

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN



Strategy for the Implementation of the Provisions Related to Election Advertising, 2012

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Provisions Related to Election Advertising	3
Media Arbitrator	4
Broadcast Time and Space.....	4
A. Costs to be Paid For by the Commission.....	4
Primary Round.....	5
General Elections and National Council Elections.....	5
B. Costs to be Paid For by Political Parties or Candidates.....	6
Political Parties	6
Candidates.....	7
Candidates for Local Government Elections	7
Thrompons	7
Dzongkhag Tshogdu Thuemis	7
ECB Sponsored Public Debates.....	7
Public Debates for Primary Round	8
Public Debates for General Elections	9
Public Debates for National Council Election.....	9
Public Debates for Local Government Elections.....	9
Guidelines for Ecb Sponsored Public Debates for Elections.....	10
Posters, Banners and other Sponsored Advertising Materials.....	10
Primary Round.....	11
General Elections.....	11
National Council Elections	11
Local Government Elections.....	12
Annexure 1.....	13

Annexure 2.....14

Annexure 3.....16

Strategy for the Implementation of the Provisions Related to Election Advertising 2012

1. Introduction

1.1 Advertising is an effective tool essential during election campaigns for political parties and candidates to inform and educate the voters. The electoral laws, rules and regulations, in order to ensure a level playing field, prevent undue influence of money power and protect the interest of the voters, include provisions that regulate election advertising.

2. Provisions Related to Election Advertising

2.1 The Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations (MCERR) and Election Advertising Regulations (EAR) require the Election Commission to:

2.1.1 Appoint a Media Arbitrator to regulate and govern the Media and Media Functionaries regarding coverage of elections and advertisements;

2.1.2 Prescribe specifications for election advertising;

2.1.3 Conduct sponsored debates amongst political parties and candidates; and

2.1.4 Regulate the role and conduct of media in elections.

2.2 The Section 4.1 of MCERR provides that:

“The Commission shall permit a media agency to cover an election only upon signing the undertaking in Media Coverage of Elections Form No. 1.”

Therefore, a media agency interested to cover an election shall be permitted to do so upon submitting to the Election Commission, a signed undertaking in the prescribed Media Coverage of Elections Form No. 1.

2.3 The Section 5.5 of MCERR provides that:

“The Media shall, immediately after the announcement of elections, make available to contesting political parties, candidates and all public relations firms and advertising agencies full information about space and time availability and the published advertising rates.”

Therefore, the Election Commission shall notify the Media Functionaries to announce the space and time availability with rates, immediately after Election Notification is issued, to the political parties and candidates, as in Annexure 1.

3. Media Arbitrator

3.1 The Section 6.2 of MCERR provides that:

“The Media Arbitrator shall be responsible for allocation of campaign broadcasting time and resolving disputes among broadcasters, political parties and candidates under these Rules or the Election Act.”

Therefore, the Election Commission shall designate a person of integrity and professional standing to serve as the Media Arbitrator.

3.2 The Section 7 of the MCERR requires that:

“The Media Arbitrator shall issue a set of guidelines, with the prior approval of the Commission, before the end of the second day after the day of issue of notification by the Commission under the Election Act respectively.”

The Media Arbitrator will be required to issue a set of guidelines, with the prior approval of the Commission, a draft of which has been placed in Annexure 2.

4. Broadcast Time and Space

4.1 Broadcast time and space available to political parties and candidates for election campaign are of two types: (A) paid for by the Election Commission and (B) paid for by the parties or candidates from their own funds.

A. Costs to be paid for by the Commission

4.2 The Section 78 of the Public Election Fund Act provides that:

“(a) Production of party election broadcasts of a value specified by the Commission;

“(b) Brochures and pamphlet for parties and candidates of a value specified by the Commission;

“(c) Production and display of Posters for parties and candidates of the size and of a value specified by the Commission;

“(c) Media advertisements and postage of a value specified by the Commission; and

“(d) Campaign Fund management trainings.”

Therefore, to ensure level playing field for all political parties or candidates in reaching out to the electorate through mass media Commission shall sponsor free time on Radio, Television and space in Print media.

4.3 The Sections 9.1 to 9.3 of MCERR provides that:

“9.1 Every contesting political party or candidates contesting parliamentary elections shall be provided with equal broadcasting time and space in the print media for the transmission of political announcements and similar programmes.

“Provided that the maximum time limit and the number of publications shall be determined by the Commission and subject to its review whenever deemed necessary.

