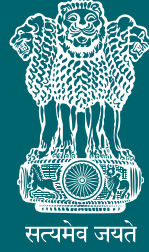


**Edition 2**



# SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS



**भारत निर्वाचन आयोग**  
**Election Commission of India**

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

Document No : 324.6.EPS:SOP:014:2023





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## CHAPTER-I

### LAST 72 HOURS (P-3)

Conduct of elections involves various activities to be carried out over a long time frame of many months. The district administration along with the police and other line departments execute given task with utmost precision. However, the last 72 hours prior to poll day, which includes the last day of campaign period, non-campaign period (last 48 hours) and poll period are very critical in election management. Timely and meticulous advance planning, rigorous implementation and close supervision under competent authority is essential to ensure the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections. It is imperative that the senior election functionaries at the state, district and constituency level are fully aware of the multifarious important activities and steps required to be undertaken during this crucial period and are thoroughly prepared to execute them as per the directions of the Commission.

Considering the multitudinous actions required to be taken on different functional dimensions by the District Election Officer (DEO) and the Returning Officer (RO) during this period, the present SOP is designed to enumerate the major action points at critical junctures like last 72 hours, last 48 hours, last 24 hours, poll day, P+1 day and Re-poll/adjourned poll in a crisp and lucid manner. The Commission has decided that email and SMS alert shall be sent by the concerned division at ECI level to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the poll-going State/UT at these critical junctures directing the activation of necessary tasks, who in turn, shall alert all the DEOs and ROs in the respective State/UT. After each specific period, a COMPLIANCE REPORT shall be sent by the CEO after compilation from DEOs in compact schedule to the Commission indicating the action taken towards the completion of activities highlighted in the SOP during the specific period.

Important activities and steps to be ensured during the LAST 72 HOURS prior to the poll day are outlined as follows:

#### **1. POLLING PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT:**

##### **1.1 Third Randomization of polling personnel:**

- 1.1.1** The third randomization of polling personnel be done on P-2 day in presence of the General Observer to ensure timely dispatch of polling parties.

However, in areas with difficult topography such as hilly areas in North India and North-Eastern India, etc., relaxation in respect of third randomization may be done on P-3 day also after approval of the Commission on case-to-case basis.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- 1.1.2 The result of randomization shall be printed and sealed in the presence and under signature of the General Observer.
- 1.1.3 The sealed covers shall only be opened on P-1 day (or any other day scheduled for dispatch) at the dispatch center.

### **1.2 Randomization of female polling personnel:**

- 1.2.1 The female polling personnel should not be put on duty on the basis of computer randomization process.
- 1.2.2 They should be put on duty by manual randomization in presence of the observers in the neighboring polling stations so that they are able to go to the polling stations on the morning of the poll day.
- 1.2.3 Every female official called for duty should be informed of the arrangements made for her stay and transportation.
- 1.2.4 Pregnant women or lactating mothers, whether on maternity leave or not or women staff who are otherwise on medical advice not to undertake any rigorous or hazardous work, may be exempted from election duty.

### **1.3 Deployment of Persons with Disability:**

Persons with benchmark disability as defined under section 2(R) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 should not be deployed on election duty unless necessary. However, if any such person is required to be put on election duty, prior approval of the General Observer may be obtained giving full details and justification. The DEO and the RO shall make personal efforts to ensure that the special needs and requirements of the Persons with Disability are taken into account, while choosing the polling station for deployment. It shall be ensured that they are posted at the polling stations located in the headquarters. In case any such physically challenged person is even inadvertently deputed to any difficult location, the RO should be in a position to make necessary change manually in consultation with the Observer.

### **1.4 Certificate of DEO on formation of polling parties:**

In order to ensure that Commission's instructions are complied with strictly, District Election Officer shall furnish to the Election Commission through the Observers and to the Chief Electoral Officer of the State/UT, a certificate immediately after the polling parties have been formed for an election.

### **1.5 General instructions regarding arrangements for welfare of polling personnel:**

- 1.5.1 A senior officer as the nodal officer shall be identified and appointed by DEO to coordinate and supervise arrangements made for polling personnel.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- 1.5.2 The name and designation, office and residential address, telephone numbers including mobile number and e-mail ID of the nodal officer shall be mentioned in the district/constituency election management plan and district website.
- 1.5.3 The contact numbers should also be brought to the notice of all the polling personnel drafted for election duty.
- 1.5.4 Enough care shall be taken to ensure that the information regarding dispatch and receipt centre arrangement etc. is conveyed to the polling personnel latest by P-3 day through the sponsoring authorities and district website.
- 1.5.5 At the dispatch centers where dispersal of polling parties for more than one Assembly Constituency is arranged, multiple color coded infrastructural arrangements like tents, stationeries, signage are to be made to mitigate confusion and harassment of the polling personnel in finding out his AC where he has been posted.
- 1.5.6 Help desk should be at every AC level dispersal center to meet up the queries of the polling personnel regarding any allowances to be transferred to their bank account.
- 1.5.7 Similarly, desk to provide information on dispatch of postal ballots and EDC to be in place.
- 1.5.8 Double rate of remuneration shall be given to polling official going to the Polling Stations 3 days or more in advance.

