



The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan to Timor-Leste

Evaluation and Suggestions from the Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan to Timor-Leste based upon the 1st Round Vote of the Presidential Election

May 8, 2007

The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan was deployed to Dili, Liquica, Manatuto and Baucau from 4 to 10 April to observe the First Round of the Presidential Election, including the campaigning, preparation for the polling day, polling, counting and tabulation procedures. On the polling day (April 9), 14 observers visited polling and counting stations in 59 polling centers for a total of 127 times.

The Mission announced its "Preliminary assessment" on April 11, based upon the reports from each observer. The Mission has now compiled its evaluation and suggestions as follows:

1. Commendable Points

- (1) In general, the voting was carried out peacefully without major confusion in each polling station observed.
- (2) The staff at the polling stations, PNTL, National Observers and others on the ground were committed to performing their duties with enthusiasm to contribute to the success of the election. Also, voters took a cooperative attitude to contribute to the success of the election.
 - *Voters waited their turn patiently in the queues, following the instructions of the staff, etc.*
- (3) The training of the staff of the polling stations conducted by STAE before the polling day had good effects.
 - *The setting-up and operation of many polling stations were effective.*

2. Suggestions for future elections

- (1) The following points are related to the training and guidance given to the staff. The training and guidance were neither uniform nor complete, and can be improved in the future.
 - (a) The set-up of the polling station
 - *Some polling stations were set up outside the building upon the request of some voters.*
 - (b) The standing position of the police officers
 - *In some polling stations, police officers were seen inside the 25 meter- area from the polling station. This is prohibited by the election law. .*
 - (c) Lack of unity in making and checking ink marks
 - *Inconsistency was seen on which finger to make the ink marks. Checking the ink marks on fingers before the voting was not always conducted thoroughly.*
 - (d) Confirming the total number of the ballot paper at the opening of the polling station
 - *Many polling stations counted the number of stacks of 50 ballot papers. It is recommended to count each, one by one, considering the possibilities of misprints.*
 - (e) The procedure of reissuing ballot papers
 - *Staff at some polling stations were unaware of the procedure of reissuing ballot papers when a voter makes a mistake in writing or punching.*



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(2) The following points are for future consideration.

(a) Once the counting begins, procedures should be more strict and efficient.

- The counting operation should be conducted as strictly as possible in order not to provide an excuse for the losing parties to argue for an invalid election. At the same time, the counting operation should seek simplification and efficiency.

(An example of a procedure observed in a polling station)

i) Empty ballot box, ii) Classify vote as valid, invalid, or white, iii) Count the vote of each candidate.

(Some suggestions from our observers)

i) The counting operation should be conducted inside a building. Counting outdoors can be vulnerable to external disturbances. Some voters insisted on outdoor counting operation arguing the need for transparency; however, transparency can be secured inside the building with the presence of observers and representatives of parties.

ii) The total number of ballot papers should be counted first. This process will enable the confirmation of the number of ballot papers cast, the number of voters who voted (as registered names on the list) and the number of used ballot papers (The number of delivered papers minus the number of unused ballot papers and spoiled ballot papers).

iii) The verification of a vote as valid or invalid should be conducted simultaneously with the counting of the votes for each candidate. This will improve the efficiency of the counting operation.

iv) A “manual (guidebook)” describing samples of valid or invalid votes should be prepared and distributed to staff.

(b) Unifying the procedure for closing the polling station

- At the closing time, the ballot box should be closed and sealed. If staff close the polling station and begin counting while the box is still open, it may become possible to add or withdraw ballots illegally.

(c) Arrangement with the Media

- Arrangements should be made with the media regarding their position at the polling station so that they do not interfere with staff’s work.

(d) Prohibit smoking inside polling stations

- To avoid fire in the polling stations. Some ballot papers were marked by cigarette fire.

(e) Introducing stricter procedures to avoid double voting

- Ink should be used just before handing the ballot paper to the voter. If the voter refuses, staff should refuse to give the ballot paper. The procedure of ink-marking after the vote can cause problems when the voter refuses being ink-marked (thus making it possible for double voting.)

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