

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN



Handbook for Presiding Officer

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ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

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FOREWORD

Dear Presiding Officer,

With the adoption of the Constitution on the 15th Day of the Second Fifth Month of the Male Rat Year corresponding to 18th of July 2008, the Kingdom of Bhutan was formally established as a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy with the sovereign power bestowed upon the citizens of Bhutan with this sovereign power to be exercised through periodic elections conducted in a free and fair manner.

To ensure that there is consistent application of laws and procedures throughout the Kingdom during elections, the Election Commission has developed this Handbook for the Presiding Officer. Further, this Handbook will guide and assist the Presiding Officers with particular points of practice and procedure in the conduct of polls for ensuring Free, Fair and Democratic elections.

This Handbook must be read thoroughly by the concerned officer upon assuming responsibility. However, it should not be treated as an exhaustive compendium in all aspects or as a substitute reference for various provisions of Electoral Laws of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the various Rules, Regulations, Guidelines and Notifications made in this regard.



(Chogyal Dago Rigdzin)

CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER

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CHAPTER 1 ELECTIONS

Introduction

The Handbook for Presiding Officer is designed to provide information and guidance, for you to perform your functions conduct of elections. However, it may be noted that this Handbook cannot be treated as an exhaustive compendium in all aspects and as a substitute reference for various provisions of electoral laws, rules and regulations.

Five main legislations govern the conduct of elections:

1. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan;
2. The Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008;
3. The Public Election Fund Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008;
4. The National Referendum Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008; and
5. Local Government Amendment Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2014.

You must keep in mind that this handbook should not be treated as exhaustive and must be read in conjunction with the Election Act, 2008, various Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Orders and Notifications made in this regard.

Overview of Elections

Elections will be conducted according to the system of ‘First

Past The Post' (FPTP) where voters will be electing their representatives to Parliament and Local Governments as the case may be, through a single member constituency chosen by direct elections from territorial constituencies/*Demkhongs* in each Dzongkhag.

Elections to the National Assembly differ from the National Council and Local Governments, as independent candidates do not contest in the National Assembly elections. On the other hand, elections to National Council and Local Government elections, only independent candidates not affiliated to any political party or lapse the one-year period from the date of acceptance of the application of resignation and removal from the membership list of a political party will be eligible to contest.

The National Assembly elections are held in two rounds: the first round is called the Primary Round where all registered parties can contest and the two parties obtaining the highest and the second highest number of valid votes cast throughout the Kingdom shall be declared eligible to contest in the second round, namely the General Elections. In the General Elections, each of the two parties eligible to contest will field a candidate in all of the Constituencies/*Demkhongs*. The Party winning the maximum number of seats in the National Assembly would be the Ruling Party and the other, the Opposition Party.

The National Council election is held to elect one member from each Dzongkhag for representation in the National Council. For this purpose, each Dzongkhag will form a *Demkhong* for the National Council with twenty seats being filled through direct election of one candidate from each of the twenty Dzongkhags.

The Local Government Election in Bhutan comprises the election to Dzongkhag *Tshogdus*, Gewog *Tshogdes* and Dzongkhag *Thromde Tshogdes*.

A Dzongkhag *Tshogdu* shall comprise of all *Gups* and *Mangmis* elected to Gewog *Tshogdes* of the concerned Dzongkhag and one each elected representative from the Dzongkhag *Thromde* and Dzongkhag *Yenglag Thromde*.

A Gewog *Tshogde* shall comprise of a *Gup* and a *Mangmi* elected by the respective Gewogs with a minimum of five and maximum of eight Gewog *Tshogde Tshogpas* from every *Chiwogs* assigned to a particular Gewog.

A Dzongkhag *Thromde Tshogde* shall comprise of a *Thrompon* elected by the voters of Dzongkhag *Thromde* with a minimum of six and maximum of nine Dzongkhag *Thromde Tshogde Tshogpas* elected from each Dzongkhag *Thromde Demkhong* equal to the number of seats allocated to the

particular Dzongkhag *Thromde*.

Election Officials

The Election Act provides that the Election Commission can deploy any officer or staff of the Government including election security personnel. All persons so employed will be deemed to be on deputation to the Commission and are subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Commission, during the period for which they are so employed.

The Election Officials appointed for the conduct of election includes Chief Election Coordinators, Deputy Chief Election Coordinators, Assistant Chief Election Coordinators, Media Arbitrator, members for Election Dispute Settlement Bodies, Spokespersons, Observers, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Polling Officers, Polling Assistants and Counting Supervisors. The Observers are appointed to oversee and report on the manner in which elections are conducted. The Returning Officer is the Officer-In-Charge of elections in a Dzongkhag/*Demkhong*.

It must be borne in mind that all Election Officials must be apolitical and further, must ensure that they are not posted to the Dzongkhag/*Demkhong* where he/she has his *Gung* or *Mitsi* registered.

The Assistant Returning Officer, Presiding Officer and Counting Supervisor reports to the Returning Officer. In the polling station, the Presiding Officer conducts the elections assisted by the Polling Officer and Polling Assistant. The Counting Supervisor carries out the counting of votes at the close of polls.

In addition, the Election Commission will also be using the services of the election security personnel through the Election Security Coordinator at the Royal Bhutan Police Headquarter and Superintendent of Police in the respective Dzongkhags to ensure safe and free fair conduct of elections.

Employment Conditions

For effective and efficient discharge of the duties of the Election Officials, the Commission will ensure that a conducive and safe working environment is provided during their temporary appointment. The Election Officers who are posted in remote areas where there is no or poor accommodation will be provided with some temporary shed or tents to accommodate well. The Gewog Administration should give full co-operation in arranging polling stations with the electorate in-charges. The election officers who are medically fit should be sent longer distance to avoid inconveniences.

