

Liveblog: Duma Vote 2011

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The  **Moscow Times**

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Welcome to MT's State Duma Vote 2011 liveblog. We began monitoring the election news at 9 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 4 (Moscow time), and we continued through the afternoon of Monday, Dec. 5, posting the latest news from around the Internet on this page. To learn about Russia's political parties, check out our [election guide](#). To read other articles about the election, visit our Duma vote [page](#).

Eyewitnesses: Report observations and/or violations in the comment boxes at the bottom of this page, or e-mail webeditor@themoscowtimes.com. Let us know if you'd prefer to remain anonymous.

Monday, Dec. 5, 6:22 p.m. — That's it, folks, we're wrapping up the liveblog. Thanks to all of you for tuning in. Stay with The Moscow Times as events continue to unfold.

5:35 p.m. — The "against all" option could return to Russian ballots, President Dmitry

Medvedev said, Gazeta.ru [reported](#). The lack of such an option this time around sent voters unhappy with United Russia into the arms of the party's opponents.

5:32 p.m. — LDPR chief Vladimir Zhirinovskiy will be the party's candidate for president, his son and party official Igor Lebedev said, Interfax reported.

5:11 p.m. — Communist party chief Gennady Zyuganov all but rules out a coalition with United Russia, instead calling on A Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party to support his party's platform. ([Interfax](#))

5:02 p.m. — The Communists have announced their readiness to join with A Just Russia in contesting election results throughout the country. ([RIA-Novosti](#))

2:55 p.m. — OSCE election observers say vote was well organized but was unfair and marred by "procedural violations and instances of apparent manipulations, including serious indications of ballot box stuffing." Read the [press release](#).

2:40 p.m. — "International observers claim Russian election 'unfairly slanted', marred with 'serious indications of ballot box stuffing'" (The Associated Press). Press conference by OSCE election observers underway.

2:34 p.m. — [Video](#) from yesterday's unsanctioned protest on Triumphalnaya Ploshchad.

2:00 p.m. — Right Cause, which finished last place in Duma elections with a mere .6 percent of the vote, will not field a candidate for presidential elections in March, Kommersant FM tweeted. (Anybody else having trouble getting on their website?)

Gazeta.ru also has a cool [map](#), which shows where each party fared best and worst. United Russia's best showing was in Chechnya (99.5 percent). Worst showing: Yaroslavl region (29 percent).

Yandex has a handy [map](#) of election results throughout the regions. (Tip to Courtney Weaver @courtneymoscow)

1:14 p.m. — Solidarity is staging a [protest](#) today at 7 p.m. on Chistoprudny Bulvar under the banner, "These elections are a farce. Bring back real elections. Give power back to the people!" (What is Solidarity? Read about it and other parties [here](#).)

12:22 p.m. — The Western-leaning Yabloko party will contest the election results, alleging widespread violations, the party's leaders said on Monday. Yabloko officially won 3.3 percent of the vote, failing to cross the 7 percent threshold for representation. ([RIA-Novosti](#))

12:07 p.m. — Central Elections Commission Chairman Vladimir Churov denied knowing anything about videos showing alleged elections violations that have proliferated on the Internet (many examples below). "We haven't heard anything," he said. ([RIA-Novosti](#))

11:50 a.m. — Mixed reports about whether Boris Gryzlov will be staying on as Duma speaker following United Russia's disappointing showing in yesterday's elections. Ekho Moskvyy [reported](#) that he'll be replaced by Deputy Prime Minister Vyacheslav Volodin, citing an anonymous party source. But a senior party official [told](#) Interfax that he'll stay.

11:28 a.m. — Yabloko won! ... in the United States. Interfax is reporting that the Western-leaning party — which looks extremely unlikely to cross the 7 percent threshold for Duma representation — got 30 percent of the 1346 absentee ballots placed in Washington, Miami, Chicago and Cleveland. United Russia placed a distant second with 22 percent. ([Interfax](#))

11:21 a.m. — United Russia took 92 percent of the vote in the restive Dagestan region, home to a long-running Islamist insurgency, the local elections committee said, RIA Novosti [reported](#). The committee also announced turnout of 91 percent. Chechnya — the site of a two bloody separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s, now ruled by Kremlin-backed strongman Ramzan Kadyrov — is claiming 94 percent turnout, with 99.5 percent of the vote going to United Russia. ([Gazeta.ru](#))

