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ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

(Ensuring Free, Fair & Democratic Elections & Referendums)



ECB/NOTIF-01/2018/365

Dated: 18th of August 2018

NOTIFICATION

Third Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly

Under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) in obedience to the Royal Decree of His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo Issued on 17th of August 2018 Calling the elections to the National Assembly of the Third Parliament, hereby, in accordance with the Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008, notifies the Election Schedule of the National Assembly Elections, 2018 and the details concerning *Demkhongs*, Letter of Intent, Nomination of Candidates, Electoral Rolls, EVMs, Polling Stations, Polling Officials, Polling Management, Security and other arrangements as follows:

(A) Elections

1. There shall be a Primary Round of Elections in which the registered Political Parties whose Letter of Intent (LoI) is found to be in order in all respects and accordingly accepted by the Election Commission of Bhutan shall contest in all the 20 Dzongkhags.
2. The Two Parties securing the Highest and Second Highest total number of votes polled in the 20 Dzongkhags shall be invited by the Election Commission to nominate one Candidate each to contest the General Elections in each of the 47 National Assembly Demkhongs.

(B) Election Schedule

3. The Schedule of Dates and time for the National Assembly Election shall be as follows:

Sl.#	Event	Date
1	Issue of Royal Decree Calling the National Assembly Elections and setting the process in motion	17 th of August 2018 (Friday)
2	ECB Notification on the National Assembly Election Schedule	18 th of August 2018 (Saturday)
3	Registered Political Parties to commence submission of Letter of Intent to contest Primary Round	
4	Last date for submission of the Letter of Intent by registered Political Parties	21 st of August 2018 (Tuesday)
5	Scrutiny of Letter of Intent by the Election Commission	22 nd of August 2018 (Wednesday)
6	Start of Application for Election Campaign Fund by Political Parties	
7	Commencement of the Election Campaign after receipt of Acceptance Letter from ECB	
8	Last date for receipt of Application for changes related to details from registered Postal Voters by Returning Officer	
9	Release of Final Electoral Roll & Postal Voter List	23 rd of August 2018 (Thursday)
10	Last Date of Withdrawal	24 th of August 2018 (Friday)
11	Returning Officer to start sending/ mailing Postal Ballot	
12	Release of the Election Campaign Fund	25 th of August 2018 (Saturday)
13	First Public Debate for the Primary Round	26 th of August 2018 (Sunday)
14	Start of the Common Forum	27 th of August 2018 (Monday)
15	Second Public Debate for the Primary Round	2 nd of September 2018 (Sunday)
16	Operation of Postal Ballot Facilitation/Mobile Booths	7 th , 8 th & 9 th of September 2018 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)
17	End of Election Campaign	13 th of September 2018 (Thursday) 9 a.m.
18	Last day for receiving Postal Ballots	14 th of September 2018 (Friday)
19	Primary Round Poll Day	15th of September 2018 (Saturday)
20	Counting of Results	
21	Declaration of Results & Submission of the Results to His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo	16 th of September 2018 (Sunday)
General Election		
22	Commence Filing of Nominations by Candidates of the 2 Parties securing highest and second highest total votes in the Primary Round	17 th of September 2018 (Monday)

23	Last Date for Filing of Nominations by Candidates	21 st of September 2018 (Friday)
24	Scrutiny of Nominations of Candidates	22 nd of September 2018 (Saturday)
25	Candidates start submitting Application for Election Campaign Fund	
26	Commencement of the Election Campaign upon acceptance of Candidature by RO	
27	Last date for withdrawal of Candidature	24 th of September 2018 (Monday)
28	Last date/ time for receipt of Application for changes related to details from registered Postal Voters by Returning Officer	
29	Returning Officer to start sending/ mailing Postal Ballot	
30	Release of the Election Campaign Fund by ECB	25 th of September 2018 (Tuesday)
31	Public Debate	25 th of September to 10 th of October 2018
32	Operation of Postal Ballot Facilitation/Mobile Booth	10 th , 11 th & 12 of October 2018 (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)
33	End of Election Campaign	16 th of October 2018 (Tuesday) 9 a.m.
34	Last day for receiving Postal Ballots	17 th of October 2018 (Wednesday)
35	General Elections Poll Day	18th of October 2018 (Thursday)
36	Counting of Results	
37	Declaration of Results & Submission of the Results to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo	19 th of October 2018 (Friday)
38	Issue of Certificate of Election & Start of Election Petition Period	22 nd of October 2018 (Monday)
39	Completion of Election Petition Period	6 th of November 2018 (Tuesday) 4 p.m.