All entitlements due to the Election Officials so appointed will be governed by existing Financial Rules and Regulations (FRR). The entitlements will be provided by the Election Commission of Bhutan. Arrangements for accommodation and food during the temporary appointments must be made by yourself and the cost met from the Daily Allowance (D.A) admissible to you.

CHAPTER 2

PRESIDING OFFICER

Introduction

As a Presiding Officer, you have an important role to play in the conduct of poll. You enjoy full legal power to control the proceedings in the polling station under your charge. It is your primary duty to ensure a free and fair poll at your polling station

It is necessary for this purpose to acquaint yourself fully with the relevant Rules, Regulations, Guidelines and directions of the Election Commission and other relevant laws and procedures in relation to the conduct of elections. Further, you must familiarize yourself with the various stages of the election process and the operation of the Electronic Voting Machines. The slight mistake, lapse, or wrong application of the law or rules or inadequate of various functions of the voting machine may vitiate the poll at your polling station.

Appointment of Presiding Officers

The Presiding Officer during his/her appointment is subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission. As per the criteria developed by the Commission, the Presiding Officer is appointed from the civil service above Position Level P5. The appointment is of temporary nature.

Appointment to the post of Presiding Officer will be made not later than three days (or depending upon the distance of travel to polling station) before the date of poll. The appointment letter will indicate the number and name of polling station at which you will be on duty. However, the Commission reserves the right to revoke such appointment or change the polling station assigned at any time.

Unavoidable Absence of Presiding Officer

In case of unavoidable absence of Presiding Officer from the Polling Station, a Polling Officer will be authorized by the Returning Officer to perform the duties of Presiding Officer. Therefore, one Polling Officer from the three Polling Officers of the Polling Station must be identified in advance for such unforeseen circumstances.

Unavoidable Absence of Polling Officer

In the case of unavoidable absence of Polling Officer appointed for your polling station, you have the authority to appoint a suitable substitute. The appointment will later have to be communicated formally to the Returning Officer. However, under any circumstances, appointments should not be made for a person who is an active supporter or worker of any of the candidates or an active opponent of any candidates.

Law Relating to Corrupt Practices & Electoral Offences

For free and fair elections and guidance of the contesting candidates, you should draw attention of the contesting candidates or their representatives to the corrupt practices and electoral offences in the Election Act, 2008 and offences relating to elections contained in Penal Code of Bhutan.

CHAPTER 3

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Introduction

As a Presiding Officer, you are required to provide service to the voters in fulfillment of the constitutional provision, which enshrines the right to vote as a fundamental right. The Election Commission considers this right of paramount importance and as a Presiding Officer; you must treat the voters and candidates with utmost respect and courtesy. Your main responsibility is to ensure that the elections are conducted in a free and fair manner in the polling station under your charge.

Broad Duties of a Presiding Officer

The general outlines of your duties are as follows:

1. Acquaint fully with the latest rules and procedures prescribed for the conduct of poll;
2. Familiarize thoroughly with the operation of the voting machine and the functions of various buttons and switches provided therein;
3. Familiarize with the duties of the three Polling Officers as provided in the Handbooks for Polling Officer and Counting Supervisor;
4. Maintain good working relationship with members of your polling team;
5. Have a clear idea of the location of your polling station

- and your itinerary to and from the polling station;
6. Ensure Polling station has two doors which could be used as separate entry and exit points;
 7. Provide guidance and necessary assistance to the Polling Officers under your charge;
 8. Ensure that the Polling Officers are given proper briefings and instructions on their duties. For example, you must ensure that the Officers direct voters to the correct places in the polling station without undue delay;
 9. Must keep in ready possession of all relevant instructions of the Returning Officer (s) and Assistant Returning Officer;
 10. In an extended Polling Station, Polling Official 1 will act as Presiding Officer.
 11. Should attend all rehearsals and training sessions without fail;
 12. Ensure that, while collecting election materials, all items required for the conduct of election have been handed over to you;
 13. Regulate the proceedings in the polling station for peaceful and smooth conduct of poll;
 14. Must be thorough with SMS Application for sending two hourly voter turnout reports;
 15. Ensure that at least the 1st Polling Officer knows how to operate computer to be used during the poll day; and
 16. Familiarize w0ith all the Checklists and Forms and

ensure when to use them.

Duties at Commencement of poll

On arrival at the polling station, you should have a clear idea of the arrangements to be made for setting up a proper polling station especially to secure secrecy of voting, regulation of queue of voters and protection of poll proceedings free from outside interference. For an ideal Polling Station, refer blueprints given in Fig 7.1. Polls will generally commence at 9.00 a.m. unless otherwise directed by the Commission.

The outline of duty at the commencement of poll will include:

1. Cautioning the candidates or their representatives present and the Polling Officers, before the commencement of poll, about the consequences of the breach of secrecy;
2. Demonstrating the EVM to the polling representatives present, before the commencement of poll to satisfy them that no votes are already recorded therein;
3. Demonstrating that the machine is in perfect working condition. A mock poll should be held by recording a few votes at random for each of the contesting candidates and tallying the result; and
4. Clearing data relating to the mock poll from the EVM so that no memory remains of the votes recorded at the mock poll. The “Control Unit” of the EVM should then be sealed and secured.

Duties at the Close of Poll

Polls must be closed at 5.00 p.m. or at the hour fixed for the purpose by the Election Commission, even if the commencement of poll was delayed for any reason.

The outline of duty after the close of poll will include:

1. EVM and all election materials must be sealed and secured after the close of poll, in the manner prescribed by the Commission. The candidates or their representatives present should also affix their seals on the EVM and the election papers in addition to your seal; and
2. Handing over the EVM and all election material duly sealed and secured personally to the Returning Officer or an officer designated for the collection thereof.

Other Duties

You are personally responsible for the:

1. Safe custody of the EVMs and all election materials;
2. Transportation of the EVMs, election materials from the Distribution Centre to the Polling Station;
3. Positioning of the EVMs during the poll; and
4. Voting activities at the polling station.