10:25 a.m. — Results for State Duma seats. The full results of the election are in. They indicate that United Russia will have 238 seats out of the 450 spots in the State Duma, Interfax is reporting. That's a loss of 77 seats, or a drop of close to a fifth, in the ruling party's representation compared with its 2007 results. ([link](#) to Central Elections Commission)

Meanwhile, the Communist Party probably will receive 92 seats in the next Duma, while A Just Russia will get 64 spots and the Liberal Democratic Party will get 56 spots.

10:00 a.m. — The first figures based on full voting results, with all districts reporting all of their ballots, are expected at 10 a.m. (Moscow time). Based on 95 percent reporting, United Russia has 49.67 percent of Russia's votes from Sunday, with the Communists, Liberal Democrats and A Just Russia parties all remaining above the 7 percent threshold.

9:55 a.m. — In Moscow, 46 percent of votes Moscow went to United Russia, RIA-Novosti [wrote](#). That's with almost all (90 percent) of ballots counted.

9:21 a.m. — United Russia is below a majority in some regions. In Chuvashia, just west of the Urals, the ruling party has 43.7 percent with more than 92 percent of votes reported, while it garnered an anemic 37.6 percent in the Altai region with 98 percent tallied and 32.6 percent in northern Russia's Murmansk region with more than 90 percent tallied. ([RIA-Novosti](#))

9:21 a.m. — Vedomosti reports on the denial-of-service attacks on Sunday that brought down numerous news web sites and sites for reporting elections violations. In essence, the Internet served as a tool for both "mobilizing protests and committing elections violations online," Vedomosti's article [says](#).

9:05 a.m. — News from the Chelyabinsk region: United Russia has received 47.7 percent of the votes on the basis of the 87 percent of ballots counted thus far, the chairwoman of the regional office of the Central Elections Commission announced. She also said A Just Russia is in second place in the region, with 17.6 percent. ([Interfax](#))

8:58 a.m. — British newspaper The Guardian [interviewed](#) university students in Yaroslavl about their voting plans in the presence of the Molodaya Gvardiya, or Young Guard, youth leader for the university.

8:15 a.m. — Beyond the border: China's news agency Xinhua is reporting "Russia's ruling party leading in parliamentary elections" over [a photo](#) of an earnest Medvedev and a frown-

faced Putin during their Sunday night speeches at United Russia headquarters.

8:05 a.m. — Moskovsky Komsolmolets, a populist (and popular) broadsheet daily, is running the headline "One Step From the Precipice." The analysis piece [declares that](#) "the Russian authorities have shown that they still haven't totally lost their instinct for self-preservation."

7:45 a.m. — "Vladimir Putin's Predictions Didn't Come True." That's the lead headline on the web site of Vedomosti, a major business daily in Russia (and, full disclosure, a publication owned by the parent company of The Moscow Times). The article [forecasts](#) a tough political slog for United Russia during the five-year term of this next State Duma.

7:30 a.m. — Now reporting 90 percent of ballots, the Central Elections Commission is putting the figure for United Russia at just below half of the national vote, or 49.93 percent. The Communist Party is holding onto to its 19 percent. (RIA-Novosti [update](#))

6:11 a.m. — Ballot stuffing videos galore. The poster of this video on YouTube claims to have filmed evidence of ballot stuffing in Moscow, at Polling Station 174 on Ulitsa Timura Frunze near Metro Park Kultury. ([link](#))

5:52 a.m. — Elections bring out the best in pundits, and the State Duma vote is no exception. Hard-hitting reporter and foul-mouthed Twitter fanatic Oleg Kashin has spent the night lambasting the ruling party and the elections. Earlier this hour, Kashin tweeted about the votes of a district in Moscow: "The [body part] of us live in Zamoskvorechiye. 90 percent for United Russia." (via @KSHN)

5:24 a.m. — And the percentages are holding for the three minority parties, meaning that they are all but certain to win seats in the State Duma: The Communists have 19.2 percent of the national vote, A Just Russia has almost 13 percent (12.98 percent, to be exact) and the Liberal Democratic Party has 11.7 percent. (Again, [RIA-Novosti](#))

5:08 a.m. — With 80 percent of ballots counted nationwide, United Russia has 50.08 percent of the vote. (Central Elections Commission via [RIA-Novosti](#))

4:54 a.m. — Activists with liberal opposition movement Solidarity have filmed what they call ballot stuffing at a Moscow polling station. The activists confront a woman they accuse of ballot stuffing — which has been called "carousel" voting in this election — and they find pre-checked ballots for United Russia in the men's bathroom at the polling station.

