

Icelanders vote for ordinary people to draft constitution

AFP, Nov 28, 2010, 02.33am IST

REYKJAVIK: [Icelanders](#) voted Saturday for dozens of ordinary people who will draft a new constitution, amid enduring public anger towards the political elite over the collapse of the country's major banks.

The once-wealthy nation is still trying to shake off the deep economic malaise that set in after the late 2008 bank crisis.

"People at all levels are among the candidates," justice ministry spokesman [HjalTI Zophoniasson](#) told AFP, describing the vote as "exciting" but acknowledging that voter turnout appeared to be low.

"We may be looking at something like 50 percent" of the some 230,000 Icelanders eligible to vote, he said about halfway through the voting day, stressing however that "polls are open until 10 o'clock tonight (2200 GMT), so we can't really say until later."

Among the 522 candidates competing for the between 25 and 31 seats on the assembly that will draft the new constitution, "there are plumbers, sailors and so on. A lot of people have university degrees, but that is absolutely no requirement", Zophoniasson said.

The only conditions were that each candidate had to be over 18 years of age and have at least 30 people nominate them, he explained, adding that people with affiliations to political parties were not in the running.

The assembly is set to convene in mid-February and work for between two and four months on drafting a new charter to replace the one adopted when Iceland gained independence from Denmark in 1944, which has previously only been slightly amended six times.

It is expected to propose a complete overhaul of the constitution.

Among the many suggestions that have been put forward ahead of Saturday's vote is the separation of Church and state and the placing of all natural resources under public ownership, as well as a clear separation between the legislative and executive branch.

"I definitely don't want separation of Church and state, so I voted for people who are not emphasising that," Inga Maria Valdimarsdottir, a housewife in her 30s told AFP at a polling station in the small town of Kopavogur, not far from the capital.

"I voted for a priest, a few lawyers, farmers and professors," she said. Once complete, the draft constitution will be presented to parliament before it ends its session in May, but the house is not likely to vote on the bill until the second half of the year, Zophoniasson said.

Although the assembly of ordinary Icelanders have not been given the final word on the charter, a unanimous and well-drafted proposal will probably be "morally binding", the justice ministry spokesman said.

"Parliament is not legally bound by this, but could be morally bound," he said, adding however that if the assembly is unable to agree on a clear proposal, the house "will basically do whatever it wants."

The counting of the votes would not begin until Sunday morning and the final count was not expected to be made public until late Monday, Zophoniasson said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Powered by *INDIATIMES*

[About us](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Terms of use](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Feedback](#)

[RSS](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[TOI Mobile](#)

[ePaper](#)

[Sitemap](#)

[Archives](#)

Other Times Group news sites

[Times Crest](#) | [The Economic Times](#)

[इकनॉमिक टाइम्स](#) | [ईकोनॉमिक टाइम्स](#)

[Mumbai Mirror](#) | [Times Now](#)

[Indiatimes](#) | [नवभारत टाइम्स](#)

[महाराष्ट्र टाइम्स](#) | [Go Green](#)

Living and entertainment

[Timescity](#) | [iDiva](#) | [Bollywood](#) | [Zoom](#)

Network

[itimes](#) | [Dating & Chat](#) | [Email](#)

Hot on the Web

[Hotklix](#)

Services

[Book print ads](#) | [Online shopping](#) | [Business solutions](#) | [Book domains](#) | [Web hosting](#)

[Business email](#) | [Free SMS](#) | [Free email](#) | [Website design](#) | [CRM](#) | [Tenders](#) | [Remit](#)

[Cheap air tickets](#) | [Matrimonial](#) | [Ringtones](#) | [Astrology](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Property](#) | [Buy car](#)

[eGreetings](#)

Copyright © 2010 Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. All rights reserved. For reprint rights: [Times Syndication Service](#)