



# Union Parishad Elections 2011

## Narrative Report

### Introduction

Odhikar has been working with human rights issues in relation to elections since 1995. As a continuing endeavour Odhikar monitors national elections, by-elections, city corporation elections, and local government elections whenever they are held. Odhikar has also been observing national and local government elections in a number of Asian countries as an international observer. Realising the importance of free, fair, credible and neutral elections, Odhikar, as mobile election observer, highlights human rights issues relating to elections, and presents recommendations for the purposes of achieving its objectives.

During the recently held 2011 Union Parishad (Union Council) Elections<sup>1</sup>, a team from Odhikar monitored the polling process in 109 unions under 5 districts of the country, as mobile election observers. In every Union, Odhikar observed 5 centres and the election environment surrounding them. Each team had five members selected by Odhikar from its human rights defenders. This election report is produced based on completed centre-wise specific questionnaires, forms printed by the Election Commission, centre-specific fact collection forms, vote counting forms, information sent by Odhikar's human rights defenders designated in the relevant districts and information accumulated by Odhikar's documentation team.

### The Election Campaign

The Code of Conduct set out by the Election Commission imposes reasonable restrictions on election campaigns as to serve the exact purpose of the campaign. Although political affiliation was not allowed as per the Code of Conduct, a large majority of the candidates were affiliated with the political parties, particularly Awami League and BNP. According to the election law, campaigning had to be suspended 48 hours before the polling started. No election campaigns or distribution of campaign material is allowed during this timeline. Violation of the election Code of Conduct, such as pasting posters on walls, graffiti, tearing down an opponent's posters during the prohibited time was observed during the monitoring. Furthermore, election campaign materials were also found in some polling centres on the election day.

### Security Arrangement

Despite having adequate security arrangements, instances of clashes and electoral fraud has been recorded in some of the observed Unions. On election day, the necessary security arrangements were made by the government and the Election Commission to enable the citizens to exercise their right to franchise without fear. There were allegations that the supporters of the ruling party were involved in manipulating elections. Nevertheless, in some Unions, members of law enforcement agencies were found to be lax while handling law and order situations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Union Parishad is the lowest tier of the local government. UP elections were held between 29 March and 13 August 2011.

## Methodology

Five hundred and fifty five mobile observers of Odhikar (five observers for each Union) were deployed for observing 555 polling centres, representing rural and urban areas across the country. They reported their findings in the prescribed 'election day observation forms' and a number of irregularities and instances of vote rigging and violence were found in various polling stations.

This report summarises the findings of Odhikar's 555 mobile election observers, deployed in 111 Unions under 5 Districts. A total of 555 polling centres were covered during the observation.

### Observed No. of Polling Centres, Unions and Districts

Sl. No.	District	Number of Unions	Number of Centres
1.	Feni	14	70
2.	Laxmipur	21	105
3.	Tangail	36	180
4.	Munshiganj	24	120
5.	Narayanganj	16	80
Total		111	555

### Union-based Mobile Observation

Odhikar monitored elections in 70 polling centres of 14 Unions in Feni; 105 polling centres of 21 Unions in Laxmipur; 180 polling centres of 36 Unions in Tangail; 120 polling centres of 24 Unions in Munshiganj; and 80 centres of 16 Unions in Narayanganj; making a total of 555 polling centres in 111 Unions in 5 Districts. It is to be mentioned that, elections were suspended at Ramnagar Union under Daganbhuiyan Upazila in Feni and at Birbashinda and Puroki Unions under Kalihati Upazila in Tangail, due to demarcation problem in the electoral areas.

The elections at Birbashinda and Puroki Unions were conducted on 13 August 2011, after a Court Order. It was supposed to be held on 2 July. However, the elections at Ramnagar Union under Daganbhuiyan Upazila in Feni remained suspended. The date of the election is yet to be finalised.

### Kinds of irregularities observed

During the course of election observation, Odhikar monitors found the following irregularities to be most common in all polling areas.

#### Narayanganj District

##### **Bandar Thana:**

Minor discrepancies were observed in Bagdobaria Government Primary School polling centre and Kainalivita Community Primary School centre in Madanpur Union under Bandar Thana in Narayanganj District. Moreover, the polling centre in Baropara Public Primary School in Muchapur Union was not easily accessible. There were no developed roads to access this centre. The dirt roads within 500 yards of the centre were muddy and slippery. There was insufficient space in the polling booth at the centre in Muchapur Union Parishad. It was observed that female voters were waiting in line for a very long time. Minor irregularities were also observed in the polling centre at Malibagh Primary Public School.

**Araihazar Thana:**

Some minor discrepancies were observed in the polling centre at Dashiradia Government Primary School in Uchitpura Union under Araihazar Thana.

**Narayanganj Sadar Thana:**

Numerous incidents of small irregularities were observed in Dharmaganj Community Primary School polling centre, Dharmaganj Model School centre, Narayanganj Girls' High School centre and Pashchim Mashdair Government Primary School polling centre at Enayet Nagar Union under Narayanganj Sadar Thana. Minor discrepancies were also observed at Gognagar Government Primary School polling centre, Ajek Kindergarten centre, Syedpur Government Primary School centre and Char Syedpur Government Primary School centre in Gognagar Union.

Minor irregularities were also observed at Gowalbandha Government Primary School polling centre, Palli Unnyan Registered Primary School centre and Bholail Government Primary School centre in Kashipur Union, Narayanganj Sadar Thana. Mohammad Ali Akbar, son of late Abdul Fazil (father) and late Osimon (mother), holding ID card No. 6715863540131, was unable to cast his vote due to the absence of his name on the voter's list in Gowalbandha Government Primary School polling centre. At Hazi Jamir Ali High School centre, voting commenced half an hour after the scheduled time due to the late arrival of the polling agents. Apart from that, some discrepancies were observed at Kurerpar Government Primary School polling centre, Kokerchar Community Primary School centre and Puran Gognagar Private Primary School centre in Alirtek Union.

**Sonargaon Thana:**

At Sonargaon Mohammadia Madrasa polling centre in Magrapara Union under Sonargaon Thana, votes were collected in booths set up in a hall room. Infrastructural development was poor around this centre. Presiding Officer Khayer Ahmed expressed discontent at the state of the infrastructure. Incidents of minor irregularities were observed at Damjahid Community Centre, Ananda Bazaar Madrasa, Ulukando Madrasa and Haria Government Primary School polling centres in the 5 Unions monitored under this Thana.

**Fatulla Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Kutubpur Union under Fatulla Thana, a few minor irregularities were observed in Mamudpur Government Primary School centre, Bhuighar Janokalyan Government Primary School centre, Haji Pande Ali High School centre and Haji Michir Ali College centre.

At 8:45 am on election day in Haji Michir Ali College polling centre, Awami League backed Chairman candidate Monjurul Alam's supporter Rubel, entered the centre illegally. When the security guards asked him to leave, he was rude and aggressive. At that time, the candidate for Chairman-Monjurul Alam, entered the centre and punched the duty officer ASI Shahin which caused some tension. As a result voting was suspended for a while. The situation returned to normal after the Executive Magistrate arrived on the scene and chastised the candidate. Voting commenced 20 minutes after the scheduled time in booths 1 and 2 of this centre. There was considerable lack of privacy during vote casting at the Mamudpur Govt. Primary School centre, and the structural development of the centre was poor.

**Rupganj Thana:**

Some minor discrepancies were observed at Murapara Pilot High School polling centre, Mahmudabad Model Primary School centre and Masimpur Government Primary School centre in Murapara Union under Rupganj Thana. Similar discrepancies were also observed in Pargaon Govt. Primary School centre, Majhipara Govt. Primary School centre, Shonabo Taat polling centre, Atlashpur Govt. Primary School polling centre in Bhulta Union. Several irregularities were observed in Barul Govt. Primary School centre, Pubgaon Govt. Primary School centre and Nabokisholoy High School centre in Kayetpara Union of Rupganj Thana.

Supporters of every candidate conducted extensive election campaigns in Boralu Govt. Primary School polling centre. Furthermore, a Chairman candidate, Rafiqul Islam Badol ('Balti' or 'Bucket' symbol), arranged for the transport of voters to and from the polling centres. In Paschingaon Jamiul-Ulum Madrasa centre, after almost 700 voters had cast their votes, it was found that the ballot papers were in fact allotted for another centre. Voting was suspended for almost an hour to resolve this issue. The local public vandalised cars in an agitation stirred up by the arrest of Awami League leader Sajjad Hossain Tuhin, after he picked an altercation with the Magistrate at Purbogaon Govt. Primary School polling centre. As a result, voting was suspended for approximately 30 minutes. At Nabokisholoy High School centre, supporters of all candidates implemented different methods of campaigning, contravening the election rules and regularities.

**Munshiganj District****Tangibari Thana:**

Minor discrepancies were observed at Dhipur Govt. Primary School polling centre, Nayananda Govt. Primary School centre and Rangmeher Govt. Primary School centre in Dhipur Union under Tangibari Thana in Munshiganj District. There were no special voting arrangements made for elderly voters, persons with disabilities or pregnant women in the 3 centres mentioned above, or in Brahmanbhita Union High School and Mokutpur Govt. Primary School polling centres.

Special voting arrangements for elderly voters, disabled voters and pregnant women were also lacking in Baligaon High School polling centre, Nayagaon Govt. Primary School centre, Purbo Baligaon Govt. Primary School centre, Aporkathi Govt. Primary School centre, and Arial Govt. Primary School centre in Arial Baligaon Union under Tongibari Thana. In Nayagaon Govt. Primary School centre, the Presiding Officer, Molla Amir Hossain did not allow Odhikar to observe the vote counting process, even though Odhikar observers had been given permission to observe the voting.

Accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were also absent in Uttar Paikpara Govt. Primary School, Abdullahpur Union Council Complex, Abdullahpur Bahumukhi High School, Abdullahpur Govt. Primary School and Paikpara Union High School polling centres in Abdullahpur Union of the same Thana. Also, with the exception of Uttar Paikpara Govt. Primary School centre, small irregularities were observed in the above mentioned polling centres.

Numerous irregularities were observed in Amtali Aliya Madrasa polling centre and Purapara Govt. Primary School centre in Shonarang union, Tongibari. Candidate for Chairman, Belayet Hossain Liton Majhi was observed entering the polling centre at Amtali Aliya Madrasa and trying to influence the voters to cast votes in favour of his symbol 'Garur Gari' (bullock cart). Another candidate for the position, Rubel Khan was observed within the area of the polling centre trying to influence voters,

through his supporters, to vote in favour of symbol 'Deyal Ghorī' (wall clock). Special voting arrangements for elderly voters, disabled voters and expectant mothers were absent in these centres. Voters faced much difficulty in accessing the polling centre at Purapara Govt. Primary School because the dirt-track roads were rendered muddy and slippery due to excessive rainfall.

Many discrepancies were observed in Darul Ulum Kaomi Madrasa and Etimkhana (orphanage) polling centres, Uttar Betka Govt. Primary School centre and Chotphotia Govt. Primary School centre in Betka Union. Manirul Islam Paltan, a supporter of Chairman candidate Shawkat Ali Khan, was caught by the public in the act of giving Tk. 5000 to Constable Giasuddin of Louhajang Police Station and Inspector Kashem of Munshiganj Sadar Police Station. The incident instigated an agitation which was brought into control once the officers of the administration arrived at the scene and ensured that the matter would be looked into.

#### **Gazaria Thana:**

Numerous discrepancies were observed in Tengar Char Union under Gazaria Thana. Accommodating voting facilities for elderly voters, persons with physical disabilities and expectant mothers were lacking in Mirergaon Govt. Primary School, Uttar Shahpur Govt. Primary School, Boiddargaon Keramat High School, Boiddargaon Govt. Primary School, and Tengar Char Junior High School polling centres. At Boiddargaon Govt. Primary School centre, Mohammad Saiful, polling agent of candidate for Chairman- Shahjahan Khan ('Tala' (lock) symbol), was caught, by the mobile court, in the act of giving fake votes and arrested by the police.

Among the centres monitored in Hosenadi union, minor irregularities were observed in Hosenadi High School, Ashrafadi Govt. Primary School and Ismanir Char (Uttar Para) Govt. Primary School polling centres. There was no electricity at Ismanir Char (Uttar Para) Govt. Primary School centre. In Jamaldi Community Govt. Primary School centre and the 4 others mentioned above, there were no facilities arranged for elderly voters, disabled voters and pregnant women. Chandidas Haldar, Presiding Officer of Ismanir Char (Uttar Para) Govt. Primary School centre, misbehaved with Odhikar's observers and refused to provide information.

Elections were observed in Monarikandi Govt. Primary School, Number 53 Puran Baushia Govt. Primary School, Dakkhinkandi Govt. Primary School and Moddhya Baushia Govt. Primary School polling centres, with some minor irregularities, in Baushia Union of Gazaria Thana. Notably, members of law enforcement agencies stationed at numbered 21 Puran Baushia Govt. Primary School centre and the 4 other centres mentioned above, performed their duties with more force than necessary.

#### **Munshiganj Sadar Thana:**

Among the centres monitored at Mollakandi Union in Munshiganj Sadar Thana, minor irregularities were observed at Churdumuria Govt. Primary School, Rajar Char Govt. Primary School, Makhati G.C. High School, Munshikandi Govt. Primary School and Anandapur Govt. Primary School polling centres. Unauthorised persons were seen inside the polling centre at Churdumuria Govt. Primary School. There was no provision for electricity at one of the booths in this centre. There was hardly any light in one of the booths at Rajar Char Govt. Primary School polling centre. Mizan, younger brother of candidate for Chairman- Shah Alam Mallik, and his men were seen repeatedly entering the polling centre at Makhati G.C High School, and trying to manipulate the voters into voting for his brother. Allegations were received that the presiding officer of Munshikandi Govt. Primary School

centre, Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, was influenced by Shah Alam Mallik. It was found that Khalilur Rahman did not provide identification cards to any of the polling agents, stating a shortage of cards as an excuse. It has also been found that 10 polling agents were working for candidate Shah Alam Mallik. Unauthorised personnel were also seen in the polling centre trying to manipulate the voters. Over-writing was observed on the identification cards of polling agents at Anandapur Govt. Primary School centre. There was also scarcity of light in four of its booths. The polling booths were small and cramped. There were no special voting arrangements for elderly, disabled or pregnant women voters in any of the 5 centres of this Union.