Further, at the time of counting of votes, if you are appointed as the Counting Supervisor by the Returning Officer, you

must refer the Handbook for the Counting Supervisor for the consistent application of laws and procedures in the counting and announcement of results.

Polling Rehearsals and Training

It is the responsibility of the Presiding Officer to attend all trainings organized by the Dzongkhag Electoral Officer so that you are well acquainted with the correct procedure to be followed on the polling day.

Further, you must ensure that every Polling Officer under your charge attend the polling rehearsals so that they are also thorough with the operation of the EVM and the procedures to be followed on the polling day.

You must at the training collect the following documents from the

Dzongkhag Electoral Officer without fail:

1. Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2018
2. Election Security Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2012;
3. Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2018;
4. Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2018
5. Forty-Eight Hour No Campaign Period before

- Commencement of Poll and the Poll Day Rules, 2018;
6. Guidelines for Implementation of Section 323 of the Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008 regarding the Physically Challenged and Remote Area Voters, 2018;
 7. Handbook for Presiding Officer;
 8. Handbook for Polling Officer; and
 9. Handbook for Counting Officer.

CHAPTER 4

ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMS)

Introduction to EVMs

The EVM consists of two units namely the “Ballot Unit” and the “Control Unit” which are inter-connected by means of a cable. The two units are supplied in two separate cases, which is easy to transport.

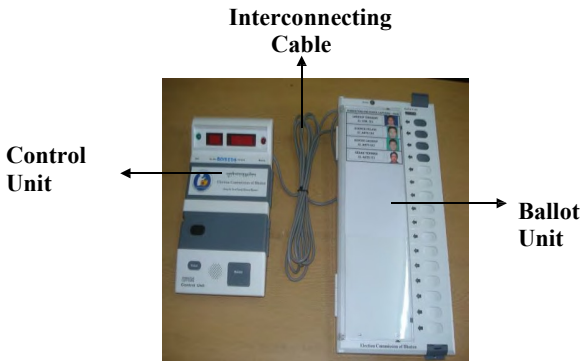


Fig. 4.1: The Electronic Voting Machine

Each of the Ballot Unit caters to a maximum of 16 candidates. The Ballot Unit has a provision for a ballot paper containing the particulars of the candidate such as the name of the candidate, photograph and the symbol reserved for him (refer **Fig. 4.2 (a) and (b)**).



ELECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL	
<p>འཇིགས་མེད་ཚོལ་གློ་ན།</p> <p>Jigme Choden</p>	
<p>དཀར་མ་དཔྱངས་རབས།</p> <p>Karma Sungrab</p>	

Fig. 4.2 (a): Example of Ballot Paper for National Council

ELECTIONS TO GEWOG TSHOGDE



<p>འཇིགས་མེད་ཚོལ་གློ་ན།</p> <p>Jigme Choden</p>	
<p>དཀར་མ་དཔྱངས་རབས།</p> <p>Karma Sungrab</p>	

Fig. 4.2 (b): Example of Ballot Paper for *Gewog Tshogde (Local Government)*

The candidate nominated by a political party shall use the name and symbol of its political party (refer **Fig. 4.3** and **Fig. 4.4**). The font size of the letters used for the label shall be a minimum of 8 millimeters and this is sufficiently legible by a person with normal vision from a distance of one metre.





PRIMARY ROUND OF ELECTIONS TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	
X ཚོགས་པ། X PARTY	
Y ཚོགས་པ། Y PARTY	
Z ཚོགས་པ། Z PARTY	
A ཚོགས་པ། A PARTY	

Fig. 4.3: Example of Ballot Paper for Primary Round



Fig. 4.4: Example of Ballot Paper for General Round

The voter, to cast vote, must press the button opposite the name and symbol of the candidate or party of his or her choice. When the button is pressed, a red light will glow alongside the button that will indicate that the vote has been recorded.

Four “Ballot Units” can be connected to a “Control Unit” at one time, that is to say a single “Control Unit” can cater up to 64 candidates.

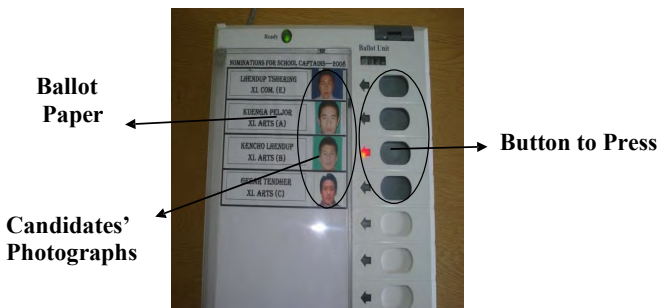


Fig. 4.5: Ballot Unit

Features on the EVM

On the “Control Unit” there is a display section on the top. Below the display section, there is the “Cand Set Section” which contains two compartments the first compartment where the batteries are inserted and the second where the “Cand Set Button” is found and is used for setting the machine for the number of candidates (refer **Fig 4.6**).

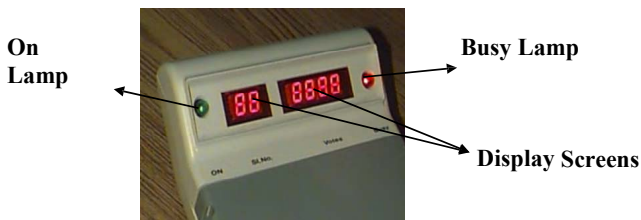
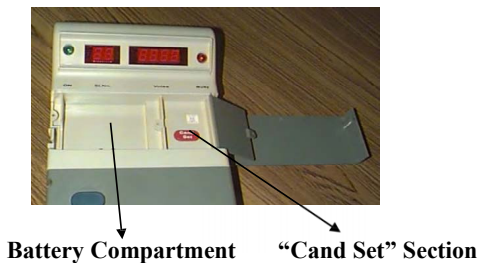


Fig. 4.6: The Top Part

Next to the “Cand Set Section” is the “Result Section”. This section contains three buttons namely the “Close Poll Button”, “Result” button and the “Clear” button. The “Close Button” is used for closing the poll, the “Result” button for ascertaining the results and the “Clear” button for erasing the data recorded. The “Close” button once pressed will ensure that no further votes can be recorded (refer **Fig. 4.7**).



