

# SPECIAL INDONESIA UPDATE

## Election Day 5 April 2004

### Summary

*The 5 April elections have passed peacefully. Reporting from across the country suggests that problems with logistics have not affected the great majority of voters.*

*While there are no official results as yet, my personal observation across Jakarta this afternoon suggests that voters in Jakarta in particular have delivered a stinging rebuke for the President's PDIP party and Golkar.*

*The winners are the surprises I predicted. Susilo Bambang Yudoyono's Partai Demokrat and the PKS party of the Muslim puritans are winning!*

*Early reports from Bali, Bandung and South Sulawesi indicate similar trends. Very early reports from Eastern Indonesia suggest that Golkar could do better in this traditional base.*

*Megawati and her PDIP leadership must be hoping tonight that the early results do not reflect a national trend in the PDIP's base in rural Java and Sumatra.*

*The face of Indonesian politics could have changed today.*

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Voting today was peaceful and orderly, without the enthusiasm that was evident in the 1999 elections. The photographs below show the simple but effective polling booths used today in Jakarta in open fields, garages, schools and even the car park of a Video Ezy store in Kemang:



The two-metre-wide ballot paper for the Parliament (DPR) elections in South Jakarta was confusing for many and too big for the small booths provided, but invalid votes in the city do not appear to have been excessive. The overall abstention rate could be over 10% this time:



Struggling with the DPR ballot paper



Forcing a completed vote into the ballot box



A voter has his finger marked with ink after voting

### The Early Results

Although the reporting system of the Electoral Commission (KPU) is unlikely to give early official results for 24 hours, TV networks and radio are already giving early results from across the country.

These early reports are made possible by an extraordinarily open counting of the votes at each booth. At 1pm, as booths closed, polling booth staff began counting votes before tens of locals who had voted early in the day. Party scrutineers, media and anyone interested could watch and photograph:



Removing DPR ballot papers from the ballot box prior to counting



Announcing the result ballot paper by ballot paper



Recording another vote for PKS

During the afternoon, news radio services have been asking voters to sms to stations the results in listeners' booths. With this data and with excellent TV coverage from 5pm tonight, we have an early sense of the possible results at least in urban and developed areas.

In Jakarta, voters have delivered a stinging rebuke to PDIP and Golkar, the largest parties in the 1999-2004 DPR. In the booth nearest my house, PDIP received 7 votes, Golkar 2 out of a total number of 240 valid votes cast. These numbers were

inconceivable until today. Elsewhere in the city PDIP was polling at around 10% at best. Golkar was consistently trailing PDIP.

The winners are Susilo Bambang Yudoyono's Partai Demokrat and the PKS party of the Muslim Puritans. Early reports from Bali, Bandung and South Sulawesi suggest that both parties are polling extremely well and that PDIP in particular is polling poorly. .

#### What Does it Mean?

On 3 April, before the vote, I was pessimistic in the light of an empty election campaign that the election could have democratic substance. Like many Indonesians I spoke to during March, I concluded that millions would still vote for old-style politics. The political elite would conclude that their tactics of an empty campaign had worked:

"The response of much of the elite to these observations is to argue that the people are simple, and cannot be trusted with politics. They prefer to deal in religious symbols not issues. They must be given simple choices. The campaign must be limited and tightly controlled or there will be violence.

The reality is different. Polling by parties told them voters are worried not about religion but about their economic futures and the declining quality of schools and health and transport services. In 1999 the campaign lasted for almost six months and there was little violence.

The joy and enthusiasm of the 1999 elections has dissipated. In its place are disillusionment and a growing conviction that elections will change nothing. A large abstention vote and a high level of spoiled ballots on 5 April will tend to confirm this air of disillusionment with politics. Many younger members of the middle class have not even bothered to register.

One party at least is offering a proven, proactive approach to the needs of the poor. It is the PKS party of the Muslim Puritans. A strong vote for the PKS will show the political elite that political success can be achieved by offering policies and approaches that promise genuine action to improve voters' lives. But the PKS will not win more than 10% of the vote.

A strong vote for Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY) and his Partai Demokrat would yet another sign of popular disillusionment with traditional politics and the political establishment.

A high abstention rate and strong votes for new 'change' figures and parties like SBY and PKS are likely nevertheless to be swamped by traditional political forces like Golkar and PDIP."

The results in Jakarta at least show that voters are punishing traditional politics and politicians. Urban voters are voting for reform and change through SBY and PKS. I may have been wrong about PKS not getting more than 10% of the vote. The question now is how far this impatience with old style politics is spread across the country and how far it extends into rural areas, if at all.

Up to 125 million votes still have to be counted and reported to the central reporting centre in Jakarta. It is too early to declare the results of such a huge election on the basis of the relatively tiny results we have so far. But, if today's trends continue – a collapsing vote for PDIP, a weak Golkar and a surging Partai Demokrat and PKS – the face of Indonesian politics changed today.