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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“YOUR VOTE IS SECRET”

The Elections and Boundaries Department hereby informs the general public, that in any election, ballot papers are numbered for reconciliation and accountability purposes. Election Officials have a responsibility to ensure that all ballot papers counted in an election are only those legitimate ballot papers issued by the Presiding Officer. The public is advised that the law **DOES NOT** require any Presiding Officer or any election official, to inform anyone of the ballot book series or the ballot paper number he/she issues at any given point during the election process.

Whenever the Presiding Officer issues a ballot paper to a voter, the voter proceeds behind a polling booth, within the polling station, to privately cast his/her vote. The voter is then requested to fold the ballot paper in such a way so as to **conceal his/her vote** prior to placing the ballot paper in the ballot box.

Furthermore, in order to safeguard the secrecy of the vote, Section 39 of the Representation of the People Act, makes provision for offences for any person who infringes the secrecy of the vote [Please see attachment]. Any of these infringements carries a penalty of a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars and in default, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year.

The Elections and Boundaries Department assures the general public that training for public officers, assigned election duties, will continue; and the issuing of random ballots be maintained. It has **never** been the standard practice that ballot books number sequence are announced at the polling station; nor are ballots issued to voters in sequential order.

The general public is therefore advised that the process employed in the simulations conducted by BUFERHD is flawed and without merit.

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ATT:

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT- SECTION 39

INFRINGEMENT OF SECRECY

39.-(1) “Every officer and clerk in attendance at a polling station shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting in that station, and shall not communicate to any person, except for some purpose authorised by this Act, before the poll is closed, any information as to the name or number on the register of voters of any voter who has or has not applied for a ballot paper or voted at that station, and no person whoever shall interfere or attempt to interfere with a voter when marking his vote, or otherwise attempt to obtain in the polling station any information as to the candidate for whom any voter there is about to vote or has voted, or as to the number on the back of the ballot paper given to any voter there.

(2) Every clerk and agent in attendance at the counting of the votes shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting and shall not attempt to ascertain at the counting the number on the back of any ballot paper or communicate any information obtained at the counting as to the candidate for whom any vote is given in any particular ballot paper.

(3) No person shall directly or indirectly induce any voter to display his ballot paper after he has marked it, so as to make known to any person the name of the candidate for or against whom he has so marked his vote.

(4) Any person acting in contravention of this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars and in default of payment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year.”

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