

Accept polls results to strengthen democracy

Foreign observers urge BNP, other parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign election observers at separate press conferences in the city yesterday called on the political parties, including BNP, to accept the December 29 election results and attend the parliament for a strengthening democracy in the country.

They said the elections were held in a free, fair and transparent manner in the favourable environment and marked an important step towards re-establishing democratic governance.

The winners would have to be magnanimous and would play a role in accommodating the opposition parties to help them play a constructive role in the parliament, the observers added.

EUEOM Releasing its preliminary findings, EUEOM's Chief Observer Graf Lambsdorff said with the exception of some minor technical difficulties, professionalism, transparency and credibility were the hallmarks of the elections.

About BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia's claim that the election results do not reflect



PHOTO: STAR EUEOM Chief Observer Graf Lambsdorff speaks at a press conference.

people's will, Lambsdorff said the results were accurate and they found no instance of fraud in the election process and result counting.

About the allegations of irregularities in the polling centres, he said, "There can be some irregularities in some centres and that should be investigated, but the number out of the around 35,000 polling centres where irregularities were alleged is very small and it will not affect the results of the elections."

The EUEOM assessed the elections were conducted in a remarkably peaceful environment with high turnout of voters.

Praising the caretaker government and Election Commission, the EUEOM chief said, "There was no instance of bias to any party by the government. The EC also deserves high marks and it is well deserved for preparing the voter list, printing ballot papers in a very short period of time, the performance of presiding officers and vote counting."

"Deputy speaker and parliamentary committees' chairmen can come from the opposition party," he added.

COMMONWEALTH Unveiling its interim statement on the elections, Commonwealth Observer Group Chairman said they have not found any evidence to support the allegation of election engineering on Monday's elections.

"We haven't found any such evidence to support the claim with what the results could be denied, rather, we have found that the elections were credible and met many of the benchmarks for democratic elections to which Bangladesh has committed itself," said Cassam Uteem, chairperson of the observer group.

The group hoped that BNP-led four-party alliance would play an effective role in the parliament and bring constructive criticism for the well-



PHOTO: STAR Commonwealth Observer Group chief Cassam Uteem addresses a press conference.

being of the country as well as its people.

Cassam said, "It is time for leaders on all sides to grasp this opportunity and display statesmanship with political forces, whether they are a future government or opposition, working in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation to address the challenges facing the country."

NDI Presenting a preliminary statement on the polls, international election observer delegation of NDI said the 9th parliamentary elections were well administered and held in a peaceful environment.

"With a few exceptions, the elections were well administered and took place in a peaceful environment, resulting in a credible electoral process that met international standards," said delegation member Audrey McLaughlin, also a former leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada.

Asked about the BNP allegation, delegation co-chair and former US envoy in Dhaka Howard B Schaffer said, "We haven't observed any specific allegation brought by BNP. Apart from our election observers, we talked to other observers who unanimously said the elections were free and fair."

Giving some recommendations, the NDI delegation said BNP should accept the election



PHOTO: STAR NDI Delegation Co-chair Howard B Schaffer addresses a press conference.

results for the sake of strengthening democracy in the country.

"The opposition should accept the results, attend the parliament and be loyal to the constitution," said Howard, adding that it would be a tragic mistake if the elected parties simply carry on with the winner-take-all approach, use of black money and muscle power and martial culture would come back again.

Praising the EC's reforms that benefited the electoral process, Audrey said, "More than 80 million Bangladeshis were registered to vote in a process that produced the most accurate voter list in the country's history."

The NDI delegation said a successful transition requires all the parties to abandon the dysfunctional practices of the past.

"Both the winner and opposition will have to act respectfully and responsibly for the sake of strengthening the country's democracy," said Audrey McLaughlin and observed that the December 29 election provided the



PHOTO: STAR ANFREL Head of Mission Damaso Magbual speaks at a press conference.

Bangladeshi people with a meaningful opportunity to select their leaders.

ANFREL, an election observer in Asia in another press briefing said the December 29 elections were conducted with integrity and credibility excepting some isolated breaches of electoral laws.

Praising the measures taken by the EC, caretaker government, civil society groups and other stakeholders, ANFREL Head of Mission Damaso Magbual said they fostered a peaceful and inclusive election environment which attracted a high turnout of voter.

He expressed his concern about the apparent breakdown of security in at least two areas of Chittagong division.

Hasina should not swear in as PM until cases disposed of

Says TIB chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad yesterday said Sheikh Hasina, now on parole, should not swear in as the Prime Minister until the pending cases filed against her are disposed of.

Prof Muzaffer also said Hasina should not distribute ministerial portfolios to those who were convicted or awarded jail terms or now freed on bail.

Speaking as the chief guest at a discussion on 'Curbing Corruption and Good Governance' organised by Dr Ambedkar Foundation at the Dhaka Reporters Unity Prof Ahmad made the call.