(C) Letter of Intent (LoI) for the Primary Round

4. A registered Political Party intending to contest National Assembly Elections shall submit the LoI to the Registrar of Political Parties, ECB Head Office, latest by 5 p.m. of **21st of August 2018**. The LoI shall be as per the prescribed format provided in Compendium of Electoral Forms or available on the ECB's website at *www.ecb.bt*
5. The Letter of Intent shall invariably include in the prescribed format, a Tentative List of Candidates for each of the 47 *National Assembly Demkhongs* who meet the required criteria;
6. Financial Statement as at the end of month preceding the submission of Letter of Intent;
7. List of Party Offices in Dzongkhags and details of Office bearers;
8. List of Registered Members by Dzongkhag;

9. The website and all social media accounts/addresses handles or use etc of the Party and Candidates on the Tentative List; and
10. A copy of the Party's Election Manifesto
11. A registered Political Party may submit at the time of filing LoI or earliest thereafter, the master copy of its proposed campaign materials so that the in-kind State sponsored materials could be made available at the earliest possible.

(D) Scrutiny of Letter of Intent

12. The Election Commission shall undertake the scrutiny of the Letter of Intent filed by the Political Parties on **22nd of August 2018** as per procedure.
13. The Letter of Acceptance/Rejection of the Letter of Intent shall be issued on **22nd of August 2018**.

(E) Nomination of Candidates for the General Elections

14. The Two Political Parties which secure the **Highest** and the **Second Highest** number of Total Votes in the Primary Round shall be invited by the Election Commission to formally nominate one eligible Candidate each to contest the General Elections in the 47 *National Assembly Demkhongs* from the accepted Tentative List submitted in the Letter of Intent.
15. Besides the other criteria for a candidate, Section 209 (c) of the Election Act, 2008, specifically provides that:

Section 209. A person shall be deemed to be duly nominated to contest an election to the National Assembly, by a registered political party, if:

- (c) He/She is a member of a registered political party which could not qualify for General Elections but is admitted as a member and nominated as a candidate by a political party to contest in the General Election. However, his/her membership in the original political party shall be forfeited.

(F) Filing of Nomination Papers by Candidates

16. The Candidate nominated by the eligible Political Party to contest the General Elections shall submit his/her nomination papers to the concerned Returning Officer starting from **9:30 am to 4:00 pm of 17th of September to 21st of September 2018**.

17. The Nomination Papers must be complete, signed and countersigned as required and include the following prescribed Forms:
 - 17.1. Nomination Paper with the necessary attachments; ***Returning Officer Form No. 6A(GE)***;
 - 17.2. Notice of Nomination of a Candidates for NA-General Elections; ***Political Party Form No.3A(GE)***;
 - 17.3. Asset Declaration;
 - 17.4. Tax Clearance Certificate;
 - 17.5. Audit Clearance Certificate;
 - 17.6. Security Clearance;
 - 17.7. Marriage Certificate & CID copy of Spouse, (If applicable);
 - 17.8. Copy of Formal University Degree Certificate with Letter of Attestation issued by Election Commission of Bhutan;
 - 17.9. Relieving order issued by Head of the Ministry/ Department/Agency (if relevant); and
 - 17.10. Affidavit/ Court Clearance;
18. The screenshot (webpage) displaying the approved status of the Security Clearance, specified for election purposes, can be printed out and filed to a Returning Officer at the time of submission of Nomination Papers.
19. Audit Clearance may be obtained as per the system put in place by the Royal Audit Authority and the print-out copy submitted at the time of submission of Nomination Papers.
20. The attestation of the Formal University Degree shall be as per the *Guidelines for Interpretation and Implementation of Sections 176 (d), 177 (d) and 178 (d) of the Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008 regarding the Academic Qualification Requirement for a Candidate contesting Elections to National Assembly, National Council or the Post of Thrompon, 2017.*
21. The Asset Declarations submitted in accordance with the Laws and shall be scrutinized in line with the *Guidelines for Evaluation of the Asset Declaration of the Candidates Contesting Elections, 2018.*

22. The Drangpon of the Dzongkhag/Dungkhag Court of Justice, signing the Affidavit, shall also be responsible to check from the Court records that the aspiring Candidate has not been convicted and received a sentence of imprisonment or does not have a pending criminal case registered against him/her in any Court of Law as required under the Electoral Laws.

(G) Scrutiny of Nominations

23. The respective Returning Officers shall undertake the scrutiny of the Nomination Papers filed by the Candidates under intimation to the Election Commission.

(H) Last Date for Withdrawal of Candidature

24. The last date for withdrawal of Candidature shall be **5:00 pm of 24th of September 2018**

25. After the last date set for the withdrawal of Candidature, it is mandatory for the validly nominated candidates to attend the respective public debates organized by the BBSC and ECB.

26. If a Candidate cannot attend a Public Debate, he/she should give a Written Notice and receive prior permission of the concerned Returning Officer. If a Candidate fails to attend, he/she shall be liable to refund the entire campaign amount.

(I) Replacement Candidate

27. In a *Demkhong* where candidature has been cancelled or a Candidate dies, the replacement Candidate may be nominated or polls in that *Demkhong* postponed in accordance with Sections 233 to 237 of the Election Act, 2008.