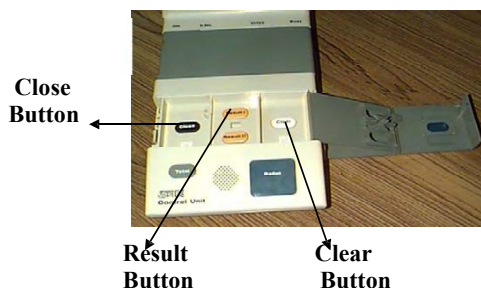


Fig. 4.7: “Cand Set” and “Result” Sections

On the lower portion of the “Control Unit” is the “Ballot Section” which contains the “Ballot” button and “Total” button. The “Ballot” button when pressed will make the “Balloting Unit” ready for recording vote. The “Total” button when pressed will display the total votes cast at that point of time, however this will not give the candidate-wise break up (**Fig 4.8**). For further information on the EVM’s, you are required to read the EVM manual and the EVM Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan prepared by the Commission.



Fig. 4.8: The Lower Part

Safe Preservation of Voting Machines

The voting machines when not in use should be stored in a well secured storeroom. Likewise, proper arrangements and storage should be made for their safe custody and preservation after the completion of the election and during the period for which they are required to be so preserved under relevant directions of the Commission.

After the expiry of the period, if no election petition or appeal is pending, the machines may be removed and handed over to the Dzongkhag Electoral Officer.

For the safe and proper storage of voting machines in the secure storeroom, you can follow the instructions given by the manufacturing companies.

CHAPTER 5

COMMISSIONING OF EVM

Introduction

Elections at the polling station will be conducted with the use of EVMs. As the Presiding Officer for a polling station, you should be thorough in the operation of EVM as per the EVM manual and the *EVM Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, 2018 prepared by the Commission. A slight mistake, lapse or wrong application of the law or rules or inadequate knowledge of various functions of the EVM may vitiate the poll at your polling station.

Preparations for the commissioning of the EVMs must start about an hour before the time fixed for the commencement of the poll. The preparations have to be done by you at the polling stations in the presence of the candidates/their polling representatives.

Ballot Unit

The “Ballot Unit” is already duly prepared by the Returning Officer in all respects and no further preparation of this Unit is required on the date of poll, except that its interconnecting cable has to be plugged to the “Control Unit”. Further you have to check that:

1. The Ballot Paper is properly fixed in the Ballot Display Panel under the Ballot paper screen (refer **Fig 4.5**); and
2. The two seals put by the Returning Officer at the top and

the bottom portion on the right-hand side is intact.

Control Unit

In the “Control unit” the seal of the Returning Officer on the “Candidate Set” Section on the left side should be intact. Thereafter, you should open the Bottom compartment of the Unit and take the following steps:

1. Connect the “Ballot Unit” to the “Control Unit” by plugging the connector of the Interconnecting cable in the socket in the said compartment;
2. Put the “Power” switch to “ON” position. It will give a beep sound and the “ON” lamp on the “Display Section” of the “Control Unit” will glow “RED”; and
3. Close the Bottom Compartment (refer **Fig 4.6** and **Fig 4.7**).

If any seal on the EVM is broken, you must report to the Returning Officer or the Assistant Returning Officer and immediately requisition for a new EVM. The report must be recorded in the Presiding Officer’s Diary.

Mock Poll

A mock poll should be held before the preparation of the EVM. For that purpose, perform the following operations:

1. Press the “Ballot” button on the “Ballot Section” of the “Control Unit”. On pressing the “Ballot” button, a “Busy” lamp in the Display Section will glow “RED”.

Simultaneously, the “Ready” lamp on the “Ballot Unit” will also start glowing “GREEN”;

2. Ask any polling representatives to press, according to his/her choice, any of the Candidates button on the “Balloting Unit”;
3. On the Candidate's button being so pressed, the candidate's lamp near the switch will start glowing “RED”. In addition, a beep sound will emit from the “Control Unit”. After a few seconds, the “RED” light in the candidate's lamp, “RED” light in the “Busy” lamp and “GREEN” light in the “Ready” lamp and the beep sound will go off simultaneously. This will be the indication that the vote for the candidate, whose button has been pressed, has been recorded in the “Control Unit” and the machine is now ready to receive the next vote;
4. Repeat the process explained in the preceding paras (1), (2) and (3) for recording one or more votes for each of the remaining candidates. Keep a careful account of the votes so recorded in respect of each candidate;
5. When the votes are being so recorded, press the “Total” button on the “Ballot Section” to verify at any time that the total votes recorded in the machine tally with the number of votes which have been polled up to that stage;
6. At the end of the mock poll, press the “Close” button in the “Result Section”;
7. Now press the button marked “Result” button in the “Result Section” so that the display panels will start to

- show the results of the mock poll;
8. Finally, press the “Clear” button to clear the account of votes recorded during the mock voting. On the “Clear” button being so pressed, all counters will show zero (000); and
 9. After the votes are being cleared, once again press the “Total” button on the “Ballot Section” to ensure that the total votes in the machine also shows zero (000).

Sealing of Control Unit

You must keep in mind that sealing of Control Unit must be properly done and the sealing must immediately follow the completion of the mock poll. The Presiding Officer shall put his seal and signature on the green paper seal, special tag and strip seal. The Polling Representatives of candidates or parties, if they so desire, may also put their seals and signature on the green paper seal, special tag and strip seal.