To note, the Solidarity activists tell elections officials that they are filming as journalists for a news outlet. They identify themselves to the camera as both journalists and Solidarity members. ([link](#))

4:45 a.m. — Twitter feed of elections watchdog Golos [signed off](#) for the night with, "The elections are illegitimate. Good night." (via @GOLOS_ORG)

4:00 a.m. — In a video posted to YouTube with the title "Ballot Stuffing," a man records

election workers with the contents of an opened ballot box. He points the camera at what he describes as neat piles of ballots, all marked for United Russia, that were lying in the box. By his account, the elections supervisor on site then shuffles the United Russia ballots into the bigger pile of ballots already on the table.

In the video, the man says of the United Russia piles, "I warned you that there would be falsification. ... What is this?" There's a chuckle in the background, and then the shuffling begins. The location isn't named; the video was posted 30 minutes after polls closed in the second-to-last voting region. ([link](#))

3:23 a.m. — Novaya Gazeta [slammed state television](#) on its Facebook page this morning for not reporting any of the shutdowns of well-known liberal media outlets — shutdowns allegedly caused by hacker attacks — that lasted for most of Sunday.

3:05 a.m. — Closer to home: The Moscow Times experienced intimidation at a polling station on Sunday. In the southern Urals, Moscow Times reporter Alexandra Odynova was ejected from polling station No. 525 in Oktyabrsky, a city of 110,000. The polling station director, Natalya Spirina, told Odynova to leave, instructed her to get a permission letter and said she would be thrown out of the polling station by police if she returned without the letter.

Read more of [our account](#) from Bashkortostan.

3:00 a.m. — United Russia's percentage is fluctuating. With more than 66 percent of ballots counted, the Central Elections Commission is saying the party has 49.98 percent. For the past 20 minutes, state newswire RIA-Novosti has been running [the headline](#) "United Russia Reaches 50 Percent of Votes." When 61 percent of ballots had been tallied, it did in fact reach 50.1 percent.

2:15 a.m. — In Novokuznetsk, a Siberian city of about 550,000, a local television station filmed confusion at a local polling station. A poll worker told NK TV that ballot boxes were filled with checked-off ballots while she and other workers were in a meeting. Elections officials and police then became involved. Actual voting started two hours late. See the NK TV video:

1:54 a.m. — What's in a number? The threshold for receiving seats in the State Duma is 7 percent — that is, a political party must receive at least 7 percent of the votes cast nationwide to "qualify" for Duma seats. With their figures holding at 12 percent and higher, three minority parties appear set to share the Duma with United Russia: the Liberal Democratic Party, A Just Russia and the Communist Party.

Other parties with major opposition figures [failed to meet](#) the threshold: Yabloko has just 2.59 percent, Patriots of Russia has just 0.97 percent and Right Cause has just 0.55 percent. (We are giving these figures unrounded, to show you the fraction of the vote.)

Right Cause had picked Mikhail Prokhorov to lead its ticket to a 7 percent win, but the outspoken billionaire quit in a tizzy in September after alleging the Kremlin interference.

1:41 a.m. — The Central Elections Commission says half of ballots have been counted and that United Russia now has 49.6 percent of the vote nationwide, RIA-Novosti is reporting.

The Communist Party is continuing to come in second, with 19.7 percent of the vote. At 12.9 percent, the liberal-leaning A Just Russia is currently edging out the conservative-leaning Liberal Democratic Party, which holds 12.2 percent. (Central Elections Commission figures [via RIA-Novosti](#))

1:15 a.m. — Elections watchdog Golos is saying Moscow officials are behind schedule in counting votes, and it explains why that's the case: At Polling Station 2121 on Balaklavsky Prospekt, for example, the portable ballot boxes hadn't been opened as of 12:40 a.m. That's almost five hours after the close of Moscow's polls. (Golos on Twitter @GOLOS_ORG)

12:58 a.m. — Dmitry Peskov, press secretary for United Russia party chairman and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, told RT television that United Russia "has shown that it is the leading political force in the country." Peskov attributed the drop-off in votes for United Russia versus the last election for State Duma in 2007 to the hardships experienced by Russians during the economic crisis.