(J) Demkhong

28. The National Assembly Demkhongs are as follows:

Dzongkhag	Parliamentary Constituency	Gewogs
Bumthang	Chhoekhor_Tang	Chhoekhor,Tang & <i>Thromde</i>
	Chhumig_Ura	Chhumig & Ura

Chhukha	Bongo_Chapcha	Bjagchhog, Bongo, Chapcha, Darla & Getana
	Phuentshogling	Doongna, Geling, Loggchina, Meadtabkha, Phuentshogling, Samphelling & <i>Thromde</i>
Dagana	Drukjeygang_Tseza	Drukjeygang, Gozhi, Karna, Khebisa, Largyab, Tshangkha Tseza & <i>Thromde</i>
	Lhamoi Dzingkha_Tashiding	Dorona, Gesarling, Tashiding, Tsenda-Gang, Karmaling, Lhamoi Dzingkha & Nichula
Gasa	Khatoed_Laya	Khatoed & Laya
	Khamaed_Lunana	Khamaed & Lunana
Haa	Bji_Kar-Tshog_Uesu	Bji, Kar-Tshog, Uesu & <i>Thromde</i>
	Sangbaykha	Sangbay, Gakiling & Samar
Lhuentse	Gangzur_Minjey	Gangzur, Khoma, Kurtoed, Minjey & <i>Thromde</i>
	Maenbi_Tsenkhar	Jarey, Maenbi, Maedtsho & Tsaenkhar
Monggar	Dramedtse_Ngatsang	Balam, Chagsakhar, Drametse, Na-Rang, Ngatsang, Shermuhoog & Thang-Rong
	Monggar	Chhaling, Drepoong, Monggar, Tsakaling, Tsamang & <i>Thromde</i>
	Kengkhar_Werringla	Gongdue, Saling, Silambi, Kengkhar & Jurmed
Paro	Lamgong_Wangchang	Dopshar-ri, Doteng, Hoongrel, Lamgong, Tsentso & Wangchang & <i>Thromde</i>
	Dokar_Sharpa	Dokar, Loong-nyi, Nagya & Sharpa
Pema Gatshel	Nanong_Shumar	Nanong, Shumar & Zobel
	Khar_Yurung	Chhimoong, Chongshing, Dungmaed, Khar & Yurung
	Nganglam	Choekhorling, Dechhenling & Norboogang
Punakha	Lingmukha_Teodwang	Chhubu, Dzomi, Lingmukha, Shelnga-Bjemi & Teodwang
	Kabji_Talog	Barp, Guma, Goenshari, Kabisa, Talog, Toepaisa & <i>Thromde</i>
Samdrup Jongkhar	Dewathang_Gomdar	Dewathang, Gomder, Orong, Phuentshogthang & Wangphu & <i>Thromde</i>
	Jomotshangkha_Martshala	Langchenphu, Lauri, Serthig, Martshala, Pemathang & Samrang
Samtse	Ugyentse_Yoeseltse	Sang-Ngag-Choling, Namgaychholing, Ugentse & Yoeseltse
	Trashichholing	Norgaygang, Pemaling, Tashichholing & Tendruk
	Dophugchen_Tading	Duenchukha, Dophuchen, Doomtoed, Tading & <i>Thromde</i>
	Phuentshogpelri_Samtse	Norboogang, Phuntshopelri & Samtse
Sarpang	Shompangkha	Dekidling, Chhudzom, Gakiling, Senggey & Shompangkha
	Gelegphu	Samtenling, Chhuzaggang, Gelegphu, Jigme Chhoeling, Serzhong, Taraythang, Umling & <i>Thromde</i>
Thimphu	North Thimthrom- Kawang-Lingshi- Naro- Soe	North Thimphu <i>Thromde</i> , Kawang, Lingzhi, Naro & Soe

	South Thimthrom- Chang- Darkarla- Ge-nyen- Maedwang	South Thimphu <i>Thromde</i> , Chang, Darkarla, Ge-nyen & Maedwang
Trashigang	Bartsham Shongphoog	Bartsham, Bidoong, Yangnyer, Shongphoog
	Thrimshing	Kangpara & Thrimshing
	Kanglung Samkhar Udзорong	Kanglung, Samkhar, Udзорong & <i>Thromde</i>
	Wamrong	Khaling & Lumang
	Radhi Sagteng	Merag, Phongmed, Radhi & Sagteng
Trashi Yangtse	Boomdeling- Jamkhar	Boomdeling, Jamkhar, Tongmajangsa, Yangtse & <i>Thromde</i>
	Khamdang Ramjar	Ramjar, Khamdang, Toedtsho & Yalang
Trongsa	Nubi Tangsibji	Nubi, Tangsibji & <i>Thromde</i>
	Draagteng Langthil	Draagteng, Korphu & Langthil
Tsirang	Sergithang Tsirang Toed	Doonglagang, Gosarling, Sergithang, Pungtenchhu, Semjong & Tsirang Toed
	Kilkhorthang Mendrelgang	Barshong, Patshaling, Kilkhorthang, Mendrelgang, Rangthangling, Tsholingkhar & <i>Thromde</i>
Wangdue Phodrang	Nyishog Saephu	Dangchhu, Gangteng, Kazhi, Nyishog, Phangyuel, Phobji & Saephu
	Athang Thedtsho	Athang, Bjednag, Darkar, Gase Tshogongmm, Gase Tshowogm, Nahi, Thedtsho, Ruebisa & <i>Thromde</i>
Zhemgang	Bardo Trong	Bardo, Nangkor, Shingkhar, Trong & <i>Thromde</i>
	Panbang	Bjoka, Goshing, Ngangla & Phangkhar

