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ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

(Ensuring Free, Fair & Democratic Elections & Referendums)



DC/CHAIR/2017/4105

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PRESS RELEASE

The Delimitation Commission of Bhutan is pleased to announce the completion of the Delimitation of the National Assembly Constituencies of Kingdom of Bhutan, 2017 and issue the **Final Delimitation Orders**.

The public hearings and consultations with the public on the Draft Delimitation Plan for the National Assembly Constituencies were successfully completed. This was possible due to the support and cooperation of the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Dzongkhag and Gewog Administrations. In particular, the electorate of Bhutan participated by way of sharing their views and comments during the public hearings held in all the 20 Dzongkhags between 20th of November and 4th of December 2017.

The public hearings were chaired by the six Members of the Delimitation Commission with prime objective to gather views, comments and suggestions on the Draft Plan. The participants included the Gups, Mangmis, Thrompons, Goshay Nyenshays of all 205 Gewogs and the 4 Dzongkhag Thromdes, and also included the officials of the Dzongkhag Administrations and other interested voters.

The Delimitation Commission has deliberated fully upon all the views and comments received from the public. In summary, the responses and the deliberations thereof are:

1. The 6 Dzongkhags of Monggar, Samdrup Jongkhar, Samtse, Sarpang, Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang submitted requests for the additional National Assembly Constituencies considering the geographical areas of the Dzongkhags and the increased number of registered voters. In Gasa and Thimphu, it was proposed to change the boundaries of the existing constituencies such that the high altitude Gewogs could form one constituency and the other Gewogs to be grouped as the other constituency.

The Delimitation Commission, in its 31st Meeting held on 15th and 21st of December 2017, noted the requests for the allocation of additional National Assembly Constituencies, however, it was found that these were not in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Election Act, and the *Delimitation of Demkhong Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2012* which require 10,000 registered voters as the standard size of a National Assembly Constituency, with minimum 2 and maximum 7 constituencies allocation possible for a Dzongkhag and with consideration of other criteria such as equality of voting strength; existing administrative boundaries; accessibility; contiguity and compactness; remoteness and sparseness; and permanent geographical features.

The Commission also noted that any change in the number of seats allocated has to be carefully considered in the context of compelling reasons against the implications of foregoing benefits from existing integration of the administrative and the representative units, as well as confusion and possible inconvenience to the general public. Therefore, the Commission resolved that the existing 47 National Assembly

constituencies to be maintained without change till the next delimitation exercise due in 2027:

(1) Sixteen Dzongkhags namely Bumthang, Chhukha, Dagana, Gasa, Haa, Lhuentse, Paro, Punakha, Samdrup Jongkhar, Sarpang, Thimphu, Trashy Yangtse, Trongsa, Tsirang, Wangdue Phodrang and Zhemgang have the Constitutional minimum of 2 seats each while Monggar and Pema Gatshel have 3 seats each and Samtse and Trashigang have 4 and 5 seats respectively.

(2) Out of the 16 Dzongkhags with 2 seats, 11 have less than 20,000 total Registered Voter Population while 5 Dzongkhags have more than 20,000 but have not reached 30,000 or more, thereby not meeting the prescribed standard voter population size criteria to increase the number of seats allocated.

(3) Of the 4 Dzongkhags allocated more than 2 NA seats:

- i. Monggar Dzongkhag has registered voter population of 32,862 registered voter population as of 8th May 2017 and meets the 10,000 per seat standard requirement for its 3 seats.
- ii. Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag was allocated 3 seats in 2007 in consideration of the-then changes in the overall geographical boundary of the Dzongkhag with three Gewogs of Chhoekhorling, Dechhenling and Norboogang under Nganglam Dungkhag of Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag and Nanong Gewog from Trashigang Dzongkhag being merged to Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag. The newly transferred Nganglam Dungkhag was then allocated one

seat and the rest of the Gewogs and the newly added Nanong gewog were grouped under two *Demkhongs* to maintain and reflect the existing administrative unit as far as possible.

The total registered voters in Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag as of 8th May 2017 is 24,503. By the standard voter population size criterion alone, the existing number of seats could be considered for reduction. However, in view of the implications and consideration of the other criteria related to *Demkhong* boundary corresponding, wherever possible, to existing administrative units and boundaries and the state of accessibility within the Constituency, no change is found necessary and it is decided to maintain the 3 seats for Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag without change.

- iii. Samtse Dzongkhag has registered voter population of 44,957 as of 8th May 2017, and as it meets the 10,000 per seat standard requirement, the 4 seats currently allocated is being maintained without change.
- iv. Trashigang Dzongkhag with a total registered voter population of 33,596 was allocated 5 seats in 2007 to maintain the contiguity of the existing administrative boundaries.

