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[Home](#) > Bhutan: Votes for a Change in the National Elections:

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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Fri, 10/19/2018 - 10:08

Paper No. 6446

Dated 19-Oct-2018

By S. Chandrasekharan

In the recently conducted National Elections of October 18, it is learnt that the DNT has come out victorious with 30 out of 47 seats. Formal official results will be announced by the Election Commission in another two days.

Given the fact that in the Primary elections both the DNT and the next one DPT had polled more or less an equal number, the high margin of 30 seats of the DNT against 17 is indeed surprising. What is said to have happened is that those who voted for the PDP and the BKP had now overwhelmingly supported the new and untested entrant- the DNT. Perhaps the postal votes which had a very heavy turn out of 82.87 percent that consisted mainly of civil servants had switched over to the DNT once when the ruling party was out of the race.

Perhaps, the voters wanted a total change and chose a party that had come into existence only in 2013. The second reason could be, that the party was led by a charismatic and popular Urologist Surgeon Dr. Lotang Tshering who did make it a point to visit all the 47 constituencies in the Kingdom.

Dr. Lotang had served in Mongar as a consultant Surgeon for a considerable time and was popular in Thimpu too where he had many patients. He is said to be a vegetarian, a devout Buddhist who carries the beads. He has two adopted children, a girl who is a nun and a boy who is studying in a college in Thimphu.

Of those who won, seven were women- five from DNT and two from DPT. Both the leaders of the parties DNT and DPT won handsomely in their Thimpu and Bumthang constituencies respectively.

Two Foreign News media- the Al Jazeera and Channel News Asia Singapore described the winning DNT, as a left of centre party. Perhaps

they came to the conclusion from the fact that originally, the DNT was named as “Social Democratic Party.” Another reason could be that the Party’s main slogan in the run up to the elections was “Narrowing the Gap” between the rich and the poor.

The DPT which will remain as the main opposition party is led by an equally competent, ex civil servant Dr. Pema Gyamtsho. Earlier some in Indian media and even analysts were concerned with their slogan- “Sovereignty, Security and Self Sufficiency”- but it looks that they will be a responsible and sensible opposition that would strengthen democracy in the country.

What Bhutan has achieved is remarkable-. Another country in the neighbourhood, Maldives started with democratic credentials at the same time. We can see the difference with a tyrant there still desperately hanging onto power by other means!

The new Government has many challenges ahead. The party has promised improvement in the health care and education systems. Funds will have to be found for enhancing the salaries of civil servants who have voted overwhelmingly for the DNT. While hydro power may provide funds, the projects cannot accommodate a large number of youths who are without jobs. The steady drift from rural to urban areas will have to be arrested and the Rural areas need to be developed. Corruption is another major issue that needs immediate attention.

In the matter of foreign policy, relations with India will continue to grow and it is hoped the Indian Government is generous enough in the matter of cost sharing and tariff rates of the power projects. No change is expected in relations with China.

The Election Commission should be congratulated for conducting the elections in a free and fair manner. While foreign policy was never discussed or debated among the contesting parties, a few who tried to raise the issue in the social media were properly dealt with and fined.

Above all, the country is safe under the benign supervision of King Gyalpo 5.

Tags:

[bhutan](#) ^[1]

[National Elections](#) ^[2]

Category:

[Papers](#) ^[3]

Countries:

[Bhutan](#) ^[4]

Topics:

Political ^[5]

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- [3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>
- [4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/bhutan>
- [5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>