

ELECTIONWATCH INDONESIA



Indonesia Pre-Election Watch: July 2009 Presidential Election

On the heels of the April 9, 2009 national parliamentary elections, an estimated 170 million Indonesian voters are headed to the polls again on July 8, 2009, to vote for their next president and vice president. A secular nation with the largest Muslim majority in the world, Indonesia has made important advances towards democratic consolidation in the years since President Heji Mohammad Suharto resigned in May 1998. There have been four peaceful transitions of presidential power and three national elections that were certified as open and transparent. The July 2009 election will be the second time that Indonesians have directly elected their president.

The April 2009 elections in the world's fourth largest democracy were not without persistent complaints of flawed voter lists and frequently changing election rules that left poll workers, political parties and voters confused about final voting procedures. Due to April election complaints, the government of Indonesia implemented remedial actions to address April complaints.

Electoral System

Thirty-eight political parties competed in various provinces across the country in the April 9, 2009 parliamentary elections. In order to qualify to nominate a presidential candidate, a political party must meet at least one of the first two criteria or the third criteria which are all based on the outcome of the April parliamentary elections:

1. A party must have won at least 20 percent of the seats in the parliament in the April elections;
2. A party must have received at least 25 percent of the total national vote in the parliamentary elections;
3. A political party must form an electoral coalition with other political parties to reach the 20 percent of the seats in parliament.

Incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's (SBY) Party Democrat was the only party able to meet one of the top two constitutional requirements. By winning more than 20 percent of the seats in the new parliament, the party was eligible to nominate candidates for president and vice president.

The President's two rival parties, Golkar and Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P) received less than 20 percent, requiring them join with other parties to reach the constitutional threshold.

The formal announcement of the July 8, 2009, election result is expected to occur between

July 25-27, 2009. In order to be elected, a candidate must have 50 percent or more of the vote, or the election moves to a second round between the top two candidates which would be held September 8, 2009. The formal announcement of the September 8 election results is expected to occur on October 8, 2009. The inauguration of the president and vice president-elect is slated to occur on October 20, 2009.

Electoral Environment

Presidential and vice presidential nominees include current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Boediono, former Governor of the Indonesian Central Bank; incumbent Vice President Jusuf Kalla and his vice presidential running mate retired General Wiranto SH; and former President Megawati Soekarnoputri joined by her running mate, retired General Prabowo Subianto.

Traditional thinking would predispose that a three-way race would end in a runoff, however, recent polling indicates that the incumbent president could be elected in the July election with no need for a runoff election.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Boediono:

Incumbent SBY is seeking a second term in office and Boediono is making his debut as a political candidate for elected office. Prior to joining the SBY ticket, the apolitical Boediono served as Governor of the Indonesian Central Bank.

Both are considered supporters of free markets and strong anti-corruption advocates. The ticket has been working to convince voters that the identity of the country can be found in furthering anti-corruption efforts and continuing to create jobs. Boediono has made clear his intent to work with SBY to privatize many functions of government in an effort to combat corruption and apathy in government service.

Recent polls suggest that voters seem to be responding to SBY's record in support of lowering fuel prices, fighting corruption and implementing subsidy payments for lower income families. Polling also suggests that voters are less concerned with religious issues rather than bread and butter, economic concerns.

Megawati Moekarnoputri and Prabowo Subianto:

Chairwoman of PDI-P, Megawati is seeking to reenergize her party and reassume her role as President of Indonesia. Incumbent SBY served in Megawati's cabinet and resigned to successfully run against her in the 2004 election. As the daughter of the first President of Indonesia, she enjoys a large and faithful grassroots following that, according to most survey results, has her in second place.

The Megawati - Prabowo ticket has encouraged unity among citizens as the identity that can bring the country together to solve problems. During the campaign, both SBY and Kalla have gone out of their way to indict Megawati's passage of employment laws during her tenure as president.

Megawati opposed various SBY initiatives such as giving subsidies to lower income families. Her solid second place standing in most public opinion polls comes more from her strong base of support than from an ideological following.

Jusuf Kalla and Wiranto SH:

Incumbent Vice President Jusuf Kalla (Golkar) split with SBY earlier this year under political pressure from within his own party to challenge the President. His running mate, Wiranto, is the former military chief of the country who has been the target of charges of human rights abuses during his time in command. The two spent energy early in the campaign in an unsuccessful attempt to pry Muslim support away from SBY-Boediono. Campaigning on breaking Indonesia's reliance on foreign money and strong nationalistic economic policies, the pair supports high taxes on foreign companies, development of domestic business and closer governmental ties to Islam.

The International Implications

Over the last several months, SBY has taken time away from the campaign trail to participate in global activities which has led many to ponder, should he be reelected, whether he will become the leader of progressive Muslim countries in the eyes of the world. Given the choice of a vice presidential candidate who can assist in managing his agenda in the Indonesian parliament, or one that will further help the country integrate itself into global markets, SBY chose Boediono as a clear signal that the country's economy will be his top priority.

During his current tenure, SBY has taken strides to establish Indonesia as a leader in Southeast Asian affairs. With SBY's party coming off a strong victory in the parliamentary elections, a victory for SBY at the presidential level will provide a strong mandate and an opportunity for Indonesia to emerge as an even larger international presence. SBY may very well have the opportunity to live up to *Time* magazine's recognition as one of the 100 most influential world leaders to watch.

IRI in Indonesia

The International Republican Institute (IRI) has been working with the people of Indonesia to advance their country's democratic development since the fall of the President Suharto regime in 1998. IRI works closely with political parties throughout Indonesia to help them develop and identify issues for political campaigns, particularly in preparation for direct local elections. Currently, IRI provides training and individual party consultations on leadership development, transparent candidate selection, accountable party finance and effective communication with constituents.

Public opinion polling is a major component of IRI's activities in Indonesia. IRI conducts public opinion research at the national and provincial levels and uses the polling data to strengthen trainings provided to political parties and government officials across Indonesia. As part of the 2009 election program, IRI conducted a national poll and a series of provincial polls. The polls were used through the 2009 election to inform political parties at national and provincial levels. Additionally, IRI has trained political parties on polling techniques and methodologies in an attempt to encourage parties to gather and analyze data themselves.



JOIN OUR
MAILING LIST



Facebook



Twitter

Email Marketing by