The total registered voters in the Dzongkhag as of 8th May 2017 is 44,525. By the standard size criterion alone, the existing number of seats could be considered for reduction. However, considering the implications in regard to the other criteria related to *Demkhong* boundary corresponding, wherever possible, to existing

administrative units and boundaries as well as the state of accessibility within the Constituency, no change is found necessary and it is decided to maintain the existing 5 seats for Trashigang Dzongkhag.

2. The 11 Dzongkhags of Chhukha, Dagana, Haa, Lhuentse, Monggar, Punakha, Trashigang, Samtse, Trashi Yangtse, Wangdue Phodrang and Zhemgang requested for additional and or relocation of the Polling Stations, focusing on the places where the voters have to walk longer distances to cast their votes and where there are more of aged voters who are not able to make it to the Polling Stations.

The Commission noted that the proposals to relocate or allocate additional Polling Stations should be taken up by the ECB based on review of the proposals submitted by the concerned Dzongkhag Administrations as per the established procedures.

3. The 6 Dzongkhags of Chhukha, Haa, Samtse, Sarpang, Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang requested for additional Local Government constituencies in view of the increasing number of registered voters in the existing constituencies. In Gasa Dzongkhag, a change in existing constituency boundary was proposed.

The Commission resolved that the proposals for changes to the number of Local Government constituencies and boundaries shall be duly noted and taken up during the next Local Government delimitation exercise.

In this regard, the Commission resolved to initiate the process in 2019, soon after the completion of the Third Parliamentary Elections in view of the large number of LG constituencies, comments and proposals for changes raised by the Dzongkhags and adequate time required for the process of public consultations. Starting the exercise in 2019, would to ensure a robust, fruitful and relevant outcome in 2021.

4. During the public hearings, the following proposals were also received that concerned the changes in Dzongkhag and Gewog boundaries and transfer of Mitsi:
 - a. The public of Trashigang Dzongkhag proposed that Benshingmo village to be moved to either Kanglung Gewog or Udzorong Gewog as the village is located along the boundary of Kanglung and Udzorong Gewogs and the residents of this village are split between the two Gewogs with a few households in Kanglung Gewog and a few households in Udzorong Gewog.
 - b. The public of Dagana Dzongkhag requested to realign Gyabling, Pipling, Gumti and Doonglagang villages of Tsenda-gang Gewog to Karmaling Gewog as these villages are very near to Karmaling Gewog.
 - c. The people of Korphu Gewog in Trongsa Dzongkhag have their civil registration under Sarpang Dzongkhag while they physically reside in Korphu Gewog, posing administrative issues relating to availing of services and development activities.

- d. The public of Zhemgang Dzongkhag requested to realign the Dhakphel village of Nangkor Gewog to Trong Gewog as the village is near to Trong Gewog.
- e. In Chhukha Dzongkhag, the people of Lalikha village have their civil registration in Phuentshogling Gewog while they physically live in Doongna Gewog; and that the people of Changkha village have their civil registration in Geling Gewog while living in Phuentshogling Gewog.
- f. Babana, Papaling and Chazi villages of Chhukha Dzongkhag to be transferred to Paro Dzongkhag in view of their proximity and traditional linkages.

The Commission resolved that the changes in the Gewog boundaries proposed in view of proximity of the villages to the next Gewog center or traditional linkages with main village in next Gewog or on grounds for more equitable resource allocation for development purposes, as well as changes in Dzongkhag boundaries would be put up to the Government for consideration by Parliament. This could ideally be done ahead of the next Local Government delimitation exercise.

- 5. Similarly, the management issues related to Thromdes in Bumthang, Haa, Paro, Monggar, Trashy Yangtse and Zhemgang Dzongkhags raised by the public to be communicated to the Government.
- 6. The 3 Dzongkhags of Bumthang, Samtse and Wangdue Phodrang requested for the changes in the names of the Local Government constituencies.

The Delimitation Commission noted that the process of standardizing the names of places to be continued through the Local Government process as well as through the joint initiatives and efforts of the relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, the National Land Commission, the Dzongkhag Development Authority and the ECB. However, the changes in the names of the electoral constituencies shall be as notified in the latest Final Delimitation Orders.

The various views, comments and suggestions expressed in the public hearings related to elections and conduct of elections shall be further deliberated and followed up separately by the Election Commission of Bhutan.

In addition to the public hearings, the Draft Delimitation Plan was hosted on the website of the Election Commission of Bhutan at www.ecb.bt for written comments of the public. No comments, other than those from the public hearings, were received by the Delimitation Commission before 30th of November 2017 which was notified as the last date for the receipt of comments.

The Delimitation Commission, hereby, releases the Final Delimitation Order for the National Assembly Constituencies of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2017, notifying the allocation of 47 National Assembly seats to the twenty Dzongkhags.

Chief Election Commissioner

CHAIRPERSON, DELIMITATION OF BHUTAN