



UNITED NATIONS

MEDIA RELEASE

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Visiting UN Mission perceives Strengths, Concerns, on Elections

Dhaka: A mission from the Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs visited Bangladesh from 18-27 June in order to assess the pre-election environment and evaluate how the United Nations may best contribute to elections in the country.

Members of the mission met with the Bangladesh Election Commission and its Secretariat, national and local government officials, political parties, civil society groups, media representatives and others. The mission was grateful for the warm welcome it received at all its meetings.

The mission observed that Bangladesh has had a well-established practice of elections, through which the people have been able to choose and change their governments relatively freely. The election system includes unique safeguards and protections and the electoral administration has repeatedly shown the capability to organize the vote effectively. All these factors can form the foundation for a sound democratic process.

At the same time, the mission was deeply troubled by the high level of political violence in Bangladesh. Constructive dialogue among the key political parties could help lessen tensions and build public confidence in all aspects of the election.

The mission recommended that several basic elements of a democratic election process should be seriously addressed in the weeks ahead:

- Ensuring public confidence in the Bangladesh Election Commission and all other constitutional and governmental authorities responsible for the elections;
- Creating a level playing field in which all candidates and parties can carry out their activities on a fair, equal and secure basis;
- Ensuring that the voter list is accurate and inclusive, in line with the principle of universal suffrage;
- Enabling civil society organizations and media to conduct election-related activities freely, safely and without interference.

The United Nations stands ready to continue to provide targeted assistance in support of Bangladesh's democratic tradition, and to contribute to an election process that is peaceful, credible and accepted by the people of Bangladesh.

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