



INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTION SYSTEMS

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IFES Releases Preliminary Findings of Bangladeshi Voter Survey *Results Reveal Outlook and Concerns of the Country's Voting Population*

DHAKA – July 20, 2001 – The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) today announced preliminary findings from a national random sample survey the organization has taken of voter attitudes to identify the main issues of interest to Bangladeshi voters. The survey sampled the rural and urban voting age population in November and December 2000. Fieldwork for the survey was conducted by a Bangladeshi research organization.

The objective, scientifically reliable survey findings highlight the needs and opinions of Bangladeshi voters and the basis for which they will choose a candidate. Because pre-testing showed that many rural voters were generally unaware of the function of Parliament, the survey questionnaire was modified slightly in rural areas to focus on local issues. The survey shows that most Bangladeshis:

- **Think that development should be the foremost concern for leaders.** Most respondents feel that improving roads and communications, increasing literacy and educational opportunities, and establishing industries and employment opportunities, irrigation, and access to electricity should be national priorities for their leaders.
- **State that politicians do not spend enough time on contemporary problems.** Seventy-one percent of rural and urban respondents agree with the statement that, “Politicians spend too much time on past events...and not enough time on the problems of the present.”
- **Support elections for representatives at all levels of local government.** Both rural and urban Bangladeshis overwhelmingly support electing representatives at all levels of local government: village level (96% rural, 94% urban), union *parishad* level (98% rural, 96% urban), *upazilla/thana parishad* (93% rural, 92% urban), and district *parishad* (90% rural and urban).
- **Feel that women should be directly elected to seats reserved for women in Parliament.** Seventy-six percent of urban respondents support reserved seats in Parliament for women. Most of these respondents (88%) think women should be directly elected rather than indirectly elected for these seats. Rural respondents on the survey were not asked this question.
- **Feel Parliament should make these issues top priority: economic development, law and order, unemployment, education, and economic stability.**

- **Oppose hartals and boycotts.** A majority of rural and urban respondents is against the use of hartals. A larger majority is against the boycott of Parliament by political parties. Many respondents are against both these actions.
- **Believe that corruption is a problem.** Both rural and urban respondents state that official corruption is a common problem in Bangladesh, particularly among the police, where the majority of respondents indicate corruption is a serious problem.
- **Strongly support human and civil rights.** Strong majorities of both urban and rural respondents support the protection of human and civil rights, including the right to honest elections held regularly, equal treatment of women by law, freedom of religion, the right to criticize the government publicly, and the right to choose from several candidates when voting.

IFES will release a full report of the survey findings later this year. For more information about the Bangladeshi voter survey, please contact Mary Lou Schramm at IFES' Washington, D.C. headquarters at +1-202-828-8507.

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Since its inception in 1987, the International Foundation for Election Systems has provided nonpartisan technical assistance to develop or refine election systems in more than 100 emerging and established democracies around the world.