"Of course, the party can't satisfy absolutely everyone in the country, and therefore, obviously, the party lost some percentage of votes," he told RT television, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Monday, Dec. 5, 12:41 a.m. — Candidates are up and about. State Duma Deputy Ilya Ponomarev is at the offices of the Novosibirsk region administration. An editor with The Moscow Times asked him what he's doing and what's happening there. He responded by Twitter, "We are going to be asking about various districts, and we are overseeing the delivery of ballots from YIK to TIK." In other words, from polling stations to election commission offices. (thanks to Ilya Ponomarev @iponomarev for fielding our questions)

11:58 p.m. — United Russia's percentage is fluctuating as state officials continue to count ballots. With just under 40 percent of ballots tallied, it has 48.83 percent of the vote, according to [the top headline](#) on the web site of state newswire RIA-Novosti. RIA-Novosti is citing the Central Elections Commission.

Earlier Sunday night, when the commission had counted just 17 percent of the vote, United Russia's share was 45.8 percent.

11:45 p.m. — Officials and pundits made rounds on state television after the polls closed at 9 p.m., and now they're hitting the airwaves. Central Elections Commission head Vladimir Churov and others are speaking now on Kommersant FM radio. Russian speakers (or proficient listeners) can tune in [online](#). (tip to Oleg Kashin @KSHN)

11:43 p.m. — A regional picture of voter sentiment is emerging as regions in time zones ahead of Moscow finish counting votes. In the Chukotka Autonomous Republic, with 100 percent of the votes counted, United Russia received 70.3 percent. That's a drop from 2007, when it won 78.1 percent, [Vedomosti said](#) citing figures from RIA-Novosti.

The next-biggest vote-getter in Chukotka was the Liberal Democratic Party, with 11.2 percent,

[RIA-Novosti reported](#). That contrasts with the VTsIOM national exit polls, which give the Communists second place.

11:10 p.m. — Putin has spoken at the United Russia post-elections presser. The party's web site is attributing a 130-word statement to him. At the presser, however, he spoke just two sentences (official [statement](#) and tip to the Associated Press' Nataliya Vasilyeva @NatVasilyevaAP)

10:47 p.m. — Medvedev said United Russia "has the moral right to continue the chosen course." He also said "democracy is strengthening" in Russia. ([United Russia web site](#))

10:40 p.m. — President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin have arrived at United Russia party headquarters. Medvedev has thanked "all of the supporters and all of those people who voted for United Russia." ([United Russia web site](#))

10:23 p.m. — Reports of elections violations continue. Elections watchdog Golos just said Sosnovy Bor in the Leningrad region refused to register voters between the ages of 18 and 23. ([Golos Twitter feed](#))

10:15 p.m. — Ekho Moskvyy's web site is now back up (tip to Miriam Elder @MiriamElder)

10:08 p.m. — United Russia leaders, including State Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov, are holding a press conference to announce United Russia's victory at the polls ([RIA-Novosti](#)).

9:45 p.m. — A pollster with FOM predicted on state television that a win of 46 percent will give United Russia just 220 of the 450 seats in the State Duma, Reuters reported. That's far below the 315 seats it took in the last election in 2007, Reuters said.

9:38 p.m. — Numbers so far: 48.5 percent of people responding to the VTsIOM poll said they voted for United Russia candidates, while 19.8 percent said they voted for the Communist Party, 12.8 for A Just Russia and 11.4 percent for the Liberal Democratic Party. (RIA-Novosti, with [infographic](#))

9:30 p.m. — Polls have closed in Kaliningrad, and in-person voting is over. Preliminary election results are coming in. United Russia has garnered 48.5 percent of the vote and that the Communist Party, Liberal Democratic Party and A Just Russia all have won enough votes for representation in the State Duma, per VTsIOM ([RIA-Novosti](#)).

