



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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NDI PRE-ELECTION SURVEY REPORT September 11-17, 1993

This statement is offered by an international team of election experts and regional specialists organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The survey team held a series of meetings with government officials, political party representatives, nongovernmental organizations, journalists and other opinion leaders at the national and provincial levels to review administrative preparations and evaluate the political climate leading up to Pakistan's October 1993 elections. Several members of the NDI team will remain in Pakistan until the elections. As in 1988 and 1990, NDI also plans to organize an international observer delegation for the October polls.

From a democratization perspective, the team recognizes that complex factors have led to the holding of this third set of elections in five years. These factors include Pakistan's constitutional and electoral arrangements as well as the evolution of, and relationships among, key institutions such as the media, political parties and the military. By remaining in Pakistan over the course of the next several weeks, the Institute hopes to gain a better understanding of the confluence of these factors and their impact on the elections as well as on Pakistan's continued democratic development.

Over the past several days, election officials and representatives of the political parties expressed the view that the present election environment is less controversial than previous pre-election periods. Persons with whom the team met also affirmed that election preparations being undertaken by the caretaker government and election officials are being accomplished in an impartial manner. The team's meetings and review of published reports in the media reinforce the impression that the caretaker government has created an environment conducive to meaningful political competition for the support of the electorate.

The team noted that the Central Election Commission has announced a number of steps to demonstrate and promote the transparency of the election process. These include explicit instructions to election officials regarding the distribution, safe storage and documenting the disposition of election paraphernalia (ballots, ballot boxes, tally sheets, etc.), providing party agents with signed copies of the official tally sheets and announcement of the results at the polling station level, and plans to accredit nonpartisan domestic election monitors. In addition, the Army has responded affirmatively to the request of the Central Election Commission that it help ensure that the elections will take place



in a peaceful and orderly manner and in accordance with the Constitution and electoral laws.

The team noted that the preparations by these institutions do not obviate the need for other participants in the electoral process -- particularly the political parties and candidates -- to observe the new Code of Conduct and exercise vigilance in ensuring that the electoral laws are fully respected. The team was encouraged to learn that Pakistani nongovernmental organizations such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan are also preparing to observe the election process. It is the experience of NDI that observation of elections by nonpartisan domestic groups that do not have a direct stake in the outcome of the election contributes to citizen participation and public accountability of elected officials. Such activities strengthen democratic institutions and enhance the development of modern civic societies.

While in an overall sense the team was favorably impressed by the election preparations and the general campaign environment thus far, several observations cause concern. Virtually everyone with whom the team spoke expressed the view that voter turnout for the October elections is likely to be lower than in past elections. The team urges continuing efforts by the government and political parties to encourage voters to cast their ballots on both October 6 and 9 in order to ensure the credibility of the electoral process and public confidence in the future national and provincial governments.

A second concern expressed to the team by a large number of people was that election-related violence could result from a heated campaign. Such violence could reduce voter confidence in election results. At the same time, individuals could use the election campaign as a pretext for pursuing long-standing conflicts unrelated to politics. In some places, prejudice against certain groups or regional parties could also lead to violence that might negatively affect the campaign environment. The team was assured by provincial officials, the Election Commission and the Army that steps are being taken in the pre-election period as well as on election day to maintain law and order and at the same time permit peaceful political expression.

The team also learned of concerns regarding problems in campaign finance. While limitations have been announced regarding campaign spending, it was almost universally stated that the present mechanisms to monitor expenditures and enforce spending limits are inadequate and unlikely to be followed. In addition, a number of people identified vote-buying by several parties as a persistent problem -- although one difficult to verify. These practices undermine the expression of political choice and create cynicism among the electorate.

The team noted that while efforts to update the electoral rolls were initiated by the caretaker authorities and election officials before the August 22 deadline, it was acknowledged that

there was not sufficient time or resources to complete the task. The degree to which this deficiency is perceived to affect voter turnout should be considered by the future elected government to strengthen electoral law provisions regarding the review and updating of the voter rolls.

A matter still awaiting resolution by election officials is how women's polling places will be secured on election day. The team hopes that the procedures adopted will encourage and ensure that women exercise their right to vote.

In closing, as in 1988 and 1990, the team expresses its appreciation for the reception it has been accorded by party leaders and election officials throughout the country. We also recognize that the ultimate judge of these upcoming elections will be the people of Pakistan and offer our support to all of those who are working to ensure that the unfolding electoral process will ultimately contribute to Pakistan's long term democratic development and prosperity.

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