### **1.6 Accommodation and food for polling parties at the Polling Stations –**

- 1.6.1 Suitable arrangements for accommodation, furniture, food, drinking water, toilet facilities along with electricity for the polling personnel have to be made.
- 1.6.2 Special arrangements for female and PwD polling personnel have to be made with due regard to their privacy.
- 1.6.3 Local Self Help Groups (SHG) or Mid-day meal workers may be mobilized to provide food to the polling personnel as per requirement on payment basis.
- 1.6.4 Arrangements for bedroll etc. may also be provided through local SHGs on rental basis. The rates of food, bed rolls etc. may be pre-determined and standardized by the District Election Officer.
- 1.6.5 The DEO shall review the situation and ensure that proper arrangements are made depending on the local condition and limitations.
- 1.6.6 Arrangement for advance movement of polling parties on P-3 Day.

## **2. MULTIPLE CIVIL (NON-FORCE) MEASURES AT POLLING LOCATION:**

- 2.1 Critical Polling Stations shall at least be covered by one or more of the following measures to keep a watch on the polling process, as Multiple Civil

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

(non-Force) measures:

- (i) Micro-observer mainly from Central Govt. employees
- (ii) Video camera
- (iii) Webcasting
- (iv) CCTV

**2.1.1** Necessary arrangements shall be made with regard to above measures, to provide immediate support, for ensuring free and fair elections and as a confidence building measure for voters. The arrangements shall be checked 72 hours before the day of poll to avoid any confusion.

**2.2** Logistics for Micro-observers:

**2.2.1** One Nodal Officer for Micro-observers shall be appointed for each district by the DEO.

**2.2.2** Each Micro-observer shall be given a photo identity card by the DEO to ensure his/ her access to the Polling Stations.

**2.2.3** Micro-observers should reach the polling station at least 90 minutes before the start of poll. They shall perform their assigned duties and submit report to the General Observer in prescribed Format. Micro-observers' reports shall also be taken into consideration at the time of scrutiny after poll for taking a decision on re-poll or disciplinary action against any delinquent polling staff.

**2.3** Identification of locations for webcasting:

**2.3.1** Commission desires that arrangements for webcasting shall be done in all critical polling stations and in all polling stations in vulnerable areas or at least in 50% of total polling stations including auxiliary polling stations, whichever is higher.

**2.3.2** Training of all the officer/Staff associated with Webcasting is very important, All Presiding Officers, polling officers, Sector Officer for Polling Station where Webcasting is planned must be familiarized in Webcasting and duties associated with it. The officials of State/District Control room shall be trained for monitoring method and appropriate reactions to be initiated.

**2.3.3** Webcasting in polling stations will be restricted for viewing only by the election machinery in keeping with the spirit of Rule 93(1) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.

**2.3.4** Special focus on Sector Officers Training- All Sector Officers and Booth Level officers must be thoroughly trained on webcasting. They

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

should be fully involved in the supervision for webcasting and live checking of webcasting, two days before the poll.

**2.3.5** A trouble shooting team may be constituted for the purpose of webcasting for each constituency.

### **3. LAW AND ORDER/SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS:**

- 3.1** The Commission has issued detailed and comprehensive consolidated instruction on measures related to law and order for conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections.
- 3.2** Nodal Officers should be appointed at all functional level in State and districts who will be responsible for keeping contacts and coordination with the election administration, police officials, home department and CAPF.
- 3.3** A reference material should also be prepared indicating the relevant Sections of Indian Penal Code, the R.P Act and Model Code of Conduct (MCC) that are relevant during elections. This reference material book should indicate the nature of offence and the relevant Sections whether cognizable or non-cognizable and the action to be taken in case of any violation. This reference material should be made available to all field officials as well.
- 3.4** At District level, the DEO-cum-District Collector/DM shall hold a special meeting with Commissioner/SP and senior police officials in presence of the General Police & Expenditure Observers for handling the law-and-order situation for the most critical 72 hrs. to the close of poll and chalk out strategies to ensure free and fair elections.



Area domination by Police and CAPF

### **3.5 Special efforts to curb misuse of money power:**

**3.5.1** During the last 72 hours, a close tracking should be made by each and every Thana officer with regard to all forms of inducement to voter.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

The field level election machinery/police administration/participating enforcement agencies should work as a team to track such types of malpractices.