9:06 p.m. — Transparency International's Russia chief [told Gazeta.ru](#) that she saw a young man stuff a ballot box at a Moscow polling place, even as observers and officials admonished him not to do so. The man ran out, and the officials said they won't count the ballots when the box is opened. (tip to Lenta.ru via Kevin O'Flynn @oflynnkevin)

8:56 p.m. — The web sites for New Times and Bolshoi Gorod are back up, while Ekho Moskvyy is down again.

8:40 p.m. — United Russia spokesman told Interfax that the dominant party's web site has come under denial-of-service attacks throughout the day. "Hackers are periodically attacking the site, but our IT specialists have been fully capable of quickly addressing the problems," Interfax quotes the spokesman as saying ([link](#)). The [United Russia site](#) is fully operational.

8:20 p.m. — Polls have closed in Moscow. They will be open in Kaliningrad for another 40 minutes. Then in-person balloting will be officially over for this election.

7:42 p.m. — Pens with disappearing ink discovered at a voting center in Moscow (see video below) in violation of election rules. Report confirmed by elections official ([link](#)).

7:25 p.m. — A representatives of the Central Elections Committee said elections in Moscow were honest and denied claims of fraud, including so-called "carousels" of ballot stuffers. ([Lenta.ru](#))

7:20 p.m. — Official turnout so far: 50.4 percent nationwide. Stand-out regions include Chechnya (94 percent), Kabardino-Balkaria (90 percent) and Ingushetia (73 percent).

7:12 p.m. — Gazeta.ru editor-in-chief Mikhail Kotov called to answer for joint project with hounded election monitor Golos. ([Lenta.ru](#))

A word from Chuck Norris ([link](#)).

Watch live footage from Triumfalnaya Ploshchad [here](#). (It looks pretty quiet now.)

6:50 p.m. — Eduard Limonov of the Other Russia, Roman Dobrokhotov and other opposition activists arrested at an unsanctioned protest on Triumfalnaya Ploshchad. ([Lenta.ru](#))

6:10 p.m.

6:00 p.m. — Turnout nationwide: 41.9 percent, according to the Central Elections Committee. ([RIA-Novosti](#))

How the "carousel" works ([link](#)). (Tip to Nikolaus von Twickel @niktwick)

4:50 p.m. — Slon.ru is back. Ekho Moskvyy, The New Times and Bolshoi Gorod still down.

4:45 p.m. — Letter from U.S. Ambassador John Beyrle about the elections. ([link](#))

4:40 p.m. — [Report](#) of votes being purchased with meat and booze in Sverdlovsk region. (Tip to Julia Ioffe @ioffeinmoscow via Twitter)

It's worth mentioning that the weather has been quite poor today in Moscow and elsewhere, perhaps depressing voter turnout.

4:17 p.m. — Ekho Moskvyy's [letter](#) to the Central Elections Committee regarding the DDoS attack against it posted online.

Ah, simpler times ([video](#)). (Tip to TV Dozhd via Kevin Rothrock @agoodtreaty)

3:52 p.m. — Live Journal is back online. It was paralyzed by a suspicious DDoS attack earlier today.

3:50 p.m. — Disturbing details have emerged about Sergei Udaltsov's detention today in

downtown Moscow. Udaltsov, the leader of Left Front, was on his way to Triumfalnaya Ploshchad when he was hustled into an unmarked Mitsubishi by unidentified men and driven away, Left Front spokeswoman Anastasiya Udaltsova said, Interfax [reported](#).

3:43 p.m. — By 1 p.m., turnout across Russia reached 25.4 percent. ([RIA Novosti](#))

This video appears to show United Russia activists campaigning outside a polling station in Volgograd in violation of election laws. (Tip to @Sky269 via @navalny)

This [sign](#) has been spotted on the fence that surrounds Triumfalnaya Ploshchad, once a popular rallying point for oppositionists. The square was fenced off in 2010 under the pretext of a grand renovation that appears to have gone nowhere since then. The sign reads, "Dear Muscovites! This fence has been erected in the event of popular unrest due to massively fraudulent elections. We apologize for the inconvenience." (Tip to Kevin Rothrock @agoodtreaty)

2:56 p.m. — Live Journal, the popular blogging platform regarded as a bastion of free speech in Russia, appears to be down, possibly a victim of the same DDoS attacks that have knocked out the web site of Ekho Mosvkiy radio, the New Times and other opposition-minded information portals.

