Polling Stations Open on Time with COVID-19 Precautions and No Major Reported Incidents

On November 8, PACE deployed 1,888 short-term-observers to polling stations in all 14 states/regions to observe the election-day process of the 2020 general elections. From reports received thus far, most PACE observers have been able to observe the process. PACE received isolated reports of observers not being able to enter the polling stations initially, but those incidents have been resolved with the exception of two observers. PACE is reaching out to both the state/region sub-commissions and the Union Election Commission (UEC) to ensure full access for observers to the process.

Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint of PACE said, “we would like to highlight the efforts of polling station officials and sub-commissions to open polling stations on time and to implement COVID-19 prevention measures. At the same time, we want to emphasize that it is important to make sure that all polling station officials follow the UEC’s guidelines and procedures for the remainder of the process, including voting and counting.”

- Most observers (95%) were permitted to enter the polling stations by 6 am. However, 5% of the observers were initially prevented by polling station officers from observing the election process at their assigned polling stations. In most of these cases, polling station officials incorrectly asked for additional permission from the township sub-commissions even though PACE was accredited at the national level. Most observers were able to gain access to the polling stations later. However, there are still two observers who cannot access the polling station. PACE is currently working to contact both sub-commissions and the UEC to get access to the polling stations.
- Form 13 (Advance Voting) was posted outside 77% of polling stations. On average, in-constituency advance voters represented 15% of registered voters.
- At almost all polling stations (94%), COVID-19 prevention guidelines were displayed publicly. Regarding the implementation of COVID-19 prevention measures, almost all polling stations (98%) are providing hand sanitizing gel, 93% are providing masks, 87% are conducting temperature tests, 84% display marks on the floor to encourage social distancing and 23% are providing gloves. However, only a few polling stations (7%) have a separate room or space for voters who might have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Two-thirds of the polling station officers (66%) are women. Women comprised the same proportion (66%) of polling station members present when voting began.
- Less than a third (27%) of polling station facilities were accessible to voters who use wheelchairs. Only a small fraction of polling stations (13%) set up an accessible booth.
- In almost all polling stations (93%) the advance ballot boxes were delivered before the station opened as required by election regulations. At 7% of polling stations, observers reported that they did not see advance ballot boxes being delivered before voting began.
- At the time of opening, almost all polling stations (99%) had all the necessary materials. Some materials, including
ballot boxes and ballots, were missing at less than 1% of polling stations.

- At most polling stations (84%), voting began between 6 and 6:30 am.

PACE will release the preliminary findings on the conduct of the election day process tomorrow, November 9.

The People’s Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) is an independent, non-partisan, non-government domestic election observer group. Upholding the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, PACE conducts its work regardless of race, religion and gender. Moreover, PACE has signed the Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, which has been endorsed by more than 251 organization from 89 countries and territories and is a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) and the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL).

For additional information, please visit www.pacemyanmar.org.

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