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AZERBAIJAN TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON WEDNESDAY

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Presidential election in Azerbaijan is set to take place this coming Wednesday. Eight major candidates are contesting for the country's one of the top constitutional positions.

The incumbent President of the country, İlham Aliyev who is also the Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party, has ruled the country since 2003. If he is elected again on Wednesday, he will hold the presidential office for a fixed term of seven years. According to the Election Commission of Azerbaijan, around 5641 polling stations have been set up across the country. Out of the total polling stations, 5426 have been declared permanent while 215 have been set up on a temporary basis.

The Election Commission of Azerbaijan has also established at least 41 polling stations in different countries for its citizens living abroad. It is expected that at least 13820 voters living outside Azerbaijan will cast their votes using these facilities. To ensure that the elections are transparent and are held in a free and fair manner, a large number of webcams have also been installed in polling stations across the country. Azerbaijan is known to have used technology for some time to ensure transparency in elections. About 10 years ago, when Azerbaijan started using webcams to monitor the electoral process in the country, around 500 cams were used initially. Eventually, the number was increased to 1000. The objective in this regard has been to ensure the monitoring of at least 20% of polling stations using webcams.

Reportedly, around 871 international observers including journalists have been invited by Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission (CEC) to monitor the incoming presidential election. Observers belonging to 59 different countries and 58 international organizations will monitor the election on Wednesday. The number of local election observers who have been accredited so far stands at 56,864 out of which 1962 have been accredited by CEC. They will monitor the election all across the country and also have the right to observe the polling stations within the jurisdiction of their relevant constituency. Moreover, members with consultative voting rights whose number is around 5099 have been appointed to the lower election commission by political parties.

According to different reports, a comprehensive system of transparency has been established to ensure fairness in the overall voting process. While speaking to the APP, the representatives of Azerbaijan's Election Commission, Lala Aliyeva, Sevinj Mahammadova and Kadija said that the polling will officially begin 8.00 a.m and polling stations will close at 7.00 p.m. Authorities in Azerbaijan hope that the turnout is likely to exceed 80 percent as polling stations have been set

up in a large number and in all regions. They further noted that police officials would be deployed outside all polling stations to ensure security.

Besides, IlhamAliyev, the candidates that are vying for the president office are the following:

Razi Nurullayev □ he is a political analyst and the former deputy chairman of Azerbaijani Popular Front Party.

Sardar Jalaloglu □ he is the Chairman of Azerbaijan Democratic Party. He previously contested for the same position in 2013. Zahid Oruc □ he is a member of the Parliament since 2001. He is also the former Deputy Chairman of Motherland Party. He ran for the same position in 2013 and came at number 5.

Hafiz Hajiyev □ he is the Chairman of the Modern Equality Party. He previously participated in the 2003, 2008 and 2013 elections. Gudrat Hasanguliyev □ he is a member of the Parliament of Azerbaijan and also the Chairman of the Whole Azerbaijan Popular Front Party. He is a seasoned politician and previously participated in the 2003, 2008 and 2013 elections. Araz Alizada □ a member of the Parliament of Azerbaijan and Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan.

Faraj Guliyev □ he is a member of the Parliament of Azerbaijan and the chairman of the National Revival Movement Party. He also participated in the 2013 presidential election.

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