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ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

(Ensuring Free, Fair & Democratic Elections & Referendums)



ECB/CEC-PR/2018/707

Dated: 16th of September 2018

Press Release

Declaration of the Results of the Primary Round of Election to the Third National Assembly 2018

The Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) has the honour to report to the People of Bhutan that the Polls for the Primary Round of elections to the Third National Assembly 2018 in the 47 *Demkhongs* of the twenty Dzongkhags were successfully conducted on 15th of September 2018.

Votes Secured by the Parties

The four registered Political Parties who contested in the Primary Round of elections have received the support of the electorate as follows:

Party	Vote Number	Vote %
Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party (BKP)	28,473	9.78
Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT)	92,722	31.85
Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT)	90,020	30.92
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	79,883	27.44

Further details of the Final Results are available on the Election Commission's Website:

<http://results.ecb.bt/NAPR2018>

Turnout

A total of **2,91,098** (1,47,070 females and 1,44,028 males) voters, **66.36%** of the total registered voters in the country, turned out and cast their votes for the Party of their choice and put their individual signatures on yesterday's Polls which will be recorded in the history of the Nation as the Third Primary Round Polls held under The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

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The details are as follows:

	Female	Male	Total	%
A. Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)	94,566	87,952	1,82,518	59.86
B. Postal Ballot (PB)	52,504	56,076	1,08,580	81.15
Total	1,47,070	1,44,028	2,91,098	66.36

The Overall Voter Turnout Percentage is **66.36 %**.

Election Campaign

Two rounds of Public Debate of the Party Presidents and Vice Presidents were organised. In addition, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) also hosted and aired the *Demkhong Dredurs* in each of the 47 *Demkhongs* for the benefit of the general public. All the Political Parties also conducted separate meetings and door to door campaigns during the election period.

Apart from the meetings called by individual Parties in the Dzongkhags, a total of **479** Common Forums were organized for campaign by all Political Parties, where a total of **40,370 (20,535 female and 19,835 male)** voters attended.

A total of Nu **28.200** million was provided by the State @ of Nu. 150,000/= per *Demkhong* per Party for financing the Primary Round Election Campaign. The Parties are also permitted to spend an equivalent amount from their Party coffers, the bank balances having been declared during the filing of the Letter of Intent..

All expenditures are required to be reported on a weekly basis with full report within a month of the declaration of results i.e. reporting by the two concerned Parties after Primary Round and other two Parties after General Elections.

All the sponsored election campaign advertising including the Public Debates, Television, Radio and Print advertisements as well as Common Forum in each *Gewogs* were conducted and provided as set out under the Laws.

Polls

The Polls on 15th of September 2018 were conducted in **865** Polling Stations in the Country on the Electronic Voting Machines.

The Postal Ballot System included the Conventional Postal Ballot method, Postal Ballot Voting at the **65** Postal Ballot Facilitation Booths and **18** Mobile Booths.

Polling Officials on Election Duty

A total of **5,250** Officials, not including Security Personnel and the permanent officials of the ECB, were deployed for the National Assembly Elections 2018 as follows:

1. Chief Election Coordinators: **20**
2. Deputy Chief Election Coordinators: **39**
3. Assistant Election Coordinators: **205**
4. Other Dzongkhag Dispute Settlement Bodies Members: **40**
5. National Observers: **47**
6. Micro Observers: **2**
7. Returning Officers: **47**
8. Assistant Returning Officers: **2**
9. Presiding Officers: **865**
10. Polling Officers: **2,404**
11. Lady Security: **865**
12. Office of Media Arbitrator: **3**
13. Social Media Monitors: **22**
14. Legal Officers: **6**
15. Booth Officials (Postal Ballot Facilitation and Mobile Booths): **542**
16. Dzongkhag Accounts Officer: **20**
17. Office Assistant in Returning Officer's Office: **97**
18. Temporary staff at Postal Ballot Administration Unit: **24**

Election Disputes

The timely adjudication of disputes and addressing of the complaints and allegations as per the laws are key factors that contribute to free and fair elections and ensuring public trust in the integrity of the system and outcomes. All the **11** cases received by the Commission were resolved before Poll Day and the general public duly intimated on the cases and the decisions.