- 3.5.2 Proper checking at the inter-State border police posts, state excise check posts and commercial tax check posts will be helpful in tracking such transportation of Narcotics, freebies, precious metal, Cash, Liquor etc. Timely meeting of border States/UTs is of utmost importance to check the movement of inducements from their respective borders as well. Whenever a consignment of such liquor is intercepted, proper investigation should follow to trace the origin of such supply and the destination.
- 3.5.3 A proper investigation is essential to establish linkage between the election process and the supply of such inducements.
- 3.5.4 Media should be briefed whenever such consignments are seized.
- 3.5.5 Drives should be launched to unearth and seize unlicensed arms and ammunition.
- 3.5.6 A very thorough search and seizure by the State Police of unlicensed arms and places of indigenous manufacture of arms and ammunition shall be carried out and persons involved shall be arrested.
- 3.5.7 Intra -state and inter- State movements of trucks and commercial vehicles shall be strictly checked with a view to prevent smuggling of arms and ammunitions and anti-social elements. Raids should be carried out regularly and intensively on underground arms factories.
- 3.5.8 Strict vigil and thorough checking of lorries, light vehicles, and all other vehicles from 3 days before the poll till counting of votes to ensure that no non-desirable elements or arms and ammunitions are being transported from outside.
- 3.5.9 Inter-state supply of Arms and ammunitions should be allowed only on the basis of valid papers including “No Objection Certificate” from the respective DM/CP, as applicable in law. Care should be taken that supply reaches the actual consignee and not into the hand of unauthorized person.

### **3.6 Checking of Inter-state and International Border and placement of Nakas:**

- 3.6.1 Extensive patrolling duty on assigned routes covering the State International Border.
- 3.6.2 In case of inter- state border falling within the AC boundary, co-ordination meeting with the neighboring district & in case of Int. border, co- ordination meeting with the BSF, Assam Rifles in case of Myanmar border, ITBP (Indo Tibetan Border Force) on China border, SSB (Sahastra Seema Bal) on Nepal border will have to be completed by P-2 Day.

**3.6.3** Placement of NAKA at Strategic Points with element of surprise checking to start immediately after issuance of notification of election with the announcement of election by the Election Commission of India.

**3.6.4** Strict vigil shall be maintained by thorough checking of lorries, light vehicles and all other vehicles from P-3 Day to ensure that no undesirable elements or arms and ammunition are being transported into the constituency from outside and to apprehend them if they are doing so. Such checking of vehicles shall continue till the completion of the counting of votes and the declaration of results. Sealing of inter-state borders/ inter-district borders from P-3 to prevent infiltration of anti-social and disruptive elements.

**3.6.5** Sealing of International Border from P-3 day to weed out possibilities of infiltration of undesired elements from across the border.

**3.7 Communication Shadow Areas:** Advance planning for shadow areas/ communication infrastructure: Special alternative measures to be put on place to cover missing links in mobile shadow zones. Fleet of cycle/motorcycle messengers may be put on service where no contacts through any kind of phones could be made besides arrangements of satellite phone, VHF, wireless set etc. Services of private telecom service providers may also be explored.

#### **4. EVM and VVPAT MANAGEMENT:**

**4.1 Deployment plan of ECIL/BEL engineers should also be made on P-3 day for cluster of sectors.**

**4.2 Movement, storage and security of EVMs and VVPATs provided to Sector Officers/Zonal Magistrates**

- (i) Sector Officers/Zonal Magistrates shall be provided 'Reserve EVMs and VVPATs' on Poll Day.
- (ii) In case reserve EVMs and VVPATs are provided to Sector Officers/ Zonal Magistrates before Poll Day, the reserve EVMs and VVPATs shall be kept at Intermediate strong room (Government Building) with proper security. Intimation should be given to all the contesting candidates in advance for deputing their representatives while opening and closing of the intermediate strong room and should be done under videography/ CCTV coverage.
- (iii) The place of storage of reserve EVMs and VVPATs are identified and earmarked in advance and intimated to all contesting candidates/their agents.
- (iv) Reserve and non-functional un-pollled EVM/VVPAT carried by the Sector Officer should have proper labeling like "RESERVE", "MOCK POLL REPLACED".

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- (v) All EVMs and VVPATs provided to Sector Officers/Zonal Magistrates shall be under cover of armed police at all times.
- (vi) For movement of EVMs and VVPATs, vehicles should have GPS tracking/ Mobile app-based tracking.
- (vii) Non-functional unit replaced before start of actual poll (mock poll) shall be handed over to Sector Officer for depositing the same in Receipt Centre.
- (viii) Categories C (Un-pollled non-functional- replaced during mock poll on poll day) & D (Unused Reserved) EVMs and VVPATs are to be stored in the strong room other than the polled strong room and also not in the vicinity of polled EVM Strong room. Armed Security should be provided to warehouse/strong room, where Categories C & D EVMs and VVPATs are stored.

### 4.3 Movement, storage and security of polled EVMs and VVPATs

- (i) All EVMs and VVPATs provided to polling parties shall be always under cover of armed police.
- (ii) For movement of EVMs and VVPATs, vehicles shall have GPS tracking/ Mobile app-based tracking.
- (iii) All polled EVMs-VVPATs (Category-A) and polled non-functional (Category-B) shall be stored in the strong room (AC/AS-wise separately) in the presence of candidates/their representatives under videography.
- (iv) 24x7 CCTV coverage of the sealed door of the strong room and corridor.
- (v) 1 Platoon Armed Security shall be provided for the Polled EVM Strong Room if in Non LWE areas and 1 Coy CAPF security if in LWE/Militancy/ Insurgency areas.
- (vi) Arrangement for uninterrupted power supply, fire extinguisher, logbook, duty register to be made at the Strong Room.
- (vii) All contesting Candidates shall be allowed to depute their representatives for watching the security arrangements of strong room and allow them to stay outside the inner perimeter.
- (viii) If entrance of the Strong Room is not visible, CCTV display shall be arranged for them.
- (ix) Opening and closing of Polled Strong Room in the presence of candidates/ their representatives, ECI Observer under videography.
- (x) P-2/3 Movement: the rate of remuneration to be double for the polling official going to the polling station before three days before the polls.
- (xi) The machines may be allotted in double set considering the problems of replacement of machine in difficult terrain.



