

Date: 10 April, 2021

Press Statement on the Opening of the Polling Centers

Transparency Maldives is observing the Local Council and Women's Development Committee Elections held today. Our observer network has a national coverage spanning Malé and the 19 atolls and we would like to thank the 55 observers and volunteers based across the country for their dedication in observing and assisting in the election observation processes. It is their hard work, especially with the restrictions due COVID-19 pandemic that have made this observation effort possible.

Our trained and accredited observers observed the opening of 34 polling centers in 29 islands spread out over 19 Atolls. TM has established a Call Center and online platform to maintain contact with the observers in the field and receive real time updates from them.

Based on the election observation information received from the observers, TM's preliminary findings are outlined below. All the observers deployed by TM reached their designated polling centers by 6.30 am and started to communicate information via the online reporting platform and Call Center from 7.10am onwards.

The data and percentages are only representative of the 34 polling locations observed by TM observers contacted through the online reporting platform and Call Center.

1. Opening time of the polling centers:

General statistics:

- Polling started between 6.50 am and 6.59 am in 2 polling centers (6%)
- Polling started between 7:00 am and 7:10 am in 14 polling centers (41%)
- Polling started between 7:11 am and 7:30 am in 11 polling centers (32%)
- Polling started after 7:30am in 7 polling centers (21%)
- All polling stations opened before 8:00 am

2. Presence of polling officials at polling stations:

All 34 polling stations had a complete polling committee to fulfil all roles of election officials.

3. Polling station preparations:

- In all 34 polling stations, the ballot box was shown to be empty prior to closing it in the presence of minimum two voters.
- Of the 34 observed polling stations, 4 pull-tight seals were not placed to close the ballot box at 2 polling stations.
- Of the 34 observed polling stations, ballot papers were not counted or reconciled before opening at 1 polling station.

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4. Election material in the polling centers:

Required elections materials were available at all 34 polling centers.

5. Presence of Party Observers at polling stations:

Of the 34 observed polling stations:

- Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) observers were present at 25 polling stations.
- Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) observers were present at 24 polling stations.
- Jumhooree Party (JP) observers were present at 3 of polling stations.
- Maldives Democratic Alliance (MDA) observers were present at 2 polling stations.
- Adhaalath Party (AP) observers were present at 1 polling station.
- Independent candidate observers were present at 10 polling stations.
- 3 polling stations had no observers.

6. COVID19 regulations during opening of polling stations:

- In 27 polling stations, the queue was well managed to ensure social distancing.
- In 29 polling stations, all election officials were wearing masks.
- In 31 polling stations, voters were wearing masks.
- In 31 polling stations, temperature was taken at the entrance.
- All polling stations, hand washing or sanitizing arrangements were available.

7. Police presence at polling stations:

Police presence was visible outside all observed polling stations at the time of opening of polling stations.

Based on the observations of TM observers until 8.30 am, the situation in the country is calm and the opening of the polling centers has been mostly uneventful. There haven't been major incidents reported that severely affected the election process so far.

We encourage all parties to maintain the climate of peace. We encourage the public to abide by the safety regulations set out by the Elections Commission and the Health Protection Agency as they continue to go out and vote. Our observers are working hard at polling stations and will be present at the polling stations until the polls are closed and the counting is done.

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