Minor discrepancies were observed in Banial Maheshpur Govt. Primary School, Banial Hafizia Darul Urum Madrasa, and Ward numbered 3 Kaijar Char polling centre in Bangla Bazaar Union of Munshiganj Sadar Thana. Altercations took place within 100 yards of the polling centre at Banial Maheshpur Govt. Primary School between supporters of Chairman candidate, Golam Mortuza Sharkar (symbol 'Zahaj' (Ship) and supporters of Chairman candidate, Mosharraf Hossain Nannu (symbol 'Anarash' (Pineapple)). In Banial High School, Dakkhin Vocational Madrasa, and the 3 polling centres mentioned above, accommodating voting facilities for elderly voters, disabled voters and expectant mothers were absent.

Some minor irregularities were observed at Torki Govt. Primary School, Bhati Hogla Govt. Primary School, Hoglekandi Govt. Primary School, Nalbuniakandi Govt. Primary School, and Guherkandi Govt. Primary School polling centres in Charkeoar Union under Munshiganj Sadar Thana. At Torki Govt. Primary School polling centre, polling booths from a number of different villages were situated in the same room, making it difficult to identify the booths and thereby causing confusion and disorder. Hoglekandi Govt. Primary School polling centre was not situated in the middle of the voting area, which made it difficult for some people to access. All the above mentioned centres in this Union lacked accommodating facilities for disabled, elderly, and pregnant voters. Minor discrepancies were observed in Muktarpur Govt. Primary School, Panchashar Union Girls' High School, Bhattacharjebagh Govt. Primary School, Panchashar Darus Sunnah Senior Madrasa and Nayagaon Govt. Primary School polling centres. A number of youths were spotted in Panchashar Union Girls' High School polling centre wearing the symbol for 'Morog'(rooster) and campaigning in support of Mohammad Abdul Hai, candidate for Member. The roof of the polling station in Muktarpur Govt. Primary School centre was dilapidated and as a result, rain water had accumulated in the room, making it unfit for voting. Due to rainfall, voting commenced at this centre 15 minutes later than the scheduled time. There was inadequate space in the polling booths in Nayagaon Govt. Primary School centre. An altercation took place at this centre between Habibur Rahman and Shahin Reza Kajal, both candidates for Chairman.

Among the polling centres monitored in Rampal Union under Munshiganj Sadar Thana, some discrepancies were observed in Sukhbashpur Govt. Primary School, Kazi Koshba Masjidbari Govt. Primary School, Kazi Koshba Govt. Primary School, Rampal Degree College and Rampal Govt. Primary School polling centres. There was no water supply system at Sukhbashpur Govt. Primary School centre. The Presiding Officer of this centre informed that they had received no instruction to set up a separate booth for elderly, disabled and the pregnant voters and so none had been established. Shah Alam, Presiding Officer of Kazi Koshba Masjidbari Govt. Primary School centre said the same. Also, there was no electricity in this polling centre and votes were cast in candle light causing serious inconvenience to the voters. The Presiding Officer for this centre misbehaved with the observers and did not allow them to observe the ballot counting process. There was no water supply at Rampal

Degree College polling centre. The booths in this polling centre were unsafe for casting votes. Saima Akhter, polling agent of symbol 'Anarash' (pineapple) and Sanjida Yasmin, polling agent of symbol 'Aam' (mango) obstructed the work of the officers responsible for vote collection by sending in false voters to the women's booth in room number 5 of the polling centre. A scuffle broke out between the women voters waiting in queue outside room number 6 and a number of interlopers. In room number 4, the polling officer did not use indelible ink, creating provisions for people to cast false votes. Shipul Mandal, Presiding Officer of Rampal Govt. Primary School centre informed that there was no need to make special arrangements for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters. However, elderly and disabled voters were seen at the centre during the observation. Indelible ink had also not been used in room number 6 and room number 4 of this centre. The Presiding Officer of Kazi Koshba Govt. Primary School centre informed that they had not received instructions to set up a separate booth for elderly, disabled and pregnant women voters. Supporters of candidate for Chairman, Shafiqul Islam (symbol 'Gorur Gari' (bullock cart) and candidate for Member, Ripon Bhuiyan (symbol 'Football') were seen right outside the centre campaigning for the election of their respective candidates. Supporters of candidate for Chairman, Mosharrif Hossain (symbol 'Anarash') and candidate for Member, Kazi Fulon Bhuiyan (symbol 'Chapkol' (tube well) were seen transporting voters to and from the centres in CNG-run scooters. Some minor discrepancies were also observed in the Ramsingh Govt. Primary School, Bajrojogoni J.K High School, Atpara Govt. Primary School centre and Churain Govt. Primary School polling centres in Barjojogoni Union. Special voting facilities for elderly voters, disabled voters and expectant mothers were absent in all 5 of these centres.

#### **Sreenagar Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Bhaggokul Union under Srinagar Thana, a lot of irregularities were observed in Mandracharipara Govt. Primary School, Uttar Kamargaon Govt. Primary School and Dakkhin Kamargaon High School polling centres. A clash broke out between supporters of two candidates for Chairman, Manir Hossain Mitul and Fazlul Haque; the attacks, and stone-throwing frightened the voters into leaving the centre. As a result, voting was suspended at the centre for 20 minutes. The door of one of the 7 booths in the polling centre at Kamargaon Govt. Primary School was closed for about 20 minutes. As a result the voters, unable to cast ballots, had to wait in line and eventually caused a disturbance out of impatience. Golam Maola, Presiding Officer of the centre, granted permission to observe the voting but refused to allow the observers to observe the ballot counting process. At the polling centre in Dakkhin Kamargaon High School, an elderly man leaning on a cane and a pregnant woman were seen waiting in queue for long time to cast their vote. When questioned about the matter, Presiding Officer Niprenda Shah informed that it was not possible to make special arrangements for these few, among so many people.

Irregularities were observed at Horpara Govt. Primary School centre, Deulbhog and Dayahata Madrasa centre in Sreenagar Union. At Horpara Govt. Primary School centre, Mohammad Abdul Barek Bepari, candidate for Chairman with symbol 'Deyal Ghor' (Wall Clock) arranged for a pickup van to transport voters to and from the polling centre. A local BNP leader, Taizul Islam, allegedly tried to instigate the voters at the polling centre to vote for Abdul Barek Bepari for Chairman and for another Member candidate with symbol 'Morog'.

