3 mobile teams comprising 13 observers from its central leadership and the Gazipur district committee to observe the voting process. The teams visited 20 polling stations spending about an hour at each polling station. FEMA Observation team included its Vice President Adv. Salma Ali, Secretary General Tarikul Ghani, Chair of the Media Committee Prof. Showkat Ara Hossein, Joint Secretary General Emam Hasnath, member Nazma Choudhury, President of the Gazipur chapter Dr. Md. Eunus Ali and others. Earlier, FEMA observed the nomination process and the campaign period.

This is an interim statement of the observation of the Gazipur – 4 by-election released after the voting process was over. More information is coming in from our observers. FEMA will release a detail report with its recommendations shortly.

For further information:
Ferozul Alam,
Program Manager, FEMA
Cell: 01819938757

Head Office

63/3/1 West Agargaon (2nd Floor), Dhaka - 1207, Bangladesh
Tel.: 88-02-, 8128793, Fax: 88-02-8128793, E-mail: fema@bol-online.com