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NDI OBSERVATION DELEGATION FINDS BANGLADESH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WELL ADMINISTERED AND PEACEFUL

DHAKA - Bangladeshis voted enthusiastically and in large numbers in Dec. 29 parliamentary elections that were well-administered and conducted in an orderly fashion, according to the findings released here today of an international observer delegation fielded by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The delegation noted several circumstances that contributed to the credibility and efficiency of the process. These included a series of reforms instituted by the Election Commission that produced the most accurate voter list in the country's history, generally well-trained election officials, secret ballots, and generally collegial interactions on election day between the two major political parties.

The NDI delegation was co-led by Howard B. Schaffer, former U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh, and Audrey McLaughlin, former member of parliament and former leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada. The delegation leadership also included Larry Garber, former U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission director for West Bank/Gaza, and Peter Manikas, senior associate and director for Asia programs at NDI. The delegation's findings were informed by an NDI pre-election assessment mission and by a team of 20 NDI long-term observers who had been working in the country since Nov. 20. On election day, 60 accredited NDI monitors observed voting and counting at more than 185 polling centers and 270 polling booths throughout Bangladesh.

The delegation statement pointed out that the Dec. 29 election was the first time that Bangladeshis have voted since 2001 or members of parliament. "With few exceptions, the elections were well-administered and took place in a peaceful environment," the statement said. "A population that has been governed under an emergency order for the past two years appears eager for a return to elected government."

However, the delegation also noted that, "elections are an essential aspect of democracy, but they are only a step toward developing transparent, responsive and accountable governance."

The NDI delegation consisted of political and civic leaders, regional and election experts, media specialists and human rights activists from 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America. The group arrived in Dhaka on Dec. 25 and held meetings with Bangladeshi political and civic leaders, electoral authorities, domestic observers, the media and the international community before being deployed around the country.

A copy of the delegation's full statement may be found [here](#). A copy of the statement of the pre-election assessment mission may be found [here](#). The observation delegation was funded by USAID.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide by promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.

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