Among the centres monitored in Patabhog Union of Sreenagar Thana, small discrepancies were observed in Hoglegaon, Bejgaon Govt. Primary School, Patabhog Govt. Primary School and Bashailbhog Govt. Primary School polling centres. Supporters of Chairman Candidate, Dalu with symbol 'Anarash' were seen trying to influence voters by supplying them with cigarettes with beetle

leaves at Hoglagaon polling centre. Mohammad Abdul Mazed, Presiding Officer of Hoglagaon polling centre and Mohammad Yusuf Ali, Presiding Officer of Bashailbhog Govt. Primary School centre did not allow election observers of Odhikar to observe the counting process. It has been found that two candidates for Chairman in this Union, Halim Reza with symbol 'Telephone' and Abul Kalam Dalu with symbol 'Anarash', had gone to the house of the voters, given them Tk. 500/1000 and asked for their votes.

Among the centres observed in Shologhar Union, accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent in Shadrampur, Shologhar Union Parishad, Shologhar High School, Khoiagaon Govt. Primary School, and Kerotkhali Govt. Primary School polling centres. Candidates for the position of Chairman and Member were also seen campaigning at the entrance of the polling centres.

**Louhajang Thana:**

There were no special voting arrangements made for elderly people, persons with physical disabilities and pregnant women in Boultali Govt. Primary School, Darar Hat Govt. Primary School and Azizia Hafizia Madrasa polling centres in Boultali Union; and Khidirpara Govt. Primary School, Khalpara Govt. Primary School, Rangunia Senior Madrasa, Bagbari Regd. Primary School and Pingon Ali Govt. Primary School polling centres in Khidirpara Union under Louhajang Thana.

**Sirajdikhan Thana:**

Accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent in all the 15 polling centres observed in Malkhanagar, Ichapura and Rowshunia Unions of Sirajdikhan Thana.

**Feni District:**

**Feni Sadar Thana:**

Abu Taher, designated to vote at the polling centre at Neyamatpur Regd. Primary School in Lemua Union of Feni Sadar Thana, alleged that he was unable to cast his vote. Apart from that, some other irregularities were observed at Lemua Islamia Dakhil Madrasa, Dakkhin Lemua Govt. Primary School, Mirganj Govt. Primary School and Rahimpur Archiya Islamia Atimkhana (orphanage) polling centres in Lemua Union under Feni Sadar Thana. A few discrepancies were also observed in the Oxford International School, Maddham Kachar Forkania Madrasa, Purba Kachar Regd. Primary School and Mathbaria Govt. Primary School polling centres in Dharmapur Union. In the above mentioned polling centres, candidates for Chairman from 'Anarash', 'Deyal Ghorri' and 'Doyat Kolom' (inkpot and pen) had arranged for rickshaw transport of voters. Unauthorised persons entered the polling centre at Maddham Kachar Forkania Madrasa, and cast a large number of false votes. In protest against such disorder, candidates for Chairman, Ziauddin, MA Khalek, Abdul Haque and Abu Bakkar abandoned the election. Voters at this centre were also inconvenienced by the lack of ample space for voting. Congestion was caused due to three booths being situated in the same polling room; and this resulted in inefficient and time-consuming vote casting and collection. In these centres, supporters of Ajharul Haque, candidate for Chairman, seized the voter ID cards of a number of voters and did not return them.

Among the polling centres monitored in Kazirbagh union, irregularities were observed in Purbo Shonapur Govt. Primary School centre, Malipur Regd. Primary School, Forest Conservation Office and Kazirbagh High School polling centres. In the mentioned polling centres, arrangements were

made by candidates from 'Anarash', 'Telephone', 'Deyal Ghorī' and 'Doyat Kolom' for voters to be transported on rickshaws. The Forest Conservation Office polling centre was a deserted venue. There was no adequate space in front of the centre and it was surrounded by dense forest. The centre had no supply of electricity and lacked necessary furniture. Due to three booths being situated in the same room, the voters had to cast their ballots in a crowd. There was no supply of electricity in Malipur Regd. Primary School centre.

#### **Sonagazi Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Mongolkandi Union under Shonagaji Thana, some discrepancies were observed in Bokhtar Munshi Govt. Primary School, Mongolkandi High School, Sompur Regd. Primary School, Master Azizul Haque Academy and Mirzapur Health and Family Welfare polling centres. Minor irregularities were also observed in Char Majlishpur Govt. Primary School, Uttar Char Majlishpur Govt. Primary School, Charlaxmiganj Najeria Dakhil Madrasa, Chandola Community Primary School and Bishnupur Govt. Primary School polling centres. Arrangements were made for voters to be brought to and from the voting centre on behalf of the candidates of 'Anarash', 'Chashma'(spectacles), 'Deyal Ghorī' and 'Telephone' symbols. Among the polling centres monitored in Matiganj Union, few discrepancies were observed in Matiganj Govt. Primary School, Palgiri Ibne Ali Primary School, Darogahat Al Jameya Diniya Madrasa, Darogahat Govt. Primary School, Palgiri Govt. Primary School and Amirbad Union Charsonapur Primary School polling centres.

#### **Chhagolnaiya Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Shubhopur union in Chagolnaiya thana, supporters of candidates were seen manipulating the voters in Joypur Govt. Primary School polling centre. Supporters of candidate for Member, Kaji Abul Hossain with symbol 'Hati' (elephant) were seen moving inside the polling centre. The toilets in this centre were unusable. Due to the polling centre being situated in a constricted zone, voters had to face considerable rush. The polling centre at Shubhopur Govt. Primary School was also in a narrow location and there was insufficient space for the voters to stand in queue. There was no electricity supply in the voting booths at Jagannath Shonapur Govt. Primary School polling centre.

#### **Phulgazi Thana:**

An altercation took place between supporters of two candidates at Hasanpura Madrasa polling centre in Anandapur Union under Phulgazi Thana. There was insufficient space for voters to stand in queue at Noab Foyjunnesa Islami Dakhil Madrasa polling centre in Amjadhat Union. There were no facilities for accommodation at Paschim Monia Mora Govt. Primary School centre in Phulgazi Thana. There was no electricity at Uttar Baroiya Govt. Primary School, Sreepur Govt. Primary School and Nilokhi Govt. Primary School polling centres.

#### **Dagonbhuiyan Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Rajapur Union under Dagonbhuiyan Thana, there were no accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters at the following venues- Paschim Joynarayanpur Regd. Primary School centre, Latifpur Govt. Primary School centre and Sapua Govt. Primary School centre. It has been learned that incidents of direct payment of cash to voters had taken place at the Purba Joynarayanpur Govt. Primary School and Rajapur Ghana Govt. Primary School polling centres. There was scarcity of light at both the mentioned centres and they were also difficult to access. Election campaigning was going on in full-swing outside the centres.

Candidates had arranged for the transport of voters to and from the polling centre. Notably, none of the results of the ballot count were announced to be 'hung'.