- (xii) In cases, where the EVMs & VVPATs are required to be shifted to the Dispersal Centers, the movement of EVMs and VVPAT should be done after maintaining the security protocol.
- (xiii) GPS tracking and storage of reserve machines to be monitored. No checking of VVPAT at Dispersal Centre (DC).

#### **4.4 ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMs) & VVPATs: SoP for Training of EVMs & VVPATs**

- (i) EVMs and VVPATs pertaining to Training and Awareness may be re-introduced as Poll Day Reserve, after de-novo FLC, randomizations, candidate setting, etc. carried out as per the extant instructions of the Commission.
- (ii) Destruction of VVPAT paper slips generated during Training and Awareness programme by shredding machines in presence of Gazetted officer and DEO shall submit compliance certificate in this regard on P-3 day to CEO.

### **5. EXPENDITURE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS:**

- 5.1** Schedule of Inspection of Expenditure Registers of Candidates: Third and Last inspection of Candidates Expenditure Register should be planned in such a manner that maximum campaign expenditure of a candidate shall be covered.
- 5.2** All the Election Expenditure Monitoring Teams like Flying Squad (FS), Static Surveillance Team (SST), Video Surveillance Team, Video Viewing Team, Expenditure Monitoring Committee, Excise Team, Media Certification & Monitoring Committee, District Election Monitoring Committee, Accounting Team, 24X7 Complaint Monitoring Cell etc. are to be fully functional during the last 72 hrs. of poll and CAPF's shall not be removed from the FS, SST.
- 5.3** Advance Police deployment plan for the last 72 hours must be prepared factoring in the requirement of deploying police personnel for poll-day duty. Under no circumstance, the FSs, SSTs should be disbanded during last 72 hours for want of sufficient police/security personnel.
- 5.4** Flying Squads (FSs): There shall be three or more Flying Squads (FSs) headed by Magistrate shall be deployed in each Assembly Constituency/Segment in 3 shifts of eight hours and shall continue till completion of poll. His contact details shall be available with all the election authorities (Complaint Monitoring Control Room, Call Centre, RO, DEO, General Observer, Police Observer, Expenditure Observer and Assistant Expenditure Observer) for better co-ordination particularly that whenever a complaint regarding distribution of cash or liquor or any other item of bribe or regarding movement of antisocial elements or arms and ammunition, is received, the FS shall reach the spot immediately. Head of Flying Squad shall be equipped with c-Vigil App to look after Expenditure as well as MCC violation cases.
  - 5.4.1** In case of suspicion of commission, of any crime, the in-charge Police Officer of FS shall seize cash or items of bribe or other such items, and gather evidence and record statement of the witnesses and the

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

persons from whom the items are seized and issue proper Panchnama for seizure as per the provisions of CrPC to the person from whom such items are seized.

- 5.4.2** The Magistrate of the FS will ensure that proper procedure is followed and there is no law and order problem. The entire proceeding shall be video recorded. The In-charge Officer of FS shall also file complaints/ F.I.R. immediately against the persons, receiving and giving bribe; and any other person from whom contraband items are seized, or any other anti-social elements found engaged in illegal activity.
- 5.4.3** In case, a complaint is received about distribution of cash, gift items, liquor or free food: or about threat/ intimidation of electors; or of movement of arms/ammunitions/ antisocial elements and it is not possible for the FS to reach the spot immediately, then the information shall be passed on to the Static Surveillance Team, nearest to the spot or to the police station of that area, who shall rush a team to the spot for taking necessary action on the complaint.
- 5.4.4** The Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGs) may also provide information on any such malpractices to the Flying Squad.
- 5.4.5** The DEO shall also repeat the exercise of distributing pamphlets through Flying Squad again on P-3 day to P-1-day stating that as the campaigning period for this election has ended/about to end, the vigilance through FS and SST has been increased hence anybody carrying cash exceeding Rs. 50,000/- should also carry all supporting documents along with it and that it is again reiterated that bribing or cases of threat/intimidation of electors are not only electoral offence but also punishable under Indian Penal Code and hence everybody should refrain from such activities and knowledge of any such incidence should be reported forthwith.

### **5.5 Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs):**

- 5.5.1** There shall be three or more Static Surveillance Teams in each Assembly Constituency/Segment with one executive magistrate and three or four police personnel in each team who shall be manning the check post. Checking by SSTs on the major roads or arterial roads shall commence from the date of notification of election. The SSTs shall be controlled by the DEO and SP in consultation with General Observer and Expenditure Observers and the mechanism shall be strengthened in last 72 Hrs. before the poll, particularly in vulnerable areas or in Expenditure Sensitive Pockets and during such period, the SST shall not be dismantled under any circumstances.
- 5.5.2** Depending on the sensitivity of the area, the CAPF members will be mixed in the SSTs. On and from P-3 day till completion of the Poll Process the number of teams may be increased police station/Chowki wise. This team shall put check posts at Expenditure Sensitive pockets/ hamlets, and shall keep watch on movement of illicit liquor, items

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

of bribe, or large amount of cash, arms and ammunition and also movement of antisocial elements in their area. The entire process of checking shall be captured in video or CCTV, a daily report be sent in due manner.

- 5.5.3** The checking by the SSTs shall be done in the presence of an Executive Magistrate. During checking, if any cash exceeding Rs. 50,000/- is found in a vehicle carrying a candidate, his agent, or party worker or carrying posters or election materials or any drugs, liquor, arms or gift items which are valued at more than Rs. 10,000/-, likely to be used for inducement of electors or any other illicit articles are found in a vehicle, shall be subject to seizure. The Whole event of checking and seizure is to be captured in a video/ CCTV, which will be submitted to the Returning Officer every day. If any star campaigner is carrying cash up to Rs. 1 (One) lakh, exclusively for his/her personal use, or any party functionary is carrying cash with certificate from the treasurer of the party mentioning the amount and its end use, then the authorities in SST shall retain a copy of the certificate and will not seize the cash. If cash of more than 10 lakh is found in a vehicle and there is no suspicion of commission of any crime or linkage to any candidate or agent or party functionary, then the SST shall not seize the cash, and pass on the information to the Income-Tax authority, for necessary action under Income Tax Laws.
- 5.5.4** During checking, if there is any suspicion of commission of crime, the seizure of cash or any item shall be done by the in-charge Police Officer of the SST as per provision of CrPC in presence of the Executive Magistrate. The purse held by the ladies shall not be checked, unless there is a lady officer. The FS shall also supervise the functioning and proper conduct of SSTs during checking in their areas.
- 5.5.5** The checking of vehicles and persons, particularly those coming from outside the constituency should be stressed upon through NAKAS, spread conspicuously at entry points of the constituency area. Care should be taken to move these NAKAS around so that the element of surprise is not lost. The DEO shall issue necessary instructions to the treasury units to receive the seized cash beyond office hours and on holidays also, in case it is required.
- 5.5.6** Wherever the FS or SST or police authorities receive information about any suspicious items in their area, including movement of huge amount of cash, they shall keep the respective Law enforcement agencies informed about such issues. In any circumstances, no member of FS/ SST shall enter in any premises.

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**Note:** The activity of Flying Squad and Static Surveillance Team shall be regulated in terms of the Commission's instruction no. 76/Instructions/EEPS/2015/Vol. II, dated 29.05.2015

### **6. AREAS OF SPECIAL FOCUS FOR EXPENDITURE MONITORING:**

- 6.1** Disbursement of funds to SHGs and NGOs. No payment from public exchequer should be released to the SHGs and NGOs in cash or by cheque from P-3 day till the end of poll and repoll, if any.
- 6.2** Checking distribution of gift items/free serving of food in Marriage/ Community Halls etc. to influence the electors:
- 6.3** The use of Marriage Halls/ Community Halls and similar places should be kept under watch by the district electoral machinery. The DEOs shall intensify such checking during last 72 hours and see that no fake party is being organized for influencing the voters. The DEO through RO, should obtain a list of all such bookings of Marriage/community halls, falling on P-3 to P Day, scrutinize the lists and should ensure that in case of any suspicion about feeding on a large scale by political parties/candidates, necessary steps are taken to prevent it.
- 6.4** Organization of Community Kitchen/Langar. No community kitchen to entertain the electors should be arranged by the Candidates or any other person from P-3 day till the end of poll or re-poll if any.
- 6.5** Likewise, gatherings at guest houses and dharam-shalas should be kept under vigil during the last 72 hours to ensure that these are not used by political parties or candidates to influence voters in any manner.
- 6.6** It will be the responsibility of DEOs to ensure that no wages and other benefits are disbursed under government scheme within 72 hours of the day of poll.

### **7. LAST 72 HRS. VIGIL FOR EXPENDITURE OBSERVERS/OBSERVERS:**

- 7.1** Ensure the adequacy and functioning of FSs and SSTs, they need to be intelligently placed at sensitive points for better effect.
- 7.2** Surprise night vigil and more activity expected of observers. Visit to vulnerable and sensitive pockets like slums, etc for closer monitoring required.
- 7.3** Visit to expenditure sensitive pockets and participate in confidence building measures of voters.
- 7.4** Close monitoring of complaints from c-vigil and toll-free numbers and quick response to resolve the complaints.
- 7.5** Close coordination with local level nodal of enforcement agencies will further activate the machinery for last 72 hours.
- 7.6** Fresh review of monitoring of border areas in reference to transfer of illicit liquor, drugs, cash and freebies for inducement needs to be carried out.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- 7.7 Ensure mixing of CAPF in ground level teams like Flying Squads for monitoring. The functioning of FS/SSTs for visible presence on roads and actions to be closely marked.
- 7.8 Focus on social media advertisements and issues of pre-certification and booking of expenditures incurred on it.
- 7.9 Ensure that baggage and passengers travelling through airways both chartered and scheduled to be religiously done as per SOPs.
- 7.10 Aspect of money transfers through digital wallets and distribution of freebies on electronic platform to be closely monitored as these are emerging challenges.
- 7.11 Gearing up on excise front by talking to excise nakas and other interventions including close tab on distribution of liquor.
- 7.12 Efforts should also be on tracking the trail of seizures and in cases where such trails have been tracked/or in process, we may be prepared for a word on it.
- 7.13 Efforts should be on seizures and also to see no harassments of common mass be there and checking of vehicles should be in courteous manner. Availability of Expenditure Observers on mobile phones and dedicated presence in office space, is required, to handle redressal of grievances and complaints of common masses related to expenditure monitoring, expeditiously.