The Presiding Officer shall, after sealing the machines, place the Control Unit on the table of the Polling Officer 3 and the Ballot Unit in the voting compartment, while making sure that the inter- connecting cables are routed in such a way that it does not come in the way of the voters or polling personnel.

You must make necessary arrangements for the safekeeping of the seals provided to you.

Sealing of Result Section

Before the commencement of the actual poll, the “Result Section” should be sealed. The sealing of the “Result Section” will involve firstly the fixing of the “Green Paper Seal” (refer **Fig 5.1**) in the frame provided for the purpose on the inner side of the door of the inner compartment. The seal should be so fixed that its green surface is seen through the apertures from the outer side. These seals have been printed specially by the Election Commission on Security paper serially numbered.

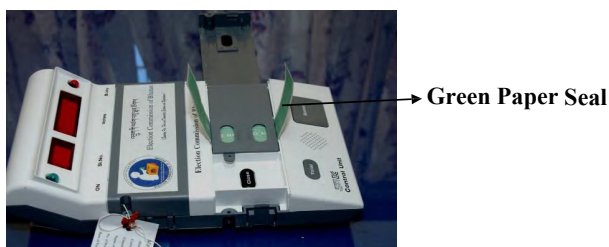


Fig. 5.1: Green Paper Seal

Then the door of the inner compartment should be closed in such a manner that the two open ends of the paper seal project outwards from the sides of the inner compartment. On the white surface of the paper seal, so projecting outwards, you should affix your signature in full immediately below the serial number of the seal. It shall also be signed by the candidates/polling representatives as are present if they so desire. Note down the serial number of the paper seal used and allow the candidates/polling representatives present to note down the

numbers.

Finally, seal the inner door by passing a thread through the two holes provided for the purpose on the left side of the inner door and seal it with the Control Unit's "Address Tag" over the "Close" button. Ensure to put seal and signature of Presiding Officer along with the polling representatives of the candidates.

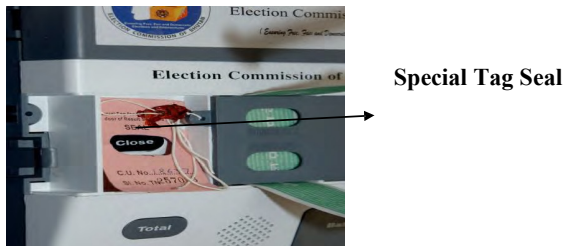


Fig. 5.2: Closing Result Button with Special Tag

Closing of Result Section

The outer cover of the "Result Section" has to be pressed for closing this section. Before pressing the outer cover, fold the open ends of the Green Paper Seal neatly in such a manner that no part of the paper seal protrudes from either side of the cover.

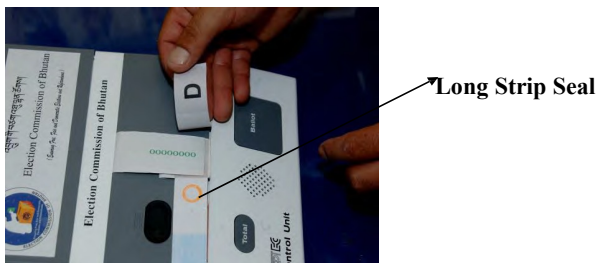


Fig. 5.3: Sealing with Long Strip Seal

After pressing the outer cover, the “Result Section” should be sealed by passing a thread through the two holes provided for the purpose on the left side of the outer cover and putting a thread seal with the seal of the Presiding Officer.



Fig. 5.4: Seal with Address Tag

Place the “Balloting Unit” inside the voting compartment. This compartment should be located at sufficient distance from the table of the third Polling Officer where the “Control Unit” shall be kept and operated. Now the EVM is ready in all respects for use in actual poll.



Fig. 5.5: Ready Control Unit

CHAPTER 6

DISTRIBUTION DAY

Introduction

On the Distribution Day, you must report before 8.30 a.m. or as directed by the Returning Officer during refresher course to the Distribution center to receive the EVM and other election material. The distribution of EVMs and election materials by the Returning Officer will begin early depending on the distance you need to travel on that day. You can instruct any Polling Officer under your charge to assist you with the transportation of the EVMs and other election materials.

From the date of receipt, you must ensure safe and secure custody and transportation of EVMs and other election materials to the Polling Station. After the completion of poll, the EVMs and election materials should be handed over to the Returning Officer or any officer designated by him. The Returning Officer will arrange transport for the polling team and election security personnel accompanying election materials to and from the Polling Station.

You must ensure that you and your Polling Officer accompanying you wear the official badge provided to you by the Returning Officer at the Distribution Centre.

Election Materials and EVMs

You are supplied with the necessary polling materials, including one complete EVM, consisting of a “Control Unit” and such number of “Balloting Units” as is to be used at the polling stations having regard to the number of contesting candidates. A standard list of such polling materials is given in Election Materials as in **Presiding Officer Form No. 2**.

You must keep the signed copy of the Voter’s List and all other items provided to you in a bag. You must stick the Polling Place Identification Label on the EVM and outside of the Bag. Then you will leave the Distribution Centre with the Set-up Bag and you should contact and inform all Polling Officers on the date and place for convening the instructional meetings.

Check the stationery and other items, voters list and ballot papers based on the prescribed checklist before you leave the distribution Centre.

Voter’s List

During the collection of election materials, you must check that the voter’s list contains the following:

1. Voter’s Serial No;
2. Name in full;
3. Sex of voters;
4. Date of birth;
5. Voter Photo Identity Card No;

6. Passport size photograph of the voters; and
7. Station and number.

Only persons whose names appear in the Voter's List will be allowed to vote at that particular polling station. On no account should their names be manually written in even though they produce Citizenship Identity Cards. Further, to facilitate searching, the range of Serial Nos. in each page should be is printed at the top right-hand corner of the page.

