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ATTENTION: NEWS EDITOR / CHIEF REPORTER

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Development Partners Congratulate the Government for keeping the Voter Registration on Track

Dhaka: UNDP gathered a large group to celebrate the halfway mark of the voter registration process today, and to congratulate the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC), the Bangladesh Armed Forces and all those who have worked so hard to keep the voter list on target.

The registration of voters with photographs, first time in the country, was launched through a pilot project inaugurated by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Dr ATM Shamsul Huda on 10 June, 2007 in Sreepur Paursashava under Gazipur district. The project then began in August 2007 with whatever equipment could be assembled at short notice. Since November / December 2007, the project has been running at full steam, registering 10 million voters per month. On 27 February 2008, the estimated halfway mark was reached – 40 million voters registered. Right on target.

“This has laid to rest all the doubts and misgivings about the response of the people and practicability of the enterprise... For all the good things happening on account of computerized voter registration, there is ample justification for celebrating its passing the halfway mark”, said Chief Election Commissioner Dr. A T M Shamsul Huda while addressing the recent achievement.

The voter list galvanized the entire country in a manner that few other national projects have ever done. Special efforts were made to include eligible voters who never made it on to previous voter lists – the disabled, the infirm and the residents of remote corners of the country. From remote chars to distant hilltop villages, everyone is being registered. Preparation of the digital voter list required over 10,000 laptops, digital cameras and finger print scanners along with huge manpower, including 62,000 supervisors and 200,000 enumerators.

“We are making a lot of noise today about the voter list because its preparation has been so remarkable and, once completed, I have no doubt it will put Bangladesh on the map globally. You will have a lot of countries knocking at your door for advice on how to prepare a gold standard voter list,” Ms. Renata Dessallien, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh said while congratulating the crowd.

A UNDP project was developed to pool donor funds to co-fund the voter list. Contributions worth 50 million US dollars (approximately 345 crore taka) were mobilized from nine development partners, namely the European Commission, DFID, the Netherlands, UNDP, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and Korea.



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“This is not only a remarkable achievement in its own right, it is also an important landmark on the nation’s roadmap to elections later this year. And it is on schedule; it is on target”, added Ms. Dessallien.

The voter list was designed to be fraud-proof. It is being compiled electronically, along with digital photographs, fingerprint scans and signatures/thumb prints. To provide an incentive to register, voters are being issued a provisional identity card.

Development partners congratulate the Government for this remarkable achievement.

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