2:45 p.m. — Police have rounded up anti-elections protesters from Left Front at an unsanctioned protest on Manezh Square. Among those arrested was group leader Sergei Udaltsov. ([Interfax](#))

2:08 p.m. — United Russia is responding to accusations of voter fraud with charges of its own. A senior party official accused Anton Belyakov of A Just Russia of starting a fight outside a voting booth in the Vladimir region. He also said A Just Russia was ballot stuffing in the region. ([Interfax](#))

1:45 p.m. — An elderly man died after voting in Nizhny Novgorod. ([Interfax](#))

1:40 p.m. — Voting has wrapped up in the Far East's Primorsky region. Interfax is reporting turnout of 42.86 percent, 4.5 percent fewer than in 2007. Turnout was generally lower in urban areas such as Vladivostok, where between 32 and 38 percent of registered voters cast their ballots. ([Interfax](#))

1:05 p.m. — Widespread reports of "[carousels](#)" operating throughout the capital and in other cities. Carousels are busloads of activists who travel about the city, casting multiple — often false — ballots. Lenta.ru's Ilya Azar says he participated in one (Lenta.ru via Twitter). The Communists claim to have uncovered another in Saratov. ([Interfax](#))

Elections-inspired musical [interlude](#). (Thanks, Lenta.ru!)

12:30 p.m. — Election monitor Golos says the DDoS attack that has knocked out its web site is generating 50,000 hits per second (Source: Golos via Twitter). More on harassment of the group from the [BBC](#).

12:00 p.m. — Vladimir Churov, head of the Central Elections Committee, says turnout has

been high. He called on officials to make voting as convenient as possible. (Source: [Russian News Service](#))

11:35 a.m. — The website of the feisty weekly Bolshoi Gorod is down. The Central Elections Committee said it has not yet received a complaint from Ekho Moskvyy about a denial of service attack that has paralyzed its web site. Earlier, Ekho Moskvyy chief Viktor Venediktov said the attack was designed to prevent the station from reporting voting violations. He promised to file a formal complaint with the elections committee.

11:30 a.m. — The Central Elections Committee told Rossia-24 television that 5 percent of Russians have voted as of 10 a.m. Moscow time. (Source: Rossia-24 via [Lenta.ru](#))

Seven hundred international observers are monitoring today's elections. (Ekho Moskvyy)

11:15 a.m. — Ekho Moskvyy radio is alleging "massive falsification" in the Strogino region of Moscow by students paid to vote for United Russia (Source: Ekho Moskvyy via Twitter). The opposition-minded radio station is preparing an official complaint over a hacking attack that has left its web site paralyzed since early Sunday morning.

11:14 a.m. — Other prominent political figures, including LDPR boss Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, and former Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov, have been spotted at the polls.

10:40 a.m. — Patriarch Kirill calls on voters to protect the nation's "spiritual unity" (Source: [Vesti](#)). Earlier, MT reported that Orthodox priests were being asked to help the ruling United Russia party ([article](#)).

10:30 a.m. — President Dmitry Medvedev and his wife, Svetlana, have arrived at school No. 1118 at 10 Dovzhenko Street to cast their votes. ([Interfax](#))

10:25 a.m. — Voting is taking place around the world, with stations open in Thailand, Belarus, Sudan and elsewhere. (Russia Today)

9:45 a.m. — Attacks on opposition-minded web sites reportedly spread to Ekho Moskvyy radio, The New Times and Slon.ru.

9:25 a.m. — Golos, Russia's only independent election monitor, is reporting that its election monitoring [web site](#), which allows users from across the country to report irregularities and lawbreaking, is down. The government has [cracked down](#) on the organization in recent weeks, with state-owned NTV television running an "exposé" about the group and Tomsk region barring its monitors from polling stations.

Sunday, Dec. 4, 9:00 a.m. — With the addition of Kaliningrad, polls are now open in all of Russia's 83 regions at 95,247 polling stations nationwide, according to the Central Elections Commission. Throughout the country, voting began at 8 a.m. local time.

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