(K) Electoral Roll

29. The Qualifying Date shall, in relation to the Electoral Roll for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly*, be the **1st of July 2018**. Therefore, all those who are not younger than eighteen years of age as on **1st of July 2018** shall be deemed to meet the minimum age requirement to be a voter.
30. Those born on or before **21st of September 1993** and on or after **21st of September 1953** shall be deemed to meet the legal age requirement for Candidates.
31. Similarly, those voters whose *Mitsi* had been registered in a *Demkhong* on or before **30th June 2017** shall be deemed to meet the durational requirement to be a voter or Candidate from that *Demkhong*.

32. The draft Electoral Roll for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018* was already issued on **2nd of August 2018** for public inspection and the public invited to file Claims and Objections by **12th of August 2018**.
33. The respective Dzongkhag Election Office shall continue to distribute the Voter Photo Identity Cards (VPIC) to those who were unable to collect it earlier even up to the Poll Day.
34. The Final Electoral Rolls for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly* shall be published and provided to the Returning Officers by **23rd of August 2018** and the Party/Candidates will be given their copies on **23rd of August 2018**.

(L) Election Campaign

35. A Political Party/Candidate may proceed with the Election Campaign upon the receipt of acceptance of the Letter of Intent from ECB in case of Primary Round or acceptance of his/her candidature by the concerned Returning Officer in case of the General Elections.
36. The campaign for the Primary Round shall be Party-based, focusing on the Party Ideology, Manifesto, Vision and Mission.
37. The campaign in the Primary Round shall be led by the central Party leadership and the respective Candidate-designate in the accepted Tentative List of Candidates who shall be deemed to be the representative authorized by the Party in the respective *Demkhong* for the Election Campaign.
38. A Political Party/Candidate shall conduct the campaign as per the Election Campaign Schedule approved by the concerned Returning Officer with copy endorsed to the concerned Observer.
39. Returning Officer in collaboration with election security personal must conduct surprise inspections of persons, vehicles and properties at entry points and within a *Demkhong* to prevent or check movement of unauthorized persons, documents, money, alcohol, arms and ammunitions and restricted items.

40. A Political Party/Candidate shall be liable for all acts of commission and omission of their election representatives and held responsible for the conduct of their Party workers or supporters.

Common Forum for Public Address by All Candidates

41. The Returning Officer or Assistant Returning Officer, in consultation with the respective Election Coordinator and Security Coordinator shall arrange at least one Common Forum in each *Gewog/Chiwog/Dzongkhag Thromde*, for both the Primary Round and the General Elections, to provide the contesting Political Parties/Candidates equal opportunity to address the electorate while reducing the necessity to call for public meetings in the *Gewog/Chiwog or Dzongkhag Thromde* by each Candidate separately thereby avoiding inconvenience to voters of attending multiple sessions.
42. The Common Forum shall be organised as per the *Guidelines for the Conduct of the Common Forum for Election Campaign, 2018*.

Any other public meetings, door-to-door campaigns or rallies

43. Any additional public meetings, door-to-door campaigns or rallies shall be subject to the provisions of the law, Code of Conduct and as per the campaign schedule and use of vehicles as approved by the Returning Officer.
44. A door-to-door campaign may be conducted only **after 6 a.m.** and **before 6 p.m.**

Abnormal Financial Transaction

45. All Banks or financial institutions shall be responsible to report to the Election Commission any abnormal transaction of money, including in and/ or out of the account of a Political Party or Candidate contesting the Elections.

Conduct of Representatives or Supporters

46. The Party and Candidate shall be held responsible and answerable for the conduct of their representatives or supporters also including those of the nature of interference to lawful electoral works and/ or cause to undermine law and order in a place of elections.

No Freebies

47. A Political Party/Candidate contesting the National Assembly Elections and all concerned shall neither serve meals or refreshments, nor pay, gift or reward the general public or voters for attendance of election campaigns or produce, wear and distribute T-shirts and/ or caps etc.

Past Attributes or Past Achievements

48. A Political Party, Candidate, Government or Non-Governmental authority, Organisation or any individual shall not screen any audiovisual products or documentary clips or display/distribute any written or pictorial materials which attributes or depicts the past achievements of a particular aspiring Candidate whilst in Government or public service or otherwise, including the portrayal of a Candidate in any audiovisual product.

No Travels or Official Tours by A Member of Parliament

49. No travels or official tours shall be undertaken by a Member of Parliament to any *Demkhong* other than the place of ordinary residence during the National Assembly Election Period except to cast votes on the Poll Days if he/she decides not to avail the Postal Ballot facility. If such travel to a *Demkhong* becomes unavoidable, he/she shall first report to the concerned Returning Officer.

No Usage of Title, Sign, Insignia or Symbol

50. No Candidate shall use the title, designation, rank, *Kabney/Rachu*, *Pata/Geyntag* or any other sign, insignia or symbol of an office held earlier, on person, car or any personal effects as may be used during the campaign period by the Candidate, representatives or supporters.
51. The Office of the Returning Officer and venue of the election events shall be, as far as possible, at locations that do not require the wearing of the *Kabney/Rachu* and *Pata/Geyntag*.

Prohibition on Election Campaign 48 hours Before Poll

52. Election Campaign must stop 48 hours before the hour fixed for commencement of Poll.

Election Campaign Finance

53. Each Political Party contesting the Primary Round shall be eligible to receive Election Campaign Fund at the rate of **Nu. 150,000/-** per *Demkhong*.
54. A Political Party contesting the Primary Round cannot exceed the election campaign expenditure ceiling of **Nu. 300,000/-**, in each of the 47 *Demkhongs*, fixed by the Election Commission and notified to the public i.e. **Nu. 150,000/-** provided as public campaign funds by the State and up to **Nu. 150,000/-** from the Party's own Funds as raised through the permitted sources of income.
55. A Candidate contesting the General Elections shall be eligible to receive Election Campaign Fund at the rate of **Nu. 150,000/-** as per the revision of the Election Campaign Fund by the Election Commission.
56. A Candidate contesting the General Elections cannot exceed the election campaign expenditure ceiling of **Nu. 300,000/-**, fixed by the Election Commission and notified to the public i.e. **Nu. 150,000/-** provided as public campaign funds by the State and up to **Nu. 150,000/-** from the Party's Funds as raised through the permitted sources of income.
57. The maximum expenditure limit shall not include in-kind sponsorship from the State, provided by ECB under the Public Election Fund Act, 2008, Public Fund Rules and Regulations and Strategy for the Implementation of the Provisions Related to Election Advertising, 2018.
58. The Parties and Candidates shall ensure that funds are neither received, directly or indirectly, from sources other than the permitted ones within the approved ceilings nor use any such funds directly or indirectly, for electoral purposes.

Election Campaign Returns

59. A Political Party Representative in each *Demkhong* during the Primary Round and a Candidate in the General Elections must submit weekly accounts of the

campaign expenses to the National Observer for his/her scrutiny and file Election Returns within thirty days of declaration of the Election Result as per the prescribed procedures, regardless of being elected or not, failing which the name of a Political Party may be removed from the Register of Political Parties or a person may be disqualified as a Member holding elective office or Candidate in future elections.

Public Debate

60. Two rounds of Public Debate between the contesting Political Parties in the Primary Round shall be conducted with Round One on *Party Ideology* and Round Two focusing on the *Party Manifesto*.
61. The Primary Round Debates shall be arranged in the Capital by the ECB Secretariat and the BBSC.
62. The General Public Debates shall be conducted in the respective Dzongkhags by the concerned Dzongkhag Election Office and BBSC.
63. The debates shall be conducted as per the ***Guidelines for Conduct of Public Debates for National Assembly Elections, 2018***.

(M) Remaining Apolitical and Above Politics

Religious Events

64. No religious events involving public gathering shall be conducted as notified in advance by the Election Commission vide **Public Advisory No. ECB/(Media-7)2017/2426 dated 4th of March 2017**.

The Dzongdag as the Chief Election Coordinator of the concerned Dzongkhag is vested with the authority to issue approval in their respective jurisdiction for other events.

65. Private religious events such as the wrathful practices and rituals such as *tordog, torphang* etc. will be prohibited in particular by the Political Parties or Candidates and/or their representatives and supporters.

66. Religious Personalities shall neither vote in the elections nor participate, directly or indirectly, or give grounds to reasonably construe support, opposition or dislike of any Candidate contesting the elections.

Religious, Civil Society Organisation and Public Entities

67. Religious and Civil Society Organisations and Public entities shall not participate, directly or indirectly, or give grounds to reasonably construe support, opposition or dislike of any Candidate contesting the elections.

Civil Servants

68. Civil servants shall cast their votes either in person at the designated Polling Stations, Postal Ballot Facilitation Booth or by Postal Ballot but shall not participate or attend any campaign events or meetings except for those civil servants on election duty required to observe or monitor such events unless provided otherwise in the Civil Service Laws.

