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## Bhutan's democratic bid promising: EU



Press Trust of India

Thursday, March 6, 2008 (Thimpu)

In spite of growing instances of mudslinging between the two contesting parties and a low level of awareness among the voters, the European Union has expressed optimism about a successful transition in Bhutan.

The EU said that the Himalayan nation has opted for democracy at a perfect time of "unprecedented peace".

"There's no doubt about the success of this new process," said Jos Javier Poms Ruiz, who is heading an EU Election Observation Mission to Bhutan.

"In our observations so far, most of the processes comply with international standards," he told reporters.

"Unlike many countries, which opted for democracy following political and social unrest, Bhutan was introducing the process at a time of unprecedented peace and against the will of the people, who chose to be guided by the wise and visionary monarchs," he said.

A team of 15 observers from 13 different EU countries is in Bhutan to "observe, among others, campaign environment, role of media, work of election administration and women's participation in the historic elections on March 24".

While six observers will be based in the capital here, nine will spread across the country in pairs, each covering five regions in Thimphu, Phuentsholing, Samdrup Jongkhar, Trashigang and Bumthang.

"Each pair will cover between 10 and 15 of the over 800 polling stations in the country, depending on difficulty and distance of the polling stations," Ruiz said.

Candidates of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa and Peoples Democratic Party are contesting for the 75-member National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament.

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