Poll Day

No major problems were encountered in the conduct of the Polls yesterday.

There were a few cases of those who turned up to vote at the Polling Station but could not vote due to their names being registered as Postal Voters and not on the Polling Station Voter's List although opportunity for claims and objections to the Electoral Roll and Voters Lists had been provided.

Initially, a few Polling Stations encountered "ERROR" reading due to a button remaining in pressed/jammed position. These could be immediately addressed as per the remedy in the EVM Manual. In 5 Polling Stations, they decided to use the spare EVMs with no difficulty or issues encountered in properly counting the ballots cast in the original and the spare EVMs. These were fully witnessed by the Party representatives in the Polling Stations.

The EVM at Thangza Polling Station in Lunana Gewog encountered problem around 3pm during the reading of the voter turnout when the display section could not read the numbers and no records were found. It was decided to conduct a re-poll using the spare EVM machine as most of the voters reside in the vicinity. The voters who had cast their votes earlier were called again as new polls began thereafter and the Poll time was extended and the results were declared around 8 pm. This process was witnessed by the Polling Officers, the Security Official, a Candidate and voters there.

There were a few cases where the Religious Personality status of voters were followed up and confirmed by Head Office against the National Council Electoral Roll and were either facilitated to cast their vote or regretted as they have to revise the status in the *mitsi* records.

As in the past, Voter Photo Identity Cards (VPICs) had to be facilitated for voters who turned up without.

It may be noted that some of the new features in the 2018 Elections include:

1. The Customized Strategy and Work plan for each Dzongkhag developed within national framework focusing on voter turnout much before the election year was successfully drawn and implemented in the 20 Dzongkhags;
2. Introduction of Postal Ballot Facilitation and Mobile Booths for registered postal voters;
3. Number of members in Polling team revised and reduced in view of experience gained over time and based on number of voters assigned to a Polling Stations;
4. Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for key procedures and positions;
5. Focus on reaching those who had not been able to vote in the past including aged, disabled etc;
6. Streamlining financial and procurement systems for timely and prudent delivery and use of election materials;
7. Development of more apps to digitize important procedure including result-relay and consolidation to make it more efficient and error-free; and
8. Purchase of 1000 new Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) to ensure smooth elections.

General Election

With the formal declaration of the Results of the Primary Round Polls, the Election Commission invites the *Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa* and *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa*, two Political Parties securing the Highest and Second Highest total number of votes polled in the 20 Dzongkhags, to formally nominate one Candidate each to contest the General Elections in the 47 National Assembly *Demkhongs* as per the Laws.

The Nomination Papers shall be submitted by the nominated Candidates starting from 17th of September 2018 with the last date for filing nominations on 21st of September 2018 to the respective Returning Officer, as notified earlier vide the Notification ECB/NOTIF-01/2018/365 dated 18th of August 2018, detailing the Election Schedule for the 2018 National Assembly Elections.

All four participating Political Parties campaigned with great enthusiasm and vigour to inform, communicate and interact with the public. The State support to election campaign, as provided under the Constitution and the Electoral Laws, ensured that the electorate had access to information on each Party's ideology, campaign manifesto and witness for themselves the leadership qualities and dynamism of each of the Party's leaders and Candidates designates.

The ECB thank the *Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party* and *People's Democratic Party* for their full-hearted participation in the Primary Round and congratulate *Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa* and *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* for getting enough support from the electorate to go further to the General Election. The ECB submits its deep respect and appreciation to all the voters who turned up to vote and exercised their franchise.

Let us all keep in mind the Words of Wisdom of His Majesty The King Who Commanded after the Local Government Elections 2016 that ***In our Democracy, there is no winning or losing in an election. The most important thing is that all have stepped forward and participated in elections for the opportunity to serve the Tsawa Sum. This is a very good sign and I take it as a cause for reassurance and pride.***

Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan