

25th October' 2016

PRESS NOTE

A TOTALLY APOLITICAL PRE-POLL VOTER PERCEPTION SURVEY

Maharashtra is moving into election mode as elections will be conducted in local bodies in 33 out of 36 districts. Nomination forms of candidates wishing to contest elections will be filed from 24th October in Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats, whereas actual elections will be held in 4 phases from 27th November 2016 to 8th January 2017. At the initiative of the State Election Commission (SEC), the **Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune** carried out a **voter perception survey** to sense the mood of the voters in areas governed by 18 Councils and Nagar Panchayats. The findings highlight what voters feel about and expect from the contesting candidates.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Maharashtra Election Watch (MEW) has partnered with the Maharashtra SEC and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune to disseminate the findings of the voter perception survey and to help the voters make an informed choice. The voter perception survey analyzed responses from 5100 respondents during the month of October 2016. The respondents were mostly from semi-urban areas.

A youth wave seems to have clearly gripped the electorate. 84 per cent of the voters would like their candidates to be less than 40 years of age. The young voters are especially emphatic about being represented by young candidates. 78 per cent of the voters express disappointment that most candidates contesting the local body elections are not even matriculate, whereas a thumping 92 per cent would like to see degree-holding candidates representing them in the coming elections. Clearly, a young and educated candidate is what the electorate is asking for.

Some findings are sombre. 84 per cent of the voters feel that contesting candidates normally do not have requisite community building experience that is needed to carry out developmental work at the local bodies. 86 per cent of voters believe that candidates contest elections merely because they belong to politically influential families. 83 per cent of voters would like their constituency to be contested by candidates with developmental experience.

Are contestants corrupt? 80 per cent of the voters think so. That rich contestants buy elections is an observation supported by 85 per cent of the voters. However, corruption is not very high on the voter's priority list while deciding whom to vote. 86% voters of the Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats feel that efficiency in development matters more than having a clean image.

89 per cent of voters feel that reserving half the seats for women candidates is a good idea, though 89 per cent also seem to support the fact that women candidates are only proxies for the dominant, male

Candidates in their families. 74 percent of the respondents felt that women representatives are likely to be less corrupt than men. The proverbial silver lining is that 74 per cent of voters feel that women actively and aggressively contesting elections has been increasing over the past few years.

Criminalization of politics is also an issue that strikes a chord with the electorate with 91 per cent of the voters believing that it is criminalization that keeps “good” candidates away from the elections. It is very interesting to note that 94 per cent of voters would like the election authorities to do more to keep the criminal elements away from local body elections.

The top three characteristics that voters want their candidates to possess are the accessibility of the candidate to his/her voters, candidate’s education and their ability to represent ward level issues of Voters in the local body meetings.

Most voters feel that local body elections are not analyzed as thoroughly as Lok Sabha elections; 93.5 per cent of the voters would like to know more about the candidates contesting from their constituencies. Clearly, voters would like to take a more **informed decision** regarding their candidates in the upcoming elections.

Thanks & Regards,

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