“9.2 The Commission shall reimburse expenditure incurred under section 9.1 to such network operators.

“9.3 The Media Arbitrator shall be responsible to oversee that allocation of broadcasting time and space in the print media is done in an equitable and fair manner among contesting political parties and candidates.”

Therefore, Media Arbitrator will have to allocate Free Broadcasting Time and Space in the Print Media, amongst the parties and candidates and it shall be paid for by the Commission.

Primary Round

4.4 Each political party, during the entire election campaign, shall be allocated a maximum total of:

4.4.1 15 minutes broadcast;

4.4.2 20 minutes telecast; and

4.4.3 A full-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English once during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.

General Elections and National Council Elections

4.5 Each candidate, during the entire election campaign, shall be allocated a maximum total of:

- 4.5.1 10 minutes broadcast;
 - 4.5.2 3 minutes telecast; and
 - 4.5.3 A half-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English once during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.
- 4.6 The local cable network operators shall be directed to re-broadcast the recorded telecast during hours specified by the Media Arbitrator, till the campaign period ends.

B. Costs to be paid for by Political Parties or Candidates

- 4.7 The Section 10.1 and 10.2 of MCERR provides that:

“10.1 The Media Arbitrator shall, in addition to the allocation of broadcasting time, and space in the print media paid by the Commission, based on consultations with contesting political parties or candidates ensures allocation of broadcasting time, and space in the print media in an equitable and fair manner.

“10.2 Expense incurred on purchase of broadcasting time, and space in the print media shall be paid out of the permissible funds available with the political party or candidate and shall be considered as an election expense of the political parties or candidates.”

Accordingly, political parties and candidates can purchase broadcast time and space in the print media as per the maximum ceiling for the allocation of time and space to ensure a level playing field as presented hereunder.

Political Parties

- 4.8 Each political party, while advertising through the following media, shall abide by the ceiling fixed below:
- 4.8.1 Print: Full-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English for two editions during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.
 - 4.8.2 Television: 20 minutes during prime-time per week and half hour during other time per week per election.
 - 4.8.3 Radio: 10 minutes programme with 3 times a week re-broadcast during the campaign period.

Candidates

- 4.9 Each candidate shall, while advertising in the media, abide by the ceiling fixed below:
- 4.9.1 Print: Half-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English for two editions during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.
 - 4.9.2 Television: A total of 10 minutes during primetime and 10 minutes during other time per election.
 - 4.9.3 Radio: 20 minutes per campaign period in each station.

Candidates for Local Government Elections - Thrompons

- 4.10 Each candidate shall, while advertising in the media, abide by the ceiling fixed below:
- 4.10.1 Print: Half-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English editions once during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.
 - 4.10.2 Television: A total of 10 minutes during primetime and 10 minutes during other time per election.
 - 4.10.3 Radio: 20 minutes per campaign period in each station.

Candidates for Local Government Elections - Dzongkhag Tshogdu Thuemis

- 4.11 Each candidate shall, while advertising in the media, abide by the ceiling fixed below:
- 4.11.1 Print: One quarter-page colour supplementary in Dzongkha and English once during a campaign period in a newspaper of their choice.
 - 4.11.2 Radio: 20 minutes per campaign period in each station.
 - 4.11.3 Any media firm which provides free of cost election advertising besides the paid election advertisements (by both state and political parties and candidates) will need to provide such free advertising on equal basis to all political parties and candidates without bias. Such media firms shall be required to indicate free of cost election advertising to be provided which shall then be distributed and allocated by the Media Arbitrator.

5. ECB Sponsored Public Debates

- 5.1 The Section 78 of the Public Election Fund Act provides:

“The Election Commission shall sponsor:

“(a) Public debates for parties and candidates for Parliamentary elections;”

As required, the Election Commission shall conduct public debates amongst contesting political parties and candidates which are to be covered live and re-broadcast. The BBSC and other private radio and Cable TV networks media shall be obligated to arrange the broadcast of these programmes as their public service contribution.

5.2 The Section 79 of the Public Election Fund Act provides that:

“All participating parties and candidates shall attend the debates sponsored by the Election Commission.

“Provided unless specifically exempted by the Election Commission, the non-participating party or candidate shall be ineligible to receive funds and liable to refund the funds received already for that election.”

5.3 A party or candidate not able to participate in a public debate organized by the Election Commission must submit a written request to the Election Commission stating the reason seeking for exemption at least one week prior to the scheduled debate, as in Annexure 3.