### **Tangail District**

#### **Mirzapur Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Jamurki Union under Mirzapur Thana of Tangail District, there was no electricity in Gunotia Govt. Primary School and Aagdholla Govt. Primary School polling centres. Voters had to wait in line for over an hour at Baniyara High School centre to cast their votes. The Presiding Officer at Satiachora Govt. Primary School centre did not allow the election observers to monitor the ballot counting process. Due to the unavailability of developed roads to Bangshinagar Govt. Primary School centre in Bashtoil Union, voters faced considerable difficulty in accessing the centre. Due to inadequate space at the polling centre in Dakkhin Pekua Dakhil Madrasa, the voters had to jostle to cast their vote. There was also no electricity in this centre. Similarly, there was no electricity at Chaowali High School and Natun Adabari Govt. Primary School polling centres in Mahera Union under Mirzapur Thana. There was no provision for a lavatory in these centres, nor was there any water supply or ample space in the polling room or outside for voters to stand in queue. Awami League backed candidate Bibhash Chandra Sharkar Nupur, used his party influence to establish these polling centres 150 yards from his house and maintained his influence inside the centre. He was seen wandering about the polling centre during vote casting. After the ballots had been counted, Presiding Officer Mohammad Nurul Islam did not announce the results but instead put the ballot boxes into his car and left the centre. At this time, the supporters of another candidate, Ali Hossain Khan took to the streets and tried to obstruct the car of the officer. To bring things under control, the police officers baton charged on the youth and fired 5 rounds of empty shots. The incident caused the villagers to go into a state of panic. Results of the polls in wards number 3 and 4 have not been released upon allegations of fraud with regard to ballot counting, against Ali Hossain Khan.

#### **Dhonbari Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Baniajon Union of Dhonbari Thana, there was no electricity in Baojan Regd. Primary School and Ponchami Chanpur Govt. Primary School polling centres. Similarly, there was no electricity in the Bajitpur Regd. Primary School, Balashuti Regd. Primary School, Bashniogi Govt. Primary School polling centres of Birtara Union and Sattar Kandi Regd. Abotedai Madrasa polling centre in Jabunath Union under Dhonbari Thana.

#### **Basail Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Kanchonpur Union, Basail Thana, it was observed that there was no electricity in Kajirpara Govt. Primary School, Haluapara Abotedai Madrasa and Tongpara Regd. Primary School polling centres. Moreover, voters were inconvenienced by the absence of developed roads to the Tongpara polling centre. This centre also had insufficient space and voters faced difficulty in voting inside the rooms.

Among the polling centres monitored in Phulki Union, Phulki Dakkhin Govt. Primary School polling centre was not situated in a convenient location. There were no developed roads to or from the polling centre and there was also no electricity.

#### **Tangail Sadar Thana:**

It was observed that there was no electricity at Kathuria Shalpoani Primary School and Ramdebpur

Govt. Primary School polling centres in Baghil Union under Tangail Sadar Thana. Presiding Officer of Ramdebpur Govt. Primary School polling centre did not allow observers to monitor the vote counting process. Similarly, it was observed that there was no electricity at Chilimpur Govt. Primary School, Chonati Govt. Primary School and Bariha Dakkhin Govt. Primary School polling centres in Chilimpur Union. Among the monitored polling centres in Katuli Union, Kholabari Hafizia Madrasa centre was situated in an inconvenient location. Due to insufficient space within the centre, voters faced problems standing in queue. There were no developed roads through which to access the centre. There was also no electricity supply in this centre. In Baghbari High School centre, the members of the law enforcement agencies used excessive force in carrying out their responsibilities. It was observed that Chowdhury Maloncho High School centre, in Magra union of Tangail Sadar Thana was not situated in a convenient location. There was lack of ample space outside and within the polling booths of Indra Belta BS Quarter polling centre in Porabari Union. There was no supply of water or electricity and there were no lavatories in this centre. There was no electricity in Belta Saroi Govt. Primary School centre. Restless people in the queue of voters in Jamirunnesa Eye Hospital polling centre caused a disturbance.

#### **Gopalpur Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Hadira Union, Gopalpur Thana, the absence of electricity and lavatories were observed in Paloshia Regd. Private Primary School, Koriata Govt. Primary School and Bhadurir Char Govt. Primary School polling centres. Within these, there was insufficient space in the polling centre at Bhadurir Char Govt. Primary School. Voters were inconvenienced in waiting in queue and in jostling into the congested area to vote. The Presiding Officer at Paloshia Regd. Private Primary School centre did not allow the election observers to monitor the ballot counting procedures. Election campaigning on behalf of the candidates was seen to be conducted in Ataullah Govt. Primary School and Mahonpur Public High School polling centres. The absence of electricity was observed in the Ataullah Govt. Primary School, Barisal Govt. Primary School, Dighalata Govt. Primary School, and Mirzapur Govt. Primary School polling centres. Dighalata Govt. Primary School centre was not situated in the middle of the voting area. Also, there was insufficient space in this centre and voters faced difficulty in standing in line. With the exception of Mahonpur Public High School centre, accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent in all the centres of the 5 observed unions.

#### **Nagorpur Thana:**

Among the polling centres observed in Pakutia Union, Nagorpur Thana, insufficiency of space and absence of electricity was observed in Pukhuria Registered Primary School centre. Among the polling centres monitored in Mamudnagar Union, the absence of electricity supply was observed in Bagherbari Govt. Primary School, Shomobaye High School and Mamudnagar Abotedai Madrasa Dakkhin polling centres. Due to insufficient space in Mamudnagar Abotedai Madrasa polling centre, the voters faced difficulty in waiting in queue outside the polling room and also in casting votes inside the constricted rooms. There was also no water supply or lavatory system in this centre.

#### **Madhupur Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Alokdiya Union in Madhupur, the absence of electricity was noted in Alokdiya Govt. Primary School, Fultala Govt. Primary School and Shibrambari Regd. Private Primary School polling centres. There was also no provision for lavatories at Fultala Govt. Primary School polling centre. There was no water supply or lavatory at Shibrambari polling centre. The polling centre was also not situated in the middle of the region, making it cumbersome for some

people to travel to. There was minimal space in this centre, making it extremely difficult to maintain order while standing in line or voting. This centre lacked accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters. Electricity was also unavailable in Joyangachi Govt. Primary School centre and Hagurakuri Private Primary School centre among the polling centres observed in Sholakuri Union. There was insufficient space in both these centres and the access routes to both were also very poor, causing significant difficulty to voters. Here again the voters had to vote and stand in line in a cramped space. Transport facilities to and from the centre in Srirambari Regd. Private Primary School centre in Golabari Union, Madhupur Thana, were also very poor. Space was insufficient in this polling centre as well and voters faced difficulty in standing in queue outside the polling rooms and casting their votes inside them.

#### **Ghatail Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Dholapara Union in Ghatail Thana, unavailability of electricity was observed in Phulmalirchar Govt. Primary School, Gangaur Govt. Primary School and Sagardighi Govt. Primary School polling centres. Transportation facilities to Gangaur Govt. Primary School centre were poor. There was scarcity of space inside the polling rooms and outside the centre. Among the polling centres monitored in Dighalkandi union, there were no developed roads through which to access the polling centre at Shalengka Registered Primary School polling centre. There was inadequate space in this centre to accommodate the voters in an orderly manner, this led to them facing considerable difficulties while waiting in queue and casting ballots. Natshala Govt. Primary School centre was not placed in the centre of the voting region. Voters faced difficulty in accessing the polling centre at Birchari Bashubari Grameen Primary School due to poor infrastructural surroundings. There was also no electricity at this centre.