Good governance is not possible without the establishment of the rule of law, he asserted. He also stressed the need for strengthening Anti Corruption Commission including local government to ensure transparency and overall development of the country.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) should take necessary steps for quick disposal of the cases filed against tax defaulters, he added.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the freedom of the Judiciary he said, the judiciary was separated from the executive body but I do have doubt about its independent entity. "I think it is a separation in words not in deeds," he said.

He underscored the need for reformation of the judiciary and administration to establish good governance.

"People of Bangladesh rejected war criminals in this parliamentary poll. They want to maintain good and warm relation among themselves irrespective of religion, cast and creed, which is why they gave their verdict against militancy in the national polls," he added.

Sujan Secretary Badiul Alam Mozumder said good governance means upholding the rule of law, equality between men and women, transparency, accountability and effective participation of people in it.

"There was lack of good governance in our society in the past. I think mass people gave their mandate in this election to help establish good governance," he said, adding that a golden opportunity is awaiting us to return to the democratic system through this poll.

"It is also necessary for the BNP to find the reasons behind their election debacle and AL, who has a stunning landslide victory in the polls, must take this triumph as a big challenge," he said.

"We will have to speak the truth and bring transparency in all our activities; only then we will be able to form a corruption-free Bangladesh," he told the discussion.



PHOTO: PFI Awami League President Sheikh Hasina calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed, left, at Bangabhaban and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, right, at his office in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: PFI Awami League President Sheikh Hasina calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed, left, at Bangabhaban and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, right, at his office in the city yesterday.

Polls victory reflects hatred towards war criminals

Speakers tell memorial meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial meeting on Barrister Salma Sobhan, Justice KM Sobhan and Advocate Aminul Haque in the city yesterday said these eminent personalities had shown us the right way like stars with their ideals and activities.

The memorial meeting was organised by Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) at the Liberation War Museum in the city.

The speakers paid homage to these scholars and remembered their involvement with the ASK to establish the rights of people especially the poor and the deprived.

While delivering her welcome speech, ASK Executive Director Advocate Sultana Kamal said they made significant contribution to the liberation war in 1971.

They used the law as a weapon to establish people's right, she added.

"Whenever we remember them we gain fresh inspiration," said Sultana, adding that with the landslide victory in the 9th parliament the countrymen now want to see that their rights are established and the trial of the war criminals is held.

Hasina to establish good governance, peace: Jamaat

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday said people of the country expect that Awami League President Sheikh Hasina as per her commitment in yesterday's press conference would establish good governance and peace in the country.

In its primary reaction over the 9th parliamentary elections the party said despite questions over credibility of the polls, Jamaat as a pro-election and pro-democracy party thinks that the country should run under an elected government rather than a non-elected one.

Jamaat gave the reaction in a statement signed by its publicity secretary Prof Md Tasnim Alam after a meeting of the party's central executive council held at its office yesterday afternoon. Ameer of the party Motiur Rahman Nizami presided over the meeting.

According to the statement, the 9th parliamentary election was held as per the roadmap announced by the caretaker government. "The results of this election are abnormal and the opinion of the people was not reflected properly," it said.

Apparently, the statement said, the election was held in a festive mood but there are lots of questions in the minds of the people about the results.

Two BSF men caught for entering Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

Bangladeshi people on Chailishpara frontier at Daulatpur upazila here caught two Indian Border Security Force (BSF) men when they illegally entered Bangladesh territory and fired on them yesterday.

Sources said one of the BSF members was bullet-hit. BDR, however, did not disclose names of the BSF forces.

According to BDR 35-Rifle Battalion, two BSF men from colony camp at Jalangi Thana in Murshidabad district of West Bengal illegally entered the Bangladesh territory through the border point near the pillar No 3s-2 at around 11:30pm.

Bangladeshi people working inside the territory got panicked and started to run away.

Sources said the BSF men

opened fire on the innocent Bangladeshi people. At one stage, one BSF man got bullet injury with his own firearms and fell down on the spot, while another stopped the firing.

The local people then caught both the BSF men and informed local Chilmari BDR outpost of the matter.

The BDR team from the outpost rushed to the spot and arrested them. No casualties of the local people were reported so far.

After a letter sending by BSF Murshidabad District Commander Atul Agnuhothra, BDR agreed to sit with them at a flag meeting yesterday.

When contacted, Commanding Officer (CO) of 35-Rifle Battalion of BDR Lt Col Sayeed told this correspondent over cellphone that they are yet to reach any decision.

UPAZILA ELECTION HC directs to accept nominations of 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the authorities concerned to accept nomination papers submitted by 18 aspirant candidates for upcoming upazila parishad polls to be held on January 22.

The returning officers (ROs) concerned recently cancelled their nomination papers on different grounds including being bank and bill defaulters.

Upon separate writ petitions filed by the candidates challenging the legality of the ROs' decisions, an HC vacation bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury passed the ad-interim orders and fixed January 4, the day for reopening of the court after vacation, for hearing the petitions.

The petitioners include Sultan Hossain Khan of Sadar upazila in Jhalakathi, Nasir Ahmed Chowdhury of Matiranga upazila in Khagrachhari, Sirajul Islam Bachchu of Madan upazila and Mostafizur Rahman Rizvi of Barhatta upazil in Netrokona.

Draw of UCEP lottery held

BSS, Dhaka

The open draw of the UCEP Lottery-2008 was held yesterday. A total of 1,033 prizes of Tk 40 lakh, including first prize Tk 25 lakh or a flat in Dhaka city, were fixed for the lottery.

The winners have been asked to collect their prizes by showing tickets and related documents within stipulated time.

DUTA ELECTIONS

Blue Panel bags 9 posts, White Panel six posts

DUJ CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League 'Blue Panel' bagged the post of president while pro-BNP-Jamaat 'White Panel' secured the post of general secretary in the election to the executive committee of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) yesterday.

Out of the 15 posts on the executive committee, Blue Panel won a total of nine posts and its rival panel got six posts. Left-leaning 'Pink Panel' teachers participated in the election under the banner of Blue Panel.

Prof Khondoker Bazul Haque of international business department was elected president and Prof ABM Obaidul Islam general secretary by defeating Prof Sirajul Islam of management department and Prof Anwar Hossain of microbiology respectively.

Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman and Prof Moutaj Uddin Ahmed of Blue Panel won the posts of the vice-president and treasurer respectively. Their rivals were Prof Chowdhury Mahmud Hasan and Prof Jahangir Alam Chowdhury.

The post of joint secretary went to Prof Md Lutfur Rahman of White Panel. His rival was Dr Zeenat Huda of Blue Panel.

The six members elected from the Blue Panel are Prof AAMS, Arefin Siddique, Prof RIM, Aminur Rashid, Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Prof Fakrul Alam, Prof Harun-or Rashid and Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam.

Four other members were elected from the White Panel. They are incumbent Duta president Prof Sadru Amin, Prof Tasmeri SA Islam, Dr AKM Sirajul Islam Khan and Prof Laila Noor.

Obituary

METRO DESK

Md Yunus, a chartered accountant and former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Apollo Hospitals in the city on Tuesday night at the age of 71, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Fatema Khairunnesa

METRO DESK

Fatema Khairunnesa, wife of late Syed Ashraf Ali, passed away at a city hospital on Monday at the age of 95, says a press release.

She left behind her one son, three daughters, grand children and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

She was buried at her family graveyard in Barguna.

Amanullah Khan

DUJ CORRESPONDENT

Amanullah Khan, cousin of former adviser to a caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan, passed away at a city hospital yesterday, says a press release.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Dhanmondi Eidgah Mosque ground after Zohr prayers today.

WEATHER TODAY

Mild cold wave likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Mild cold wave is likely over Rajshahi division and the region of Jessore and Kushtia.

Night temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 28.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 09.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:23pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)

DHAKA TODAY

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of the annual report on human rights situation in Bangladesh by Ain O Salish Kendra will be held. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 3:00pm.

View exchange meeting

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonnoy Parishad organises a view exchange meeting to share experiences on election observations. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 3:00pm.

Book fair

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) organises a day-long book fair. Venue: ULAB Dhanmondi campus. Time: 10:00am.

Valerie Ann Taylor BANGLADESH'S FLORENCE NIGHTANGLE



Love, Care, Divinity and tireless Dedication - to find them in one person is rare, very rare. But among us, in Bangladesh, there breathes a soul who belongs to that super elite of humanity. Her name is Valerie Ann Taylor.

Born on 8th February, 1944 in the UK, she came to Bangladesh in 1969 and had to leave for sometime during the early part of the War of Independence in 1971. After she returned to independent Bangladesh, she began her journey of helping out the physically disabled; promising and fulfilling their dreams of living a life like any one of us. For the first time they were made to belong to the mainstream of the society.

She set up the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) in 1979 to provide holistic treatment and rehabilitation to people with disabilities. CRP started its journey with four patients in two disused warehouses belonging to Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital in Dhaka. After eleven years of operating from different rental premises in Dhaka, CRP moved to Savar in 1990. Valerie's achievements have been recognized with many accolades. Among them she received National Social Service Award (2000) by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Rokeya Shining Personality Award (2005) and Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1995.

In 1998 Valerie was granted Bangladeshi Citizenship.

We shall always bear the love of Valerie close to our heart and feel proud to have Valerie as a Bangladeshi national.

We hope you have such an inspired life in 2009 UNITREND LIMITED