

Beat: News

N. Korea: Kim Jong-un wins parliamentary election with 100 per

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USPA News - North Korean leader Kim Jong-un secured a 100-percent victory in Sunday's parliamentary election, the government reported on Monday, though voters in his district had little choice as anyone who dares to vote against the single candidate faces harsh punishment. A report from the Central Election Committee said all voters, except those out of the country or working at sea with permission, took part in Sunday's election.

It said all voters in Constituency No. 111, in Mount Paektu district, had voted in favor of Kim with not a single vote against him. "This is an expression of all the service personnel and people's absolute support and profound trust in supreme leader Kim Jong-un as they single-mindedly remain loyal to him, holding him in high esteem as the monolithic center of unity and leadership and a striking demonstration of their revolutionary spirit and indomitable will to make a fresh shining history of Kim Il Sung's and Kim Jong Il's Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong Un," the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in a dispatch. Referring to North Korea by its official name, the report added: "The DPRK is ushering in the era of great surge in building a thriving socialist nation under the outstanding and tested leadership of Kim Jong Un. ... Thanks to Kim Jong Un's leadership, the DPRK will as ever prosper as the glorious state of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and ... is sure to win a final victory." Only results for Constituency No. 111 were released on Monday, but voters in other parts of North Korea also went out to vote to elect deputies for the country's 13th parliament, which consists of 687 legislators. It was not immediately known when results from the entire country would be released. Sunday's elections were the first for leader Kim Jong-un, who took over to lead the impoverished and secretive country in December 2011 after his father, Kim Jong-il, died of a heart attack. Foreign experts and observers believe the election results may reveal possible changes in the country's power elite under the new leadership. North Koreans last went to the ballot box in July 2011 to `elect` deputies to provincial, city and county assemblies. But voters who showed up had little choice but to vote for `candidates` who were already selected for them by the ruling party, with the government reporting a 99.97 percent turnout among registered voters and those on the ballots receiving 100 percent of the vote. Dutch stamp dealer Willem van der Bijl, who was briefly detained and accused of being a spy in 2011 during his 24th trip to the country, provided a unique insight into the election process in a 2012 interview with NK News, an independent American news website that focuses on events in North Korea. Van der Bijl appeared in a posting on the website of the state-run Pyongyang Times newspaper after the elections took place and initially seemed to praise the process. "Looking round the poll, I have been greatly impressed by the free and democratic elections and I have had a better understanding of the DPRK's reality," he was quoted as saying in the report, that later turned out to be partially fabricated. The stamp dealer told NK News that he had visited a polling station on election day and told North Korean journalists that the experience had given him a "totally new view" on how elections are held in North Korea, and that he was "surprised" to see how the country's system works. "This was an ironic comment - in my view - on what I had seen," he said. "From their point of view, a foreigner who says he is surprised, etc., and if you miss the ironic undertone, it is a perfect piece of propaganda. Later I found out my `interview` is on the internet as well, and even signed by me, with what is indeed my signature, as a scan from my passport." Van der Bijl described a process in which voters have little choice but to vote in favor of the pre-selected candidate. "The voter is allowed to take a piece of paper from one of the piles at the table, in front of the officials, and visible to everybody in the room," he said. "The paper is, per pile, colored green or red, and it is your `free` choice as to whichever color you like. After you took, in front of everybody, your - green, I hope - piece of paper, you ... are able to put it in a box." In North Korea, all residents are legally required to vote during elections unless they have left the country with permission or if they work at sea. A similar process to what Van der Bijl described has also been reported in which voters are able to vote against the selected candidate by picking up a red pen, but doing so is known to result immediate arrest and severe punishment.

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