



Voters' turnout is only within 52 to 55 percent

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) previously expected at least a 60% voters' turnout for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections. After the October 25 polls, there was a report that then total turnout exceeded expectations with levels at 67%. However, a Comelec source privy to the polls management & reports pegged it at only 50 to 55 percent of turnout or half of the 52.7 million registered voters and 2.4 million registered voters for the SK polls. This is below the 70 to 85 percent turnout in previous Barangay / SK and national elections as recorded by the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB). Worse, despite the low turnout, the recent polls have a higher election related violence with 78 recorded incidents and 39 fatal casualties.

The Comelec's expectation of a 60 percent turnout is based on claims that previous village & youth elections had low voter turnouts, a claim belied by the NSCB data. The expectation of a lower turnout was premised on a high level of people's involvement in a national and local automated elections last May and the reversion to manual elections discouraged voters. However, the October 25 polls low turnout may be attributed more to the delays in the elections resulting in more than 2000 barangays not having elections during election day. Ironically, this lower turnout has even resulted in a higher violence. Clearly, election management of the October 25 remains wanting polls. The recently concluded polls is a major disappointment to the Election Body and has eroded the goodwill & credibility gained from the May 2010 elections.

Burma election not free and fair; unrest looms

As expected, the November 7 parliamentary election in Burma was marred by fraud, eliciting condemnation from Burmese citizens and observers, election monitors, citizens in exile, Western governments, and the United Nations.

Burmese media outlet in-exile The Irrawaddy enumerated some of the types of irregularities and fraud that took place on election day, as reported by citizens, reporters, and observers under cover: ballot stuffing, lack of secrecy in voting, faulty voters' lists, unsealed or poorly secured ballot boxes, polling station officers' bias (telling voters to vote for candidates belonging to the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party — USDP), illegal campaign, party members serving as polling station officers, proxy voting, violence and intimidation. Citizens reported that local officials supporting USDP had been collecting advance votes prior to election day, threatening people that they would lose their jobs or source of livelihood if they do not vote for USDP. These officials also reportedly forced individuals to change their votes if they voted for the opposition. Candidates also reportedly ticked ballots themselves. (Continue reading... <http://bit.ly/c8vYuK>)

Electoral Observers Seminar and Study Tour in PHL

On November 8 to 11, 2010 a delegation from Mongolia will visit the Philippines for an Electoral Seminar and Study Tour to be conducted by NAMFREL with the support of the Open Society Forum. The aim of the study tour is to provide opportunities for Mongolia's key stakeholders to learn from the Philippines experience in ensuring the integrity of democratic elections and electoral process.

Participants of the Mongolian delegation would comprise representatives from a Parliamentary task force assigned to develop a new draft law on Parliamentary election, the Parliament Secretariat, the General Election Commission, election monitoring organizations, and journalists.

NAMFREL's involvement in the international electoral scene include invitations by the United Nations and the UNDP to monitor elections in Cambodia and most recently in Madagascar, Solomon Islands, and Afghanistan as well as receiving several nominations to the Nobel Peace Prize from notable organizations such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the International Human Rights Law Group, based in Washington D.C.

Internationally, NAMFREL volunteers have worked as trainers, observer team members, election administrators and resource persons in 32 countries so far, namely: Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Cote D'Ivoire, Denmark, Haiti, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, U.S.A., Uzbekistan and Zambia. NAMFREL volunteers, staff, and officers have been directly involved in the creation of similar election monitoring organizations in some of these countries.

[Sources: NAMFREL data]