Among the polling centres monitored at Digor Union under Ghatail Thana, there was no electricity at Bagonta Grameen Primary School centre. Among the polling centres monitored in Falda Union of this Thana, there was no electricity at Maminpur Regd. Private Primary School. Presiding Officer Rafiqul Islam, in charge of Shehabuddin University polling centre, asked the election observers to make a written application seeking permission to observe the vote counting procedures. Among the polling centres monitored at Gobindashi Union, there were no provisions for lavatories at Jigatala Dakhil Madrasa centre. There was also lack of ample space in this centre and voters were inconvenienced as a result. There was no provision for a lavatory, water supply or electricity at the polling centre in Ruhuli Govt. Primary School. Among the polling centres monitored in Arjuna Union under this Thana, non-availability of water supply was observed at Arjuna Govt. Primary School centre, unavailability of electricity was observed at Bhorua Govt. Primary School centre and unavailability of both water and electricity supply was observed at Jagatpura Dakkhin Govt. Primary School. There was also insufficient space for voters to stand in queue at these centres.

#### **Shakhipur Thana:**

Among the polling centres observed in Kakrajan Union under Shakhipur Thana, absence of electricity was noted in Dighirchola Govt. Primary School, Indrani Govt. Primary School, Tiguriapara Govt. Primary School and Jitesshari Dakhil Madrasa polling centres. Apart from that, there were no developed roads through which to access the polling centres at Dighirchola Govt. Primary School and Kazirampur Abotedia Madrasa. Kazirampur Abotedia Madrasa centre lacked ample space for the voters to stand in queue and vote inside the rooms. Scarcity of space to accommodate the voters was also observed at Beltolipara Private Primary School polling centre in Kalia Union. Due to the unavailability of ample space inside the polling room, voters faced difficulty in casting their votes.

This polling centre did not have electricity either.

### **Kalihati Thana**

Among the polling centres monitored in Salla Union under Kalihati Thana, the absence of electricity was observed in Deupur Govt. Primary School, Deupur High School, Jabraja B.H Dakhil Madrasa and Solla High School polling centres. Among the polling centres observed in Bolla Union, there was inadequate space in Behala Bari Madrasa centre. Voters faced difficulties waiting in queue and voting within the congested space. There were no developed roads through which to access the polling centre at Raypur High School.

The polling centres at Pakhri Union under Kalihati Thana had some irregularities. No electricity, lavatory and water supply were found to be available at Bhiyail Govt. Primary School, Aoliabad Govt. Primary School, Bhiyail Hafezia Madrasa and Sarisha Ata Regd. Primary School polling centres. Sarisha Ata Regd. Primary School polling centre was set up in a central location but there were no roads to go there. Voters had to reach that polling centre by boat, travelling for about two hours. It also lacked ample space for the voters to stand in queue and vote inside the rooms. Scarcity of space to accommodate the voters was also observed at Pakhri Govt. Primary School and Bhiyail Govt. Primary School and Bhiyail Hafezia Madrasa polling centre in Pakhri Union. The secret ballot marking place in Bhiyail Hafezia Madrasa was not secret at all due to lack of space. Violations of the Code of Conduct have been observed at Pakhri Govt. Primary School, Bhiyail Govt. Primary School, Aoliabad Govt. Primary School, Bhiyail Hafezia Madrasa and Sarisha Ata Regd. Primary School polling centres. Posters of almost all the candidates were seen in the polling centres.

Among the polling centres observed in Bir Basinda Union of Kalihati Thana, voters could not stand in queue at Kosturipara Junior High Girls School and Atabari Govt. Primary School polling centres due to water logging. Insufficiency of space and absence of electricity and lavatories were also observed in Kosturipara Govt. Primary School, Kosturipara Junior High Girls School and Atabari Govt. Primary School polling centres. Due to insufficient space in Atabari Govt. Primary School polling centre, the voters faced difficulty in waiting in queue outside the polling booths and also in casting votes inside the constricted rooms. There was also no water supply or lavatory system in this centre. Kosturipara Govt. Primary School centre lacked accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters. Members of law enforcement agencies were observed not carrying out their duties. Among the polling centres monitored, the violation of the election Code of Conduct were observed at Rajaphoir High School, Kosturipara Govt. Primary School, Atabari Govt. Primary School and Singna High School polling centres.

### **Laxmipur District**

#### **Laxmipur Sadar Thana:**

Among the polling centres monitored in Shakchar Union under Laxmipur Sadar Thana, no electricity was found to be available at Dakkhin Shakchar Govt. Primary School, Moddhya Shakchar Community Govt. Primary School and Shakchar Shatantra Abotedia Madrasa polling centres. Dakkhin Shakchar Govt. Primary School centre did not have provisions for a lavatory. At Shakchar Govt. Primary School centre voters faced difficulty in waiting in queue because water had accumulated in the field outside the centre. Community Govt. Primary School centre was not situated in the middle of the voting region. This centre and the centre at Shakchar Community Govt. Primary School also lacked ample space. In Hamid Miaji Nurani Madrasa polling centre and the 4 others

mentioned above, accommodating voting facilities had not been arranged for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters. The members of the police force assigned to Hamid Miaji Nurani Madrasa and Dakkhin Shakchar Govt. Primary School polling centres were not carrying out their duties.

Among the polling centres monitored in Daoapara Union of Lamxipur Sadar Thana, accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent in Srirampur Govt. Primary School, Darjipara Govt. Primary School, Doupara Govt. Primary School, Uttar Sayedpur Govt. Primary School and Bottoli Govt. Primary School polling centres. There was insufficiency of space in Srirampur Govt. Primary School centre. The light in the polling booths was insufficient and there was no water supply or provision for a lavatory. Darjipara Govt. Primary School centre lacked electricity and ample space to accommodate the voters. The lavatories were also in a very poor state at this centre. There was no water supply, electricity or provision for a lavatory at Sayedpur Govt. Primary School polling centre, and the centre also lacked structural safety. Assistant Presiding Officer Amanot Ullah was seen taking the ballot papers from the voters and stamping seals on them. Agents of candidate for Member, Harun-Ar-Rashid Mia (Football), forcibly seized the ballot papers from the voters and cast votes in favour of their own symbol at the polling centre in Moddhya Charbhuta Regd. Primary School. Voters at this centre faced difficulties in obtaining their serial numbers. There was no water or electricity and the transport facilities available to this centre were poor. Transportation facilities were arranged for voters on behalf of almost all candidates at Bhabaniganj College, Bhabaniganj Bahumukhi High School, Community Primary School and Piyarpur Shahid Majharul Islam High School polling centres. Elderly voters were seen waiting in line at Piyarpur centre; they faced difficulties in having to take the stairs up to the second floor to cast their votes. Notably, candidates and their supporters were seen campaigning on election day in the above mentioned centres and information was received regarding the buying and selling of votes the night before. Unauthorised persons were seen inside the centre at Piyarpur, intimidating and influencing the voters on behalf of candidate for Chairman, Saiful Hossain Rony (Deyal Ghor). There was a scuffle at this centre between the supporters of Saiful Hossain Rony and those of other candidates.