Electronic Voting Machine

At the time of issue of EVM, a spot test must be conducted for the machine so that in case of defect including cases where seal affixed by the Returning Officer on the EVM is broken, it can be returned or changed with another.

Check, in particular, the following that:

1. You have been supplied with the requisite number of balloting units and the ballot papers are duly fixed under the Ballot Paper Screen in each of them.
2. Control unit and the balloting unit(s) of the voting machine given to you are the same, which are meant for use at your polling station. This shall be checked with reference to the address tags attached to the said units as the number and name of the polling station shall be indicated by the Returning Officer on each of those address tags.

(a) The address tag for control unit will contain the following particulars:

Election to from
..... constituency
Control unit No.....

Sl. No. and Name of Polling Station Date of Poll.....

(b) The address tag for balloting unit will contain the following particulars:

Election to from
..... constituency
Balloting unit No.....

Sl. No. and Name of Polling Station..... Date of Poll.....

3. The “Cand Set Section” of control unit is duly sealed and the address tag is firmly attached.
4. The battery installed in the “Cand Set Section” of the control unit is fully operational. This may be checked by putting the Power Switch provided in the rear compartment to “ON” position. The power switch must be then put to “OFF” position.
5. The candidate’s buttons which are visible on the balloting units are equal to the number of contesting candidates, and that the remaining buttons, if any, have been masked.
6. Each of the balloting units is duly sealed and secured at

two places, i.e. at right top and right bottom portions, with the seals of the Returning Officer, and that the address tags are firmly attached thereto.

Further, you must also ensure that the ballot paper aligned on the EVM contains:

- (a) The name and party symbol of candidate contesting in the constituency in the case of National Assembly elections are in the same order as the pre-printed authenticated order; and
 - (b) The name, party symbol or photographs of the candidate contesting in the constituency are in the same order as pre-printed authenticated order.
7. Further, you must also take an Undertaking as in the prescribed **EVM Form No. 3** from the Polling Officer III that he/she is fully conversant with the operation of the Control Unit of the EVM.

CHAPTER 7

PRE- POLL DAY

Introduction

The Dzongkhag Electoral Officer with the approval of the Election Commission will provide sufficient number of polling stations for a Dzongkhag/*Demkhong* not less than 30 days before the date of poll. Thereafter a list of Polling Station in a constituency and the polling areas will be published. Transportation for the Presiding Officer, Polling Team and Security Personnel accompanying the EVMs and Election Materials to the polling station will be provided by the Returning Officer.

You must be familiar with the name of each village covered by the Polling Station, the territorial extent of the polling station and the number of voters in the polling area. Prior to the polling day, you must arrange for your Polling Officers to visit the Polling Station to make the necessary preparations for the conduct of polls.

It is required under law that no polling station will be cancelled before the completion of poll after it has been provided and published. However, it may be done only after obtaining prior approval of the Election Commission.

Polling Station Arrangements

On arrival at the polling station, you should have a clear idea of

the arrangements to be made for setting up a proper polling station especially to secure secrecy of voting, regulation of queue of voters, protection of poll proceedings free from outside interference, etc.

As far as practicable the polling booth should be as spacious as possible, so that there is no congestion inside the polling station. The polling booths must be well-lit.

Polling arrangement must be made taking into consideration the following:

1. There is enough space for the voters to wait outside the polling station;
2. There is easy flow of voters inside the polling station and there are no crisscrossing movements within the polling station;
3. The inside of the voting compartment is sufficiently lit. If necessary, arrangements for proper lighting must be made;
4. Voting compartments are correctly and securely placed so as to prevent anyone from seeing a voter cast his vote; and
5. Posters containing the following information are properly displayed:
 - a) Name and number of constituency and the polling station;
 - b) Directions for the guidance of voters; and
 - c) Names and symbols of Candidates in the pre-printed

authenticated order.

Thereafter, you will start to set up the polling station. You will lead the Polling Officers in the setup of the polling station as follows:

1. Properly set up or arrange the furniture including voting compartment;
2. Tie Polling Station Demarcation tapes along the perimeter of the polling station to guide the movement of voters;
3. Assemble chairs, tables, and other furniture in the polling station and install and test electronics and other communication equipment to be used;
4. Display the notices at the gate or entrance to the polling station;
5. Check to ensure unencumbered access for voters and also clear view of the polling booth for effective supervision;
6. Check within 100 meters of the polling station for election advertisement and have it removed;
7. Place all other items, including drinking water, lanterns, paper bags containing forms and envelopes in proper and safe places; and
8. Test the telephone and facsimile machine, if available.
9. Check that the mobile network is working in the area to send reports to Election Commission of Bhutan and Returning Officer.

In addition, the following furniture, materials and equipment must be made available:

1. A table each for the “Control Unit” and the “Balloting Unit”;
2. Tables and chairs for the Polling Officer, Polling Assistants and Polling Representatives;
3. Voting Compartment with correct specification and in proper condition;
4. Telecommunications links, mobile network to relay reports; and
5. Few additional chairs for voters with disability.