Midhey Gothrips

69. The *Midhey Gothrips* shall not participate, directly or indirectly, or give grounds to reasonably construe support, opposition or dislike of any Party and/or Candidate contesting the elections other than casting their votes and fulfilling such tasks as may be specifically required by the Electoral Authorities.

(N) Postal Ballots

70. The Schedule for the Postal Ballot process shall be as given in the Election Schedule above and also detailed in the *Strategy for Conduct of the Third Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly*.
71. The Postal Ballot System shall include the conventional Postal Ballot method, Postal Ballot Facilitation Booth, or Mobile Facilitation Booth as opted for at the time of registration as postal voters and assigned in the Postal Voters List.
72. Eligible postal voters wishing to exercise their franchise through the Postal Ballot must register as a postal voter with the Election Commission latest by **24th of August 2018**.

73. The Postal Voters who have opted for the conventional method of the Postal Voting shall receive the Postal Package from the Returning Officer at his/her Postal Address given during registration and are reminded to return the marked Postal Ballot directly to the Returning Officer at the earliest.
74. A Postal Voter shall intimate to the Returning Officer any change in Postal Address or if he/she wishes not to use the conventional method and instead prefer to vote at a Facilitation Booth of Convenience or to vote in person at the Polling Station on Poll Day. Such application for change in details of postal voter must reach the concerned Returning Officer **latest by 22nd of August 2018 for Primary Round and 24th of September 2018 for General Election.**
75. The Postal Voters, who have opted to vote at the Postal Ballot Facilitation Booth, are reminded turn up at the Booth of Choice from **7th of September to 9th of September 2018 for Primary Round and 10th of October to 12th of October 2018** during office hours or as may be specifically intimated by the Election Authorities.
76. Mobile Facilitation Booths shall be provided as a special service for those with special needs or large number of Postal Voters in one place such as schools, projects etc.
77. The Postal Voters, shall bring his/her VPIC to the Postal Ballot Facilitation Booth as proof of identification.
78. A person who applied for Postal Ballot, be it by any option, cannot vote in person at a Polling Station on Poll Day as his/her name will be included in the Postal Voters' List and struck off from the Voters' List sent to the Polling Station by the Returning Officer.

(O) Voter Photo Identity Card (VPIC)

79. Voter Photo Identity Card (VPIC) issued by the Election Commission shall be the valid document for identification of voters at the polling stations during the Elections.

80. All voters must also carry with them the Citizenship Identity Card (CID) issued by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, which would form the basis for decision by the Presiding Officer in the event of any dispute related to the VPIC.

(P) Polling Hours

81. The Polling Hours shall be from **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.** However, those voters already in the queue at 5 p.m. shall be allowed to vote with issuance of tokens to those in the queue with the last voter present at that time in the queue being given token No. 1.

(Q) Electronic Voting Machines

82. The Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) shall be used for polling in all *Demkhongs* on Poll Day.

(R) Indelible Ink

83. Quality indelible ink shall be used during the elections and care must be taken in applying the indelible ink as a line running from Top of the nail to the Bottom of the first joint of the **Right Thumb** during the **Primary Round** and the **Left Thumb** during the **General Elections**.

(S) Polling Stations

84. The Polls for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly* shall be conducted in a total of **865** Polling Stations, the details of which are indicated in the Final Electoral Roll for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly*.

(T) Poll Day

85. The Poll Days, **15th of September 2018** for Primary Round and **18th of October 2018** for General Elections, shall be declared National Holidays in the 20 Dzongkhags.

86. All employers are required by law to grant required number of days as election leave for any voter wishing to go to vote in person.

87. No one shall carry any sort of audio/photo/video recording device in and around a Polling Station on Poll Day except those authorised to do so.
88. No one shall carry any arms or weapons which can be used to cause bodily harm on Poll Day except by those who are authorised under the Electoral Laws for security duty.
89. A permitted media agency or journalist shall be allowed into a Polling Station but not have access to the voting compartment when a voter is inside it and be escorted out of the Polling Station after a few minutes.

(U) Election Result Counting, Consolidation and Declaration

90. The Postal Ballots shall be counted only by the concerned Returning Officers who shall consolidate it with the EVM results received from the Counting Centres and verify the information received through the **SMS Relay System** against the **hard copy**, following the standard procedures and in the required Forms.
91. Candidates or their representatives can witness and observe all stages of the polling and counting procedures but shall not make public statements on estimates and guesses before the official declaration of the results.
92. A permitted Media agency or journalist may witness and observe the counting procedures but shall ensure that they comply with the procedural requirements of the Returning Officer and not obstruct or interfere with the process or make public statements or online posts on estimated poll results before the official announcement and declaration of the results.
93. All stakeholders are advised that prohibition on Exit Polls provided in the Election Act are as follows:

Section 343. No person shall broadcast, telecast or publish before the close of poll, any

- (a) Statement or news relating to the manner in which voters have voted at an election;

- (b) Public opinion survey reports on an election shall not be released to the general public prior to closure of polls; or
- (c) Forecasts or predictions relating to the probable results of an election based on the information provided by or obtained from, voters or observers at an election.

(V) Election Officials

Chief Election Coordinators

- 94. The *Dzongdags* shall be appointed as the Chief Election Coordinators (CECo); Dzongrabs/ Dungpas/ Executive Secretaries of the Dzongkhag Thromdes as the Deputy Chief Election Coordinators; and the Gewog Administrative Officers as the Assistant Chief Election Coordinators in the respective Dzongkhag, Dungkhag, Dzongkhag Thromdes and Gewogs for the purpose of the conduct of the National Assembly Elections.
- 95. The Election Coordinators shall be responsible for carrying out the roles, responsibilities and duties as provided in the Electoral Laws and in accordance with the Appointment Order issued by the Election Commission on **18th of August 2018**
- 96. The Chief Election Coordinator of a Dzongkhag shall be responsible to submit a comprehensive Report on the Elections, as provided in the *Handbook for Election Coordinators 2013*, in the concerned Dzongkhag within ten days of the declaration of the Results.

National Observers

- 97. The Election Commission shall appoint Forty-Seven National Observers in each of the 47 National Assembly *Demkhongs* and **2** Micro-Observers, one each in Lhamoi Dzingkha_ Tashiding *Demkhong* of Dagana Dzongkhag and one in Jomotshangkha_ Martshala *Demkhong* of Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag to assist the respective National Observer of these 2 *Demkhongs*.

98. An Observer is vested with the authority, roles and responsibilities as per the provisions in the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations and Handbook for Observers, to observe the Elections.
99. An Observer shall, besides submission of required reports, report any infraction requiring immediate action to the Election Commission instantly through SMS and other social media platforms.

Follow-up on Observer Reports

100. The Policy and Planning Coordination Division of the Election Commission shall consolidate the Reports submitted by the Observers for review and decision by the Commission on a weekly basis and as and when an immediate decision is required.

Returning Officers

101. The Election Commission shall appoint, for the National Assembly Elections, Forty-Seven Returning Officers in each of the 47 *National Assembly Demkhongs* and 2 Assistant Returning Officers, one in Lhamoi Dzingkha_Tashiding *Demkhong* of Dagana Dzongkhag and one in Jomotshangkha_Martshala *Demkhong* of Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag to assist the respective Returning Officer of these 2 *Demkhongs*.
102. A Returning Officer is vested with full authority, roles and responsibilities as per the provisions in the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations and Handbook for Returning Officers.

Presiding and Polling Officers

103. The appointment of Presiding Officers and Polling Officer for the Elections shall be as per the Appointment Orders issued by the concerned Returning Officer on or before **12th of September 2018** in case of the Primary Round and **15th of October 2018** in case of the General Elections i.e. three days before the day of Poll, unless otherwise authorised.

104. Presiding Officers and Polling Officer are vested with the authority, roles and responsibilities as per the provisions in the Electoral laws, Rules, Regulations, Handbook for Presiding Officers and Hand Book for Polling Officers.

Counting Supervisors & Counting Assistants

105. The Presiding Officers shall serve as the Counting Supervisors and a Polling Officer as the Counting Assistant authorized as such in the Appointment Orders issued by the concerned Returning Officer.
106. Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants are vested with the authority, roles and responsibilities as per the provisions in the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations and Handbook for Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants.

Media Arbitrator

107. The Media Arbitrator appointed for the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly* shall be vested with the authority and be responsible for fulfilling the roles and responsibilities as provided in the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations and the Appointment Order.
108. The Election Commission shall appoint Social Media Monitor(s) and a Legal Officer as part of the Media Arbitrator's Team.

Accounts Officers

109. Each Dzongkhag Administration shall identify and appoint Accounts Officer(s) to be responsible for managing and keeping the accounts for all expenditures related to the National Assembly Elections 2018 in that Dzongkhag, except for the Public Election Campaign Fund which shall be handled directly by the Public Election Fund Division of the Election Commission with verification by Observers.
110. The finance and expenditure records and accounts shall be maintained and submitted in line with the *Guidelines for the Maintenance of Financial Records and Accounts for an Election in the Kingdom of Bhutan 2018*.

Assignment of Duty Stations

111. The Observers, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Polling Officers and Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants shall not be posted to the Gewog where his/her *Gung* or *Mitsi* is registered.

Authorisation to Record Election Related Events

112. The general public are hereby notified that the Officials appointed on election duty are being officially authorized to photograph, videography and/or record any election-related event or activity which may be used as evidence in the election dispute settlement system.

