



European Union
Election Observation Mission in Bangladesh – 2001
EU-EOMB

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1. The EU Election Observation Mission in Bangladesh [EOMB] has been deployed to monitor the October 1st General Elections on the invitation of the authorities of Bangladesh.

31 Long Term Observers [LTOs] were deployed in 14 regional offices since August 27th. During this time, the observers have concentrated on the pre-electoral phase, in particular the election campaign and administrative preparations.

The various authorities and electoral-related organizations have always constructively cooperated with all the European Union Observers throughout Bangladesh in all our observation operations.

On Election Day, 72 Observers have been present in more than a third of all constituencies, and more than half of the sixty-four districts of Bangladesh. They have visited more than 500 polling stations. They also made observations on vote counting and results consolidation.

2. The European Union Observation Mission in Bangladesh considers that the electoral process has guaranteed sufficient conditions of freedom and fairness and represents an important step towards democratic consolidation. We strongly hope that all the political actors will respect the people's choice as reflected in the results announced.

The Bangladeshis have shown their strong commitment in furthering democracy in the country, and the electoral authorities, the security forces and the media have contributed to a positive process with a spirit of independence and authority, in challenging circumstances.

3. However, several crucial problems were observed during our six weeks presence.

They must be taken into consideration:

- Politically motivated violent incidents and their effect on the overall atmosphere of the electoral campaign.
- The practice of smear campaigning and the usage of inflammatory language and brutal electoral campaigning material. These practices have contributed to create a heated atmosphere in the country and hindered the development of a peaceful election process. These practices have affected, in some cases, the freedom of choice of the voters.
- Several flaws in the regulation, and violations of the Electoral Code of Conduct have affected the full implementation of the electoral process: For instance, a lacking of information about the postal ballot system disenfranchised a large number of Bangladeshi citizens [Police, military, polling officers, local observers, prisoners].

4. Finally, the European Union Observation Mission expresses its strong wish that the confrontation and politically motivated violence be now replaced by dialogue in view of a furthering of democratic progress in Bangladesh.

The European Union Observation Mission Observers will be de-briefed by the Core Team in Dhaka on October 3rd.

For further information, please find the contact numbers below.