5.4 The BBSC would bear the cost of production and airing of this broadcast.

Public Debates for Primary Round

5.5 Public debates shall be conducted as per the Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates, 2012

5.6 The Public Debates for Primary Round will take place in two rounds organized in collaboration with the BBS and telecast live.

5.7 The first round shall be based on party ideology while the second shall be issue based.

5.8 Each party shall nominate a representative to participate in the debates.

5.9 A moderator, appointed by the Election Commission, shall be responsible for conducting the debate in an unbiased manner.

5.10 A speaker shall be given 10 minutes to make his/her statement.

5.11 All other speakers shall be given 2 minutes each as an opportunity to pose one

question or make one observation to the speaker at the end of his/her presentation.

5.12 The speaker shall then be given a total of 5 minutes to respond to the questions.

5.13 The Speaker shall be again given 5 minutes to make his/her closing remarks.

Public Debates for General Elections

5.14 The Public Debates for General Elections shall be held in the Dzongkhags for each of the constituencies and between the two candidates of the two parties contesting in the General Elections.

5.15 Each candidate will be given 5 minutes to present the party's programme for that particular constituency.

5.16 The other candidate shall be given 2 minutes each as an opportunity to ask the speaker one question or make an observation at the end of his/her presentation.

5.17 Each speaker will be given a total 5 minutes to respond.

5.18 The Speaker will again be given 5 minutes to make his/her final focus.

5.19 The debates for the duly nominated candidates contesting in the General Election shall be conducted at Dzongkhag level, jointly by the BBS and Election Commission.

Public Debates for National Council Election

5.20 The candidates nominated from Gewogs for the National Council elections shall participate in one public debate conducted in each Dzongkhag, jointly by the BBSC and Election Commission.

5.21 Each candidate will be given 10 minutes to make his statement.

5.22 Rest of the candidates shall be given 2 minutes each as an opportunity to ask the speaker one question or make an observation.

5.23 Each speaker will be given a total of 5 minutes to respond.

5.24 The Speaker will again be given 5 minutes to make his/her final focus.

5.25 The Dzongkhag with one candidate instead of the public debate shall make public presentation with questions asked by the moderator.

Public Debates for Local Government Elections

5.26 The candidates for the Local Government elections shall participate in one

constituency level public debate conducted by the Election Commission.

- 5.27 Each candidate will be given 5 minutes to make his/her statement.
- 5.28 Rest of the candidates shall have the opportunity to ask the speaker one question or make an observation.
- 5.29 Each speaker will be given a total of 5 minutes to respond.
- 5.30 The Speaker will again be given 3 minutes to make his/her final focus.
- 5.31 The Constituency with one candidate instead of the public debate shall make public presentation with questions asked by the moderator.

Guidelines for ECB Sponsored Public Debates for Elections

- 5.32 The debates must be conducted strictly in accordance with these sections and as per procedure outlined in the *Guidelines for ECB Sponsored Public Debates for Elections* issued by the Election Commission.
- 5.33 The broadcast media shall be required to re-broadcast these debates at least 2 times a week till the end of the election campaign period.
- 5.34 The local cable network operators shall be directed to re-broadcast the recorded debates at least 2 times a day during hours specified by the Media Arbitrator, till the campaign period ends.

6. Posters, Banners and Other Sponsored Advertising Materials

6.1 The Section 78 of Public Election Fund Act provides that:

“The Election Commission shall sponsor:

- “(c) Brochures and pamphlet for parties and candidates of a value specified by the Commission;
- “(d) Production and display of Posters for parties and candidates of the size and of a value specified by the Commission;
- “(e) Media advertisements and postage of a value specified by the Commission;”

Therefore, the specifications for advertising material including posters, banners and placards for the Primary Round, General Elections, National Council Elections are as presented below in Tables 1, 2 and 3:

Primary Round

Table 1: Specification for Advertising Materials for Political Parties in Dzongkha and English

Sl. No.	Particulars	Standard Dimension	Average per constituency	Maximum Quantity per party	Uses
1	Posters	28 x 19 inches	20	940	Public Display
2	Banners	5 x 1 m	2	94	Display during meetings for publicity
3	Placards (L)	A4	200	9,400	Meetings/rallies/logos/symbols
	Placards (S)	Postcard	1000	47000	Logos/symbols/meetings/publicity

General Elections

Table 2: Specification for Advertising Materials for Candidates in Dzongkha and English