### **8. SPECIAL EFFORTS TO CURB MISUSE OF MONEY POWER:**

- 8.1 During the last 72 hours, a close tracking should be made by each and every Thana officer of payments and other forms of inducement to voter. The field level election machinery/police administration should work as a team to track such types of malpractices.
- 8.2 Proper checking at the inter-State border and commercial tax check post will be helpful in tracking such transportation of liquor and other inducements. Whenever a consignment of such liquor is intercepted, proper investigation should follow to trace the origin of such supply and the destination.
- 8.3 A proper investigation is essential to establish linkage between the election process and the supply of such inducements.
- 8.4 Media should be briefed whenever such consignments are seized.

### **9. PERMISSIONS:**

- 9.1 During campaign by candidates on P-3 and P-2 day, the Commission directs that, subject to exceptions mentioned on the instruction mentioned above, there shall be a total and absolute ban on the use of official vehicles for campaigning, electioneering or election related travel during elections.
- 9.2 On receipt of a request from a recognized political party, the DEO would issue permit for one vehicle to be used by the district level office bearer of a recognized party (other than the star campaigner) for their visit to multiple ACs within the district for electioneering purposes. The expenditure in this regard shall be booked against the political party and not the candidates.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- 9.3** The CEO may grant permission for number of vehicles equal to number of assembly constituencies in the State divided by 25 or number of parliamentary constituencies in the State divided by 3, as the case may be, rounded off to the nearest integer. This provision shall not be applicable in case of bye- elections. The expenditure on these vehicles shall be incurred by the political party and not by the candidate.
- 9.4** District Administration shall keep a close watch on the vehicles used by persons accompanying the contesting candidates and their party's leaders for any possible mischief, including criminal activities like carrying of illegal arms and weapons.
- 9.5** In respect of persons covered by security, the use of State owned bullet proof vehicle for the particular person (PP) will be permitted in all cases where the security agencies have prescribed such use.
- 9.6** The use of multiple cars in the name of stand-by should not be permitted unless so specifically prescribed by security authorities.
- 9.7** During the campaign period, whether on a private or official visit political functionaries shall not use-
- a) Pilot car(s)
  - b) Car(s) with beacon lights of any color
  - c) Car(s) affixed with sirens of any kind
- 9.8** The restriction will apply even if the State administration has granted him a security cover despite the vehicle is government owned or private.
- 9.9** Convoys: The Commission has directed that cars/vehicles shall, under no circumstances, be allowed to move in convoys of more than ten vehicles, excluding the security vehicles. Wherever necessary, convoys may be broken in smaller size of 10 vehicles or less with distance of 100 meters between two convoys. Separate permissions will be given for campaign purpose for up to 48 hours from the close of polls and for poll day.

## **10. MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT:**

- 10.1** Since campaign by candidates amplifies during P-3 up to 48 hours from the close of poll, it should be ensured no party or candidate shall include any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic.
- 10.2** Criticism of other political parties, when made, shall be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work.
- 10.3** There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, Temples or other places of worship shall not be used as forum for election propaganda.

**10.4** Nobody should indulge in any activity or make any statement that would amount to attack on personal life of any person or statements that may be malicious or offending decency and morality.

**10.5** No Use of Bulk SMS/Voice Message in political campaigning.

**10.6** Arrangement and facilitations for effective operation of c-vigil for MCC violations.

## **11. ASSURED MINIMUM FACILITIES:**

**11.1** The Commission has identified the list of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) which every DEO shall provide at each polling station within his district. These include provision for ramp, potable drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, Voter Assistance Booth (VAB), proper signage, separate toilet for men and women, medical kit, Voter facilitation posters etc. The polling stations should be set up on the ground floor of a building or at the same level of approach road in case of hilly States to facilitate voting for aged and disabled electors.

**11.2** The DEO and the Returning Officer should ensure the availability of such facilities at the polling station through the Sector Officer. The status and photograph of AMF have to be uploaded in ERONET. CEO office to monitor AMF availability through it.

**11.3** General Observer is also required to undertake the following activities vis-à-vis AMF:

- (i) Review the 'Assessment and Inventory of Polling Station' exercise undertaken by the District Election Officer.
- (ii) Make random visits to verify the availability of assured minimum facilities at the polling stations, as per the parameters mentioned above.

