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ATTENTION: NEWS EDITOR / CHIEF REPORTER

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Bangladesh Electronic Photo Voter List Gets Excellent Rating from International Audit Team

Digitized Voter Photos Aim at Cutting Vote Fraud in Parliament Elections

Dhaka – As Bangladesh gears up for its first parliamentary elections in seven years, a nationwide independent audit of the country's new digital voter list has concluded that all names on the roll are legitimate voters and nearly all eligible voters are on the list. This first ever computerized photo voter list in Bangladesh contains pictures of more than 80 million voters and took 11 months to compile.

The independent audit of the computer voter list, conducted by Washington-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), consisted of two nationwide surveys sampling nearly 17,000 individuals of voting age across the country. It concluded that the list was compiled with a "high degree of accuracy." It verified that "no 'ghost voters' were found on the 2008 photo voters list."

The new electoral roll was designed by the Bangladesh Election Commission, with support from the Bangladesh Army and financial assistance from Denmark, the European Commission, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP also provided technical and logistical support for the creation of the unprecedented voter roll. Preparation for the digital voter list required over 10,000 laptops, digital cameras and finger print scanners, all aimed at creating a fraud-proof voter roll.

"The upcoming election represents an historic opportunity for Bangladesh in reestablishing democracy. We are pleased that the current voter list has passed the scrutiny of an independent team of auditors because a credible voter list is an essential ingredient for all free and fair elections," says Renata Dessallien, UN Resident Coordinator.

The external audit found that the voter list was geographically uniform, suggesting that the registration process was administered evenly throughout the country. The audit reported that photographs were of good quality and will help ensure that all voters have the opportunity to exercise their voting right in the upcoming election.

The audit also found that more than 99 per cent of respondents had confidence in the accuracy of the voter list and gave positive evaluations of the voter registration process. The results indicate that the list meets international standards and is a significant improvement from all previous voter lists.



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The audit concluded that “in comparison with assessment of voter lists created during previous voter registration efforts in Bangladesh, the voter list for the December 2008 election has effectively registered the universe of eligible voters in Bangladesh, and accomplished this with a great deal of accuracy in capturing the particulars for individual voters.”

The independent audit was designed, supervised and analyzed by international election experts from IFES, a leading election assistance organization working in more than 100 countries. The audit was conducted from September 15 to November 2, 2008, using statistical sampling methods with a $\pm 1.5\%$ margin of error. The independent external audit was sought by UNDP following the completion of the electronic registration of over 80 million people.

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