Sl. No.	Particulars	Standard Dimension	Average per Gewog	Maximum Quantity per Candidate	Uses
1	Posters	28 x 19 inches	10	10 x No. of Gewogs	Public Display
2	Banners	5 x 1 m		1	Display during meetings for publicity
3	Placards (L)	A4	100	100x No. of Gewogs	Meetings/rallies/logos/symbols
	Placards (S)	Postcard	300	300 x No. of Gewogs	Logos/symbols/meetings/publicity

National Council Elections

Table 3: Specification for Advertising Materials for Candidates in Dzongkha and English

Sl. No.	Particulars	Standard Dimension	Average per Gewog	Maximum Quantity per Candidate	Uses
1	Posters	28 x 19 inches	10	10 x No. of Gewogs	Public Display
2	Banners	5 x 1 m		1	Display during meetings for publicity
3	Placards (L)	A4	100	100 x No. of Gewogs	Meetings/rallies/logos/symbols
	Placards (S)	Postcard	300	300 x No. of Gewogs	Logos/symbols/meetings/publicity

- 6.2 The Returning Officer shall, as soon as possible after the nomination proceedings have closed, issue a permit in the Election Advertising Form No. 2 (A, B or C) authorizing the display of posters and banners in the prescribed places.
- 6.3 The Commission shall be required to reimburse the cost of production of the election advertising materials for parties and candidates, for the quantities specified in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Local Government Elections

- 6.4 A candidate contesting the Local Government Elections can incur expenditures for production of posters, banners and placards from his/her own sources, as per the specifications mentioned below:

Table 4: Specification for Advertising Materials for Candidates in Dzongkha and English

Sl. No.	Particulars	Standard Dimension	Average per Chiwogs	Maximum Quantity	Uses
1	Posters	28 x 19 inches	5	5 x No. of Chiwogs	Public Display
2	Banners	5 x 1 m	-	1	Display during meetings for publicity
3	Placards(S)	Postcard	300	300 x No. of Chiwogs	Logos/ symbols/ meetings/ publicity

- 6.5 The Commission shall ascertain that the procurement and production of these by the Political Parties and candidates are based on competitive rates.
- 6.6 Political Parties and candidates shall be responsible for ensuring that the messages conveyed in the advertisement is not in violation of any of the provisions of the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines and interpretation made there-under.

Sample

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

Notification to the Media Functionaries

The Broadcast/Print Media functionaries are hereby notified to submit broadcast time and space availability with detailed rates to the Election Commission, immediately after issuance of Notification for Election to National Council/National Assembly.

These shall be announced to the political parties and candidates as per Section 5.5 ~~(e)~~ ~~(b)~~ of Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations.

Chief Election Commissioner

Media Arbitrator’s Guidelines

(As per Section 7 of the Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations)

1. No media coverage on the contestants shall be allowed for a period of 48 hours prior to the hour of poll and till the poll closes.
2. Media Functionaries shall cooperate with the election officials and functionaries throughout the election period.
3. All Media Functionaries shall, before covering an election, acquaint themselves with the Reporting Format below:

Reporting Format of Media Functionaries

Sl. No.	Political Party/Candidate covered	Details/Particulars of Event	Date & time duration	Place
1				
2				
3				
Submitted by: (Name of the Media functionary) Address. Name & Signature				

4. All Media Functionaries shall acquaint themselves with Media Coverage of Elections Form No. 2.
5. Allotment analysis of broadcast time and space in print media to political parties and candidates shall be carried out based on the information in the Reporting Format given above.

6. The Reporting Format must be filled and submitted to the Media Arbitrator after the declaration of results.
7. The Media Arbitrator will, as per Section 6.11 of MCERR, evaluate the performance of the Media Functionaries and report to the Commission.
8. All Media Functionaries shall abide by these Guidelines and the Media Coverage on Elections Rules and Regulations, Election Advertising Regulations and any law in force pertaining to elections and media.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

Returning Officer

Election Commission of Bhutan

.....,

.....

Please refer to the notification No.: dated: issued by the Election Commission regarding the public debate to be held on

Since Party/Candidate is not able to take part due to It/ I may be kindly be exempted from participating in the public debate.

As per Section 80 of Public Election Fund Act, 2008 this request is being submitted one week prior to the scheduled debate.

(POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES)

Signature

Name of the Political Party/Candidate/Authorised Representative:

Address:

.....

.....

production

distribution and content,

competitive rates