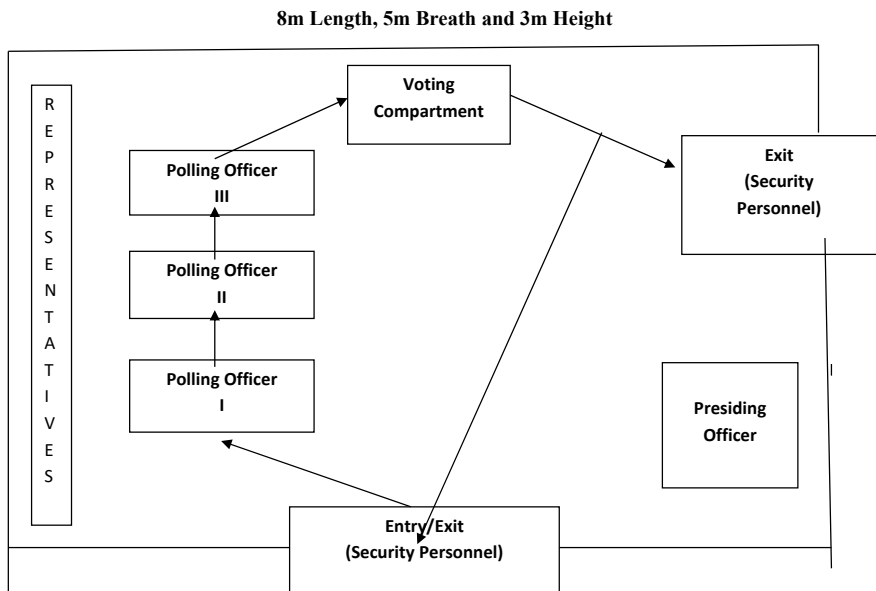


Fig. 7.1: Proposed Layout of Polling Station for Elections

CHAPTER 8

POLL DAY

Introduction

Poll is the most important event in the election process. It is through the poll that the voters express their choice of their political parties and candidate to represent them. Any irregularity in the conduct of poll may vitiate the election and, therefore, you should ensure that the poll is conducted strictly in accordance with the law and the prescribed procedure.

You will attend to the election candidate (s), their representatives and media where necessary as well as handling any enquiry from the public and coordinating activities concerning them.

You must ensure that you and your Polling Officers wear the official badge provided to you by the Returning Officer at the Polling Station.

Commencement of Poll

The polling must generally commence at 9 am or at an hour fixed for such commencement by the Election Commission. You and your Polling Team must arrive the polling station not later than 7.00 am and make a final check of the polling station, so as to ensure that all election equipment and paraphernalia are in working condition.

At the commencement of poll, you have to make a declaration as prescribed in the Declaration by the Presiding Officer Before the Commencement of the Poll as in **Presiding Officer Form No.4** about the demonstration of the EVM, display of the marked copy of the Voter's List, the Register of Voters to candidates or their polling representatives present and get it signed by them.

Make a final check of the polling station, so as to ensure that all election equipment and paraphernalia are in working condition. You must also look out for displayed posters and banners within 100 meters of the polling station.

The Polling Representatives of candidates are expected to arrive, before 8 am however non-attendance by any representative of the candidate or political party should not hinder the commencement of poll.

Attendance of Polling Representative and Candidates

Polling representatives of candidates are expected to arrive, before 8 am and each of them must handover their Letter of Appointment to you. Verify and check the Appointment Letter signed by the Candidate or their Election Representative before admitting any polling representative into the polling station. In the case of any candidates visiting the polling station, you should ask to see his identity card for identification.

However, it should be noted that the non-attendance by any representative of the candidate or political party does not invalidate the act, if the act is done in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Persons Entitled to Enter the Polling Stations

Apart from the voters assigned to your polling station as per the Voter's List, the following persons can be admitted into the Polling Station:

1. Polling Officers;
2. Polling Assistants;
3. Lady Security;
4. Each Candidate or his/her Polling Representatives;
5. Persons authorized by the Commission;
6. Public servants on duty in connection with election;
7. Observers and Micro-Observers appointed by the Commission;
8. Nodal-Officers;
9. A child in arms accompanying a voter;
10. A person accompanying a physically challenged voter; and
11. Such other persons as you may from time to time admit for the purpose of identifying voters or otherwise assisting you in taking the poll.

Instructions for Presiding Officers

During the actual conduct of polls, the Presiding Officer must:

1. Allow Polling Representatives to observe the voting but ensure that they do not interfere with the polling process;
2. Care for the aged and the physically challenged voters and it is your duty to maintain a List of voters living with Disability as prescribed in the **Presiding Officer Form No. 6**;
3. Accompany physically challenged voters who do not have a companion;
4. Maintain proper order and discipline in the polling station and ensure that voting progresses smoothly and efficiently. This includes supervising Polling Officers and promptly resolving any problems they encounter; and
5. Be helpful and courteous to the voters and be prompt in attending to any other matters that may arise. It is essential that you make the right decision in such cases. You require much tact, but at the same time you should be firm and impartial.

You may, if requested by a voter, explain to the voter, in the presence of all, the method of voting but should take care not to perform any action that may be construed by onlookers as influencing the voter to vote for a particular candidate.

Further, you may, if requested by physically challenged voter, assist in taking him to the voting compartment, to cast his vote

according to his instructions. Secrecy of the vote cast must be maintained at all times.

Procedures for Casting Vote

The First Polling Officer verifies the identity of voters with reference to his entry in the Voter's List and the Voter Photo Identity Card (VPIC) issued by the Commission.

After verification, the Second Polling Officer obtains the signature or thumb impression of the voter on the Register of Voters and the serial number of the voter as given in the marked copy of the Voter's List are noted in the Register of Voters. Voters refusing to put signature or thumb impression will not be permitted to vote. An entry such as "Refused to vote" will be made in the remarks column of the Register of Voters and signed by you and the voter.

Thereafter, the voter's finger is marked with an indelible ink and issued a Voter's Slip the sample of which is as prescribed in **Presiding Officer Form No.3** showing the serial number at which the entry relating to him has been made in the Register of Voters.

Then, the Third Polling Officer inspects the indelible ink mark on the finger of the voter. The voter is then permitted to record his vote in the EVM on the basis of the Voters' Slips in the strict order in which they have been entered in the Register of Voters.

It should be ensured that only one voter is admitted inside the voting compartment to vote. Special care should be taken to ensure that a voter goes in that compartment in the same order in which his/her serial number is entered in the Register of Voters. Also ensure that the “Ballot” button is pressed only when the earlier voter has come out of the voting compartment.