(W) Election Control Rooms

113. Control Rooms shall be established in the Office of the Returning Officers and at the Election Commission Headquarters to effectively supervise, direct, monitor and backstop the conduct of elections.
114. The Control Rooms shall be set up and function in the manner detailed in the *Manual for Control Rooms*.
115. All concerned officials shall be provided with a copy of the *National Assembly Election Directory 2018* to facilitate effective communications during the elections.

(X) Election Code of Conduct

116. The Election Code of Conduct shall continue to be in force from **18th of August 2018** until the completion of the Election Period i.e. till the declaration of the General Election Results on **19th of October 2018**.
117. All election officers, Candidates and voters must comply with the Election Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Electoral Laws, Rules and Regulations and Guidelines.
118. All electoral stakeholders may use the social media for election or campaign purposes but shall ensure to abide by the Electoral Laws, Election Code of Conduct and specifically adhere to the requirements under the *ECB Social Media Rules of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2018*.

(Y) Law and Order & Deployment of Forces

119. The *Dzongdags* of the twenty *Dzongkhags*, Executive Secretaries of *Dzongkhag Thromdes* and the Gewog Administrative Officers in the *Gewogs* shall serve as the Focal Points for all administrative matters in the *Dzongkhags, Thromdes* and *Gewogs* respectively for the election period.
120. The *Dzongdags*, Executive Secretary and the Gewog Administrative Officers shall be responsible in ensuring that their respective jurisdictions are conducive and congenial for the conduct of free and fair *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly*.
121. The Royal Bhutan Police and the Royal Bhutan Army shall deploy security as per the *Election Security Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2012*
122. The Royal Bhutan Police and the Royal Bhutan Army shall ensure appropriate coverage and deploy adequate number of men and officers so that there is no possibility of any security threat and incidences affecting the electoral process in their respective jurisdictions.
123. The Election Security Focal Officers of the concerned *Dzongkhag* shall work in close coordination and cooperation with the election officers as a team towards conducting the elections smoothly.
124. Election Security personnel shall be fully empowered and authorized, under Section 38 of the Election Act, to detain any individual or group on sufficient grounds to suspect that he/she/group is a threat to peace and harmony and free and fair elections are likely to be undermined.

(Z) Election Dispute Settlement System

125. The quasi-judicial role of the Election Commission during the Election Period shall be fulfilled through the election dispute settlement system which includes three levels of decision-making and appeal:
 - 125.1. *Dzongkhag* Dispute Settlement Body;
 - 125.2. Central Dispute Settlement Body; and

- 125.3. Full Election Commission.
126. Election Disputes may be filed with a Returning Officer, Observer, Chief Election Coordinator or the Chief Election Commissioner but must contain all details as in *Election Dispute Settlement Form 1A (PR/GE)*
127. The adjudication of Election Disputes shall be guided generally by the principles and provisions of the Laws of the land and in particular by the Electoral Laws, Election Dispute Settlement Rules and Regulations and the Election Dispute Settlement Manual.
128. All concerned are reminded that, as notified to the public vide Notification No. ECB/NOTIF-1/2011/825 dated 16th of December 2011, a complaint related to an election shall be dealt only by an Election Dispute Settlement Body or the Election Commission.
129. The Election Commission shall appoint Legal Officers on deputation to the Central Dispute Settlement Body. The Dzongkhag Legal Officers and other Dzongkhag Sector Officer may be coopted to assist and serve on the respective Dzongkhag Dispute Settlement Body during the Election period as and when necessary.
130. The Election Dispute Settlement Bodies shall automatically dissolve in the following manner:
- (a) The Central Election Dispute Settlement Body on **9th of September 2018 for Primary Round** and **12th of October 2018 for General Elections** i.e. six days before the Poll Day; and
 - (b) The Dzongkhag Election Dispute Settlement Body on **6th of September 2018 for Primary Round** and **9th of October 2018 for General Elections** i.e. nine days before the Poll Day.

Appeal

131. An appeal against a decision of the Election Commission or an issue related to the Poll Day or EVM may be lodged to the High Court of the Kingdom of Bhutan from **22nd of October to 6th of November 2018** in accordance with

the provisions of the Election Act, 2008 related to the filing of an Election Petition.

(AA) International Observers & Media

132. The Policy and Planning Division of the Election Commission shall coordinate and liaison all matters that concern the International Observers, National and International Media permitted to observe the Elections as provided in the *National and International Observers Guidelines, Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations* and the *Social Media Rules*.

(BB) Other Reference

133. All stakeholders, general public and Election Officials shall, besides all the Electoral Laws, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Handbooks, Orders and Notifications, also refer to the *Strategy for the Conduct of the Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly* for additional information and guidance in the conduct of the Elections.

Now, thereof, from the day of issue of this Notification, the Election Commission of Bhutan notifies the general public on all matters relating to the *Parliamentary Elections 2018: National Assembly*.

Issued on the 8th Day of the Seventh Month of the Earth Male Dog Year corresponding to the 18th of August 2018



(Chogyal Dago Rigdzin)

Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan