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Maldives: Presidential Elections: Nasheed goes it alone in Run off:

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By Dr. S.Chandrasekharan.

In his first response to the results of the first round of elections, Nasheed of MDP declared that the party has resumed the campaign activities to garner some “few thousand” additional votes to guarantee a win in the second round.

In another connection, the party members indicated that an additional 2 to 3 thousand votes would make the difference.

But the arithmetic does not work that way. Nasheed would still need over 4.5 percent votes, granting that all those who voted would come to vote again and that all those who voted for Nasheed would continue to vote for him in the run off also. Even then it would mean an addition of 5000 votes as every additional vote given to Nasheed in the run off would also mean one less for the other candidate.

Nasheed welcomed all those persons in the JP, PPM and the DRP to join him as his party MDP had only development in its heart as its objective. In talking to the Press he said

- * The first round indicated that the citizens want an MDP government and good governance
- * The incumbent President (Waheed) had no support at all. In fact he used the term “Baghee” - traitor in referring to him
- * It will be detrimental to the country’s development if the cabinet is split to various parties.
- * The MDP respects Islam and upholds its values. Some other parties create a lot of deceit under the pretence of speaking about Islam.
- * Ideologically the DRP is closest to the MDP but unfortunately the former has been forced to move away from them under foreign influence.

Yameen of PPM who will be contesting against Nasheed in the second round called upon all those who voted against Nasheed in the last election to come on board with him. Former president Gayoom his half brother had already begun talks with other parties. Yameen

declared that he would be able to get 60 percent of the votes in the run off and that Gasim Ibrahim of JP who lost narrowly in the first round will not refuse a coalition with him. He indicated that Waheed the present president who stood on a non party basis, had already agreed to support him.

Gasim appears to have been upset over the election results. He said that he will not accept the results announced by the Election Commission. He also alleged that over 10000 voters who were not registered had voted in the elections.

There is no doubt that there were some minor discrepancies in some places between the voters list and the number of voters who voted. But nowhere it would reach the proportion of 10000 or even near 2677 votes- (the difference in votes obtained by the PPM candidate Yameen against Gasim). Gasim indicated that he may go to the court.

The Commonwealth team which observed the elections were in all praise for the manner in which the elections were conducted. Dr. Gonzi the head of the team said that

- * the election was inclusive and competitive with freedom of association, assembly and movement of people provided.
- * the media was fair
- * there was some negative rhetoric, some allegations of financing and material supplies to the voters. There were also alleged inappropriate use of state resources.
- *the voter registers were accurate and robust.

Former Indian Elections Commissioner of the Indian Observer team Lyndogh also described the polls as “orderly and unblemished.”

It is doubtful whether Gasim would succeed in the court case in the face of the findings of many neutral observers. It also looks very doubtful whether Gasim would whole heartedly support Yameen Abdulla as their relationship has a bitter history.

Perhaps Nasheed must have taken these into consideration in deciding to go it alone and not go for a coalition with other parties. His experience in the first term where he was unable to get along with those who voted for him like Gasim, Hassan Saeed and others must have made him decide not to go against coalition this time.

On the other hand the other candidate Abdulla Yameen, Gayoom’s half brother will have no compunction to use every card available with him to show that not only the country but also Islam will be unsafe under Nasheed. Some of his supporters may also resort to “India bashing”.

Already the rabid leader Sheikh Mohammed Shaheen Ali Saeed of Adhaalath party has declared that he would join the PPM of Yameen.

Some allegations are already being made that the GMR will be brought back to run the international Airport of Male to favour India in case Nasheed is voted to power.

With all other groups ganging up against Nasheed which we saw in the first round itself, **it looks that it is not going to be an “easy walk” for him in the runoff.**

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