In an Extended Polling Station, it shall be conducted by 3 Polling Officers wherein Polling Officer 1 shall also act as the Presiding Officer and Polling Officers II and III shall carry the tasks as in all other Polling Stations.

Procedure for Casting Provisional Vote

A Provisional Vote is given when a voter at the polling station finds that his/her name is already struck off in the Voter’s List indicating that he/she has cast his vote.

In such instances, the voter should sign the Oath of Identity as prescribed in **Presiding Officer Form No. 10** declaring that he/she has not voted earlier. You should make a 2nd strike across the voter’s particulars in the Voter’s List and fill the voter’s particulars in the Provisional Voter’s List. Further, the serial number of the voter is to be noted on the List of Provisional Votes as prescribed in **Presiding Officer Form No. 8**, which is to be kept in an envelope, marked “Provisional Votes List”.

Thereafter, the voter is given a “Provisional Ballot Paper” with

the name and serial number of the voter clearly written at the back of the ballot paper. The time of issue of the Provisional Ballot Paper must be immediately recorded in the Voter's List. It should be noted that a voter given Provisional Vote cannot cast his/her vote in the EVM but make his/her preference in the Provisional Ballot Paper provided by you.

Procedure for Conducting Summary Inquiry for Challenged Voters

A summary inquiry may be conducted by you if an identity of a voter is challenged. In such instances, the challenger may be asked to produce evidence that the voter is not the person he/she claims to be. If the challenger fails to provide evidence in support of his/her challenge, the challenge may be considered as not established and the challenged voter allowed to vote.

However, if the challenger succeeds in making out a case that the person is not the voter in question, you should call upon the latter to produce evidence to rebut the challenge i.e. to prove that he/she is the voter he/she claims to be. If he/she proves his/her claim by such evidence, allow him/her to vote after filling in the form for the List of Challenged Voter as prescribed in **Presiding Officer Form No. 9**. If he/she fails to do so, the challenge may be considered as established and the challenged voter disallowed from voting.

Once the challenge has been established, you should hand over

the person to the policeman on duty, together with your complaint addressed to the Officer-In-Charge of the Police Station under whose jurisdiction your polling station falls.

During the summary inquiry, you are free to ascertain the fact from the elders and neighbors of the voter in question and any other person present. You may administer an oath to the person challenged or any other person offering to give evidence.

Maintenance of the Presiding Officer's Diary

During the conduct of poll, you should maintain a "Presiding Officer's Diary" to record the proceedings of conducting polls in the polling station as prescribed **Presiding Officer Form No. 5**. You must go on recording the relevant events as and when they occur.

Further, you must record in the Presiding Officer's Diary the total number of votes polled hour by hour since the commencement of the poll. For this purpose, "Total" button should be pressed. The display panel will then show the total number of votes polled by that time. Please remember that the "Total" button is to be pressed only when the 'Busy' lamp is "Off".

It should be noted that any lapse on your part in the proper maintenance of diary at all points of time during the process of poll will be viewed seriously by the Commission.

Removal of Disorderly Persons

Any person who misconducts himself or fails to obey your lawful directions during the poll may be removed from the polling station on your orders by any Police Officer or other persons authorized by you.

CHAPTER 9

CLOSE OF POLL

Introduction

The Poll generally closes at 5.00 pm sharp or at such time as the Commission specifies and no voter should be allowed in the polling station after such time. Any voter in the polling station before such time should be given a slip so that only those present in the polling station premises on or before 5.00 pm can vote. The slip must be distributed starting from the end of the queue.

Result Declaration and Sealing of EVM

On expiry of the hour fixed for the close of poll, the Presiding Officer who is also the Counting Supervisor will count the result for his/her polling station on the EVM used for the Poll. For details on result counting, please refer to handbook on Counting Supervisor. Immediately after the result counting, Presiding Officer must invite the polling representatives for sealing of EVM and to sign or affix their seals if they wish to do so.

For sealing the EVM, you will have to perform the following operations:

1. Switch “OFF” the EVM by pushing Power Switch in the “Control Unit” to “OFF” position;
2. Remove the interconnecting cable;
3. Close the bottom compartment;

4. Put back the “Balloting Unit” and “Control Unit” in their respective carrying cases;
5. Seal the carrying cases by passing the thread through the two holes provided for the purpose on both sides of the carrying cases;
6. Put thread seal on the prescribed address tag showing the particulars of the polling station with the Presiding Officer's seal and also the seals of such polling representatives as are present and desirous of putting their seals. While sealing proper care should be taken to see that the direct flame does not come in contact with carrying cases and the molten wax does not fall on any part of the machine; and
7. Now the EVM is ready to be transported from the polling station to the counting place.

Under exceptional circumstances, in the case of an accidental pressing of the “Ballot” button when there is no voter left at the close of the poll, and the “Busy” lamp glows “Red”, remove the interconnecting cable and the “Busy” lamp will stop glowing “RED”. Thereafter perform the operations (c) to (h) above for closing the EVM so that no further recording of votes in the machine is possible.

Return of EVM and Election Material to the Returning Officer

At the close of poll, you and your Polling Team must forward all the election materials and result forms to the Returning Officer as per Presiding Officer **Form No.2 (A, B, C, D)**

Return of Furniture

The furniture or other items acquired for the conduct of poll at the polling station may be handed over to the person from whom the premise was taken over after completion of poll. A Polling Officer may be identified to complete the handing taking of the following items:

1. Furniture; and
2. Other items belonging to the premises.

The Polling Teams shall make mandatory halt at the Polling Station 48 hours before and on Poll Day and remain accessible on the Poll Night. They shall start the return journey only on the next day except in case of unavoidable circumstances, which must be with prior approval or intimated without fail to respective CECos and RO before leaving the Polling Station.