In Moddhya Rasulganj Bahukukhi High School in Char Ruhita union, there was not enough space for voters to stand in lines even on the field outside the centre. Moreover the field had accumulated water and had turned marshy. There was no electricity or water, nor was there provision for a lavatory at Nabiganj Islamia Dakhil Madrasa. Charruhita Govt. Primary School lacked a lavatory, water supply and electricity and also had insufficient space. The lavatory system and supply of water and electricity at Dakkhin Charruhita Public Junior High School were less than satisfactory. Special voting arrangements for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters was not made at Dakkhin Char Ruhita Govt. Primary School and Char Ruhita Govt. Primary School polling centres. Information had been received regarding the buying and selling of votes during voting hours at Dakkhin Char Ruhita Govt. Primary School.

A number of people were arrested at Tumchar Asad Academy polling centre in Tumchar Union, for roaming around inside the polling centre without authorisation. The space allocated on the field for female voters to stand was marshy. An altercation took place between two candidates at this centre. At Paschim Tumchar Govt. Primary School, a candidate for Chairman was seen wandering around the voting centre trying to influence the voters. One of the candidates in this centre was seen giving a female voter Tk. 30. At Tumchur Madrasa centre 6/7 voters were seen simultaneously casting their votes at the same booth. The above mentioned centres at Tumchar Union all lacked ample space and had very small polling booths.

There was a clash between supporters of candidates bearing 'Anarash' and 'Doyat Kolom' symbol at Abinagar Govt. Primary School centre, Lahorekandi Union. Supporters of the 'Cup-Pirich' (cup and saucer) symbol, in an act of vandalism, broke the windows of a 'Bhai-Bhai Express' bus. Candidate for Chairman, Golam Ajam Bhuiyan entered the voting booths in this centre at campaigned for votes. Elder brother of candidate of symbol 'Fan' entered the centre without authorisation and the candidate himself entered booth number 1 and threatened the female agent of symbol 'Anarash'. This centre lacked water supply and lavatories. Also, the election observers were obstructed in their work at this centre. The Magistrate evacuated the observers from the centre at around 12 noon. Campaigning was observed inside the polling centre at Kutubpur Regd. Govt. Primary School. Rickshaws and vans were arranged on behalf of the candidates for transportation of voters to and from the polling centre. Due to excessive rainfall, the water level in the field outside the centre had risen to knee height. Vote casting was difficult due to the situation of two booths in each polling room. This centre also lacked electricity. No accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled or pregnant voters were set up in this centre. Unauthorised individuals were seen wandering inside the polling centre at Chadkhil Govt. Primary School. The centre was in an inconvenient location. Chadkhil Islamia Dakhil Madrasa centre was located beside the home of candidate for Chairman, Yunus Khan and allegations have been made that Presiding Officer Ahsan Ullah and Sub Inspector Tajul Islam were working at the centre on behalf of the candidate. Voting in this centre was suspended for approximately 15-20 minutes due to some problem with the ballot papers. Presiding Officer Ahsan Ullah and Sub Inspector Tajul Islam evacuated the election observers from the centre at 11:30 am. A clash broke out between the supporters of 'Anarash' and 'Morog' in Uttar Chadkhil Regd. Private Primary School centre. 2/3 individuals were injured in this incident.

Among the polling centres monitored in Mandari Union of this Thana, Aliullah Daroga Forkania Madrasa polling centre was set up in a house. Polling agents sat on the ground and carried out their work at this centre. Three booths were placed in each house, and the centre lacked a lavatory and supply of water and electricity. This centre was entirely unfit for a polling station. Umbrellas were used as substitutes for curtains at the polling booths in Fatema Bahumukhi High School. There was no water supply, electricity or provision for lavatories at Paschim Mandari Govt. Primary School centre. There was water on the ground on which the voters were supposed to queue. Campaigning on behalf of all candidates was on-going and arrangements had been made to transport voters to the centre in rickshaws. The access roads to Matari Govt. Primary School polling centre were covered in mud. This centre lacked supply of water and electricity. Unabated campaigning was observed at this centre. In the above mentioned centres, accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent.

At Muslimabad High School polling centre in Hajirpara Union of this region, there was no electricity at one of the 3 booths. There was little provision for privacy during vote casting in this centre. The water supply and lavatory system in Begum Ojifa Girls' High School centre were poor. Here also there was little provision for privacy during vote casting. Two women were unable to vote because they did not have voter ID cards. There were no accommodating voting facilities for elderly voters, disabled voters and expectant mothers at Hajirpara Govt. Primary School centre. There was again little provision for privacy in this centre. Campaigning on behalf of 'Tal' (palm tree) was observed right outside the centre. There was no electricity in this centre. Awami League opposing candidate Nijam and SI Nurunnabi got into a scuffle at the centre. Male and female voters were made to vote in the same booth in this centre. Wife of a candidate from 'Tala' (lock) arranged for drinking water for the voters and tried to influence them through this act. Yusufpur Govt. Primary School polling centre

was so crowded that there was barely any space left to stand. The women had to vote while standing on water. There was also no supply of water and electricity in the centre. The voters had to vote in insufficient privacy.

Information has been received as to incidents of false vote casting at Dalal Bazaar N.K High School polling centre in Dalal Union under Laxmipur Sadar Thana. It has been heard that candidates have distributed money for votes at Uttar Laxmipur Govt. Primary School centre. The polling rooms were small at Dakkhin-Paschim Laxmipur Registered Private Primary School centre. There was no electricity at Mohadebpur Govt. Primary School polling centre. Allegations have been made that relatives of candidate Sohel (Doat Kolom), had used their influence to enter the above mentioned centres and influenced the voters within. Candidate for Chairman, Mostafizue Rahman from Parbotinagar Union Parishad Office centre and Candidate for Chairman- Mostofa Kamrul, from Makorthobaj Govt. Primary School centre, arranged for transportation of voters to and from the polling centres and carried out campaign trails. Accommodating voting facilities arranged for elderly voters, disabled and pregnant voters were absent in all 5 of the mentioned centres of this Thana.

#### **Raipur Thana:**

All the 5 centres monitored in Kereya Union of Raipur Thana had inadequate space and small voting rooms and the voters had to jostle as a result. Due to some difficulty in obtaining their serial numbers, female voters had to wait in line for a long period of time. A lot of female voters, unable to obtain their serial numbers, left the polling centre without voting. These centres all lacked accommodating voting facilities for elderly, disabled and pregnant voters.

