

Free, Fair, and Credible Election and Democratic Governance in Bangladesh

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Abstract : The aim of this study was to evaluate the relation between the free, fair and credible election in ensuring democratic governance in Bangladesh. The paper is a case (Bangladesh) study and qualitative in nature and based on secondary sources of materials. For doing this study, conceptual clarification has been done first and identified few elements of free, fair and credible elections. Then, how far these elements have been ensured in Bangladeshi elections has been evaluated by analyzing all the national elections held since independence. Apart from these, major factors and challenges of holding a free, fair and credible election in Bangladesh have been examined through using the following research questions: 1. Does role of election commission matter for free, fair and credible elections to form a democratic government? 2. Does role of political parties matter for democratic governance? 3. Do role of government matter for conducting the free, fair and credible election in ensuring democratic governance? 4. Does non-party caretaker government matter for conducting a free, fair and credible election? 5. Does democratic governance depend on multi-dimensional factors and actors? Major findings of this study are: Since the independence of Bangladesh, 10 national elections held in various regimes. 4 out of 10 national elections have been found free, fair and credible which have been conducted by the non-party caretaker government. Rests of the elections are not out of controversy and full of manipulation held under elected government. However, the caretaker government has already been abolished by the AL government through 15th amendment of the constitution. The present AL government is elected by the 10th parliamentary election under incumbent (AL) government, but a major opposition allies (20 parties) lead by BNP boycotted this election and 154 of the total 300 seats being uncontested. As a result, AL again came to the power without a competitive election and most of the national and International election observers including media world consider this election as unfair and the government is suffering from lack of legitimacy. Therefore, the governance of present Bangladesh is not democratic at all and it is to be considered as one party (14 parties' allies lead by AL) authoritarian governance in the shade of parliamentary governance. Both the position and opposition of the parliament is belonging in 14 parties' alliances lead by AL.

Keywords : democracy, governance, free, fair and credible elections, Bangladesh

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