## **12. VOTERS' EDUCATION:**

**12.1** During the last 72 hours, DEO/RO must undertake a focused approach to voters' education and awareness about the following.

- Date of polls.
- Start and closing time of polling.
- Polling station locations.
- List of documents as valid proof of identity.
- Ethical and informed voting.
- Imperatives of orderly and peaceful conduct at polling stations.
- Polling Day offences/ mal-practices.
- Digital outreach programme on awareness on EVM/VVPAT focusing new electors.

- Generation of awareness about C-Vigil app, NGS portal, Saksham app, Voter helpline app, Know your candidates, Result portal etc.

**12.2** In order to fulfil the statutory requirements under Rule 31 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and to provide accurate and relevant information for voter awareness and information at each polling station, the Commission has also directed that uniform and standardized Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP) [total of FOUR (4)] kind of Posters i.e.

- (i) Polling Station Details
- (ii) List of Candidates,
- (iii) Do's and Don'ts and
- (iv) Approved Identification Documents & How to Vote, shall be prominently displayed at all Polling Stations.

### **13. ABSENTEE POSTAL BALLOT VOTING:**

**13.1** "Absentee Voter" defined in clause (aa) of Rule-27A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, and includes person who is employed in essential services, senior citizens(80+), Persons with disability (with benchmark or above disability) and COVID 19 suspect or affected persons. These types of voters are facilitated Voting through postal ballot, if make an application to the RO of the Constituency concerned in Form 12 D, giving all requisite particulars. Such application seeking postal ballot facility should reach to the RO during the period from date of announcement of election to five days following the date of notification of the election concerned.

**13.2** In case of absentee voters belonging to PWD category (AVPD), who opt for postal ballot, application (Form 12D) should be accompanied by a copy of benchmark disability certificate specified by the concerned appropriate Government, under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

**13.3** The elector may or may not opt for Postal Ballot. If he/she opts for Postal Ballot, then the BLO will collect the filled-in-Form 12D from the house of the elector within five days of the notification and deposit with the RO forthwith.

**13.4** Sector Officer shall supervise the process of distribution and collection of Form 12D by BLOs under the overall supervision of RO.

**13.5** Further, the RO shall share list of all such PwD and 80+ electors, whose applications in Form 12D for availing Postal Ballot facility have been approved by him, with the Contesting Candidates of recognized political parties in printed hardcopy.

**13.6** A polling team comprised of 2 polling officials along with a videographer and security will then go to the elector's house along with a Voting Compartment and get the elector to vote on the Postal Ballot maintaining complete secrecy of vote. Candidates will be provided a list of these electors in advance and will also be provided the schedule of voting and the route chart of the polling parties so that they can send their representatives to witness the polling procedure. Postal ballots will then be stored securely by the Returning Officer.



## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- 13.7 The electors will be intimated, in advance, about the date and approximate time of visit of poll officials.
- 13.8 The candidates shall be informed about the schedule of visit for the delivery and collection of postal ballots. They may, if desired, depute their authorized representatives with prior intimation to the Returning Officer, to watch the process.
- 13.9 Visits by team of Poll Officers to the address of Absentee Voters should be planned in such a way that the same is completed one day prior to the date fixed for poll in the constituency.



Casting of Absentee Postal Vote

### 14. MEDICAL FACILITY AT POLLING STATION LOCATION (PSL)

- 14.1 It must be ensured that sufficient number of Medical Kits/First-Aid kits containing medicines & items like gauze pads (4x4 inches)/ large gauze pads/ adhesive bandages/rolling bandage/ORS/triangular/bandages/wound cleaning agent/ scissors/blanket/tweezers/adhesive tape/latex gloves resuscitation

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equipment/Masks & Sanitizers etc., along with a medical attendant should be made available at each Polling Station location for emergency use of voters and polling staff. In this regard, the DEO should prepare a standard list of medicines and user instructions in consultation with the District Chief Medical Officer.

- 14.2** During summer, every polling party shall be supplied with oral rehydration salts for their own use as well as for any voter needing the same due to heat-stroke. A hand-bill on 'Dos and Don'ts' in case of heat stroke may be prepared and supplied to each of the polling parties.
- 14.3** An appeal to the electors may be issued to carry wet towels to protect themselves against dehydration and also advise women electors to avoid bringing children along with them to polling stations during hot weather conditions.
- 14.4** The DEO shall requisition the services of paramedical staff from the offices of the Chief District Medical Officers and one such Para Medical Staff member shall accompany every mobile Patrol Unit and Sector Officer in their vehicles along with essential heatstroke medicines. Such mobile patrol units shall touch every polling station once in every hour so that instant medical assistance would be available to any voter needing such help besides the first aid facilities given to the polling parties.

## CHAPTER II

### LAST 48 HOURS (P-2)

The last 48 hours before the polls are extremely crucial for the election machinery, not only from the poll day planning perspective, but more crucially, from the law and order and creation of conducive environment for free and fair polling.

Under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, in the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of poll, the campaign will come to an end. Hence, this period essentially constitutes the period when all election campaigning through public meetings etc. is brought to a halt.

However, strict vigil needs to be maintained in the poll-bound areas to ensure that no unscrupulous elements are able to engage in nefarious activities like illicit distribution of cash, gifts, liquor etc. to unduly induce and influence the electors for extracting political mileage.

*In case the constituency is comprised in State Capital/Metropolitan Cities/Municipal Corporations, then MCC would be applicable in the area of concerned Constituency only. In all other cases the MCC would be enforced in the entire district(s) covering the Constituency going for bye-election(s).*

A brief summary of the major actions required on P-2 Day are as follows:

#### **1. PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AT DISPATCH CENTER:**

- 1.1. There should be adequate provision of drinking water, toilet, first aid etc. at the dispatch location. The process of dispatch shall be closely monitored by the senior officers.
- 1.2. The coordination between the sector police personnel deputed to accompany the polling personnel should be perfect so that there is no communication gap in this matter. It will be the duty of the Sector Officers to ensure that the polling personnel deputed to perform their duty at the polling stations assigned to the Sector Officer are taken care of and they are not unduly held up at the dispatch center.
- 1.3. A senior officer should track the transport to be provided to polling personnel. There should be proper coordination with CAPF.
- 1.4. Advance measures should be taken to ensure that transport facilities for pickup and dropping the polling personnel are made using the same resources, requisitioned for election purposes.
- 1.5. Counter arrangements at Dispatch centre to be well planned and arrangement of prominent signage to be displayed.

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1.6. Third randomization of polling parties in the presence of Observer. Prepare large flex for this decoding chart and display on P-1 day morning.

### **2. PREPAREDNESS CHECK OF MANPOWER/ MATERIAL/ VEHICLE AVAILABILITY:**

- 2.1 Apart from polling personnel, various other category of personnel are deployed for poll duty like micro-observers, camera-persons, webcasting personnel, Voters Assistance Booth personnel, BLOs etc.
- 2.2 On P-2 day, it is to be checked and ensured that these personnel are in a position to attend at respective polling stations on the poll day.
- 2.3 On P-2 day, it is also to be confirmed that bagging of polling materials is complete with adequate reserve materials given to the Sector Officers.
- 2.4 Preparation and authentication of marked and working copies of electoral roll is a very important activity, which is to be done very meticulously by P-2 day along with the polling station wise list of ASD, AIS, ARL & CSV.
- 2.5 On P-2 day, the reporting of vehicles for elections is to be monitored and the vehicles are to be readied with fuel, labeling etc.
- 2.6 A last minute check may also be made for picking up and dropping of polling personnel through the requisitioned vehicles.
- 2.7 Sample checking of bagging for polling parties for ensuring that all forms and stationeries are bagged as per scale.

### **3. CAPF/CIVIL (NON-CAPF) MEASURES**

#### **3.1 CAPF/SECURITY FORCE DEPLOYMENT PLAN:**

- 3.1.1 Whenever, area domination by CAPFs is needed, CAPF will undertake area domination etc. till 2 days before the polling day (P-2).
- 3.1.2 Wherever possible, CAPFs may be deployed for active election related duty along with static duty at polling booths such as mobile patrols with magistrates, area pickets, check gates and quick reaction teams located in specific areas etc. Posting of QRT and its management should be well planned.
- 3.1.3 Civic Voluntary Force shall not be used directly or indirectly, under any circumstances, for election related works.

#### **3.2 MICRO-OBSERVERS:**

- 3.2.1 Randomization of Micro-observers: Randomization of available Micro-observers will be done in the presence of Observer, among

those Polling Stations. The conditions for randomization of Micro-observers will be the same as that of Presiding Officers, viz. they shall not be posted on duty in a Polling Station within the same Assembly Constituency, where they are enrolled as voters or where they are working. All efforts should, however be made to put them on duty in the same Parliamentary Constituency where they are enrolled as voters, to enable them to exercise their franchise through EDC. They shall be informed about the exact Polling Station where they will be on duty only on the day of departure.

- 3.2.2 Supervision of the work of Micro-observers –General Observers will supervise the work of Micro-observers and shall be in close touch with them. Micro- observers shall report to the Observer alone and not to any other election functionary.

#### **4. LAW AND ORDER:**

- 4.1.1 Generally, orders under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC) are issued regarding ban on unlawful assemblies and prohibition on holding of public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll, applicable for the areas/constituencies bound for polls.
- 4.1.2 This order is issued by the District Magistrate or any other competent authority effective from P-2 day to P+1 day within the Constituency.
- 4.1.3 The restrictions under 144 CrPC Order do not permit more than 5 persons to assemble/move together in the area. However, the Commission has clarified that this does not restrict house-to-house visits during 48 hours in connection with door-to-door campaigning. However, this should be specifically spelt out in the orders under Section 144 to avoid any confusion.

#### **5. EVM AND VVPAT ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMs) & VVPATs:**

- 5.1 P-2/3 Movement: the rate of remuneration to be double for the polling official going to the polling station before three days before the polls.
- 5.2 The machines may be allotted in double set considering the problems of replacement of machine in difficult terrain.
- 5.3 By P-2 day, all EVMs and VVPATs, duly prepared are stored in the strong room under 24x7 security, the list of which has