Among the centres monitored in Dakkhin Char Ababli Union of this region, election campaigns continued unabated in Paschim Udamara Sholpobayi Govt. Primary School centre. Unauthorised persons were seen entering and lurking about inside the centre. The access roads to Udamara High School centre were undeveloped, which made it very difficult for voters to access in the heavy rainfall. Campaigning and entry of unauthorised individuals was also observed in this centre. Voters were observed to be casting their votes while standing in mud at Purbo Udamara Govt. Primary School polling centre. The polling booths in this centre were very small and yet there were two booths set up in each room. Similar circumstances were observed in Dakkhin Gohiarchar Govt. Primary School centre.

Among the centres monitored in Shonapur Union, rickshaws, cycle vans and CNG scooters were seen to be arranged on behalf of the candidates for transportation of the voters in Shonapur Dakhil Madrasa centre. Juice was distributed among the children who had accompanied the voters, on behalf of the candidates. There wasn't enough space for voters to stand in queue at Dorja BRAC School polling centre in Munshi Bari. This centre lacked a supply of water and electricity and provisions for a lavatory. Due to some difficulty in obtaining their serial numbers, female voters had to wait in line for prolonged periods. Unauthorised personnel were seen wandering about in the centre.

Among the centres monitored in Dakkhin Charbangshi Union, the field outside the polling centre at Uttar Charbangshi Govt. Primary School was waterlogged and marshy. There was insufficient space in this centre. There were no accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters in this centre. There were 4 booths in each polling room. There was no supply of electricity or water and there were no lavatories. Due to the undeveloped state of the roads around this centre, it was difficult to access. There was no electricity at LKH Upakulio High School polling centre. Voters were provided with betel leaves and cigarettes in Paschim Charlokkhi Govt. Primary School centre

and allegations of voters being bribed were received from this centre.

Among the centres monitored in Bamoni Union, election campaigning was seen to continue unabated at Bamoni Govt. Primary School. There was no electricity at this centre and the polling rooms were very small. Allegations have been heard about voters being paid off at all 5 of the centres in this Union. In each of these centres there was difficulty and delay in vote casting procedures for the female voters. Accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters were absent.

Among the polling centres monitored in Number 10 Raipur Union of this Thana, there was no electricity or water and there were no lavatories in Dakkhin Debipur Bismillah Kindergarten polling centre. The centre was fenced with broken metal sheets and therefore had little security. The centre was placed inside a betel nut garden and was not identifiable from a distance. There was no electricity or water, and there were no lavatories. Moddhya Debipur Nurani Madrasa polling centre was not positioned in the middle of the voting centre. There were no accommodating voting facilities for elderly or disabled voters and expectant mothers. Allegations have been heard as to the express buying of votes in the above mentioned centres. Structural development was poor in all of these centres. Information has been received as to Chairman votes being bought at Tk. 500 and Member votes being bought at Tk. 300.

#### **Ramganj Thana:**

Hosnebad Non-Govt. Primary School polling centre was situated inside a betel nut garden. Even though there was electricity, voting had to continue under poor light during power cuts. There was scarcity of light during ballot counting. Structural development was poor in the following centres observed in Chandipur union- Hajirpur community school, Monsha High School, Shurerbagh Primary School, Ramnagar Govt. Primary School and Fatehpur Govt. Primary School polling centres. There were no lavatories in these centres, neither was there any supply of water or electricity. There were no accommodating voting facilities arranged for elderly, disabled or pregnant voters in this centre and they were seen to be waiting in line in order to be able to cast their votes. Members of the Ansar and police, to maintain order, did not make any special arrangements for these voters but made them wait in line with the others. Allegations were made as to candidates of 'Doat-kolom' symbol and 'Anarash' symbol buying votes for Tk. 500 to each voter at Ramnagar Govt. Primary School and Fatehpur Govt. Primary School polling centres respectively.

#### **Conclusion**

Odhikar has monitored elections in 545 centres in 109 Unions in Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Feni, Tagail, and Laxmipur Districts. Even though major incidents of violence and snatching ballot boxes were not observed, numerous incidents of irregularities were observed in many polling centres and the areas surrounding them. Allegations of breach of Election Rules and Code of Conduct were heard and poor structural development in the centres was observed. Among the centres observed in Laxmipur District, allegations of vote selling and purchasing were heard; minor clashes broke out between the supporters of different symbols; and they were seen at the centres trying to intimidate, manipulate and influence the voters. In Chaoani High School polling centre at Mahera Union under Mirzapur Thana in Tangail District, because election results were not announced at the end of ballot counting, there was a commotion at the Chaoani Bazaar and two candidates abandoned the election.

The common issues observed at most of the 545 centres in 109 Unions were the arrangement of

transportation facilities for the voters on behalf of the candidates; attempts to influence the voters by arranging provisions for betel leaves, cigarettes, juice, etc for the voters standing in queue. Most of the centres lacked accommodating voting facilities for the elderly, disabled and pregnant voters. Elderly voters were observed to be standing in line, supported on their canes, for long periods. Majority of the centres lacked electricity and water supply and had no lavatories. Access roads to polling centres were undeveloped and the fields outside were water logged and covered in mud. Rain water seeped into the polling booths at many of the polling centres. Polling centres were even setup in village houses. Majority of the polling centres lacked ample space. There was difficulty in identifying and obtaining the serial numbers for female voters and they had to wait in line for prolonged periods as a result. In some centres, umbrellas were used instead of curtains to provide privacy during vote casting; and in some, polling agents were observed to have to carry out their duties sitting on blankets laid on the ground. 7/8 people were seen to be voting simultaneously in the same booth at some centres. Allegations were also received as to indelible ink not being used in some centres. In Bottoli Govt. Primary School centre at Daopara Union, Laxmipur Sadar Thana, Presiding Officer Amanat Ullah was seen forcibly seizing ballots from voters and casting votes himself.

Furthermore, incidents of fake voting and female voters leaving without being able to vote were also noted in some centres. Election observers were obstructed, ill-treated, and not allowed to monitor the ballot counting process in many polling centres; at some centres the observers were even evacuated by the authorities. In the light of the events that transpired and the issues discussed in the report above, elections were not conducted in a totally fair, free and neutral manner in the Unions Odhikar observed. The Election Commission was not seen to be active in order to conduct elections in a fair, free and neutral manner and in many occasions, the EC failed to take immediate action to ensure free and fair elections.

## **Recommendations**

- The Election Commission needs to be more proactive in respect to preventing potential violence, irregularity and intimidation during elections. The Commission should take necessary steps against those involved in intimidating and influencing voters.
- Violations of the election Code of Conduct by many candidates was observed during the polls. All candidates are urged to follow the Code of Conduct set out by the Election Commission. The Election Commission should also take stern action against such violations to ensure a free and fair election.
- Law enforcement agencies and security forces need to be proactive in handling the unlawful situations. Law enforcement agencies should increase their efforts to maintain the security of the voters in the interest of preventing violence; however, they should also refrain from using excessive force.
- Regarding future elections, political parties should be encouraged to come together to discuss the potential issues of violence and should consider developing a public Code of Conduct and make a commitment for non-violent, fair and peaceful elections.
- Civil society, the community and religious organisations, as well as citizen groups should make public statements denouncing the cycle of violence, irregularities and intimidation and should take effective measures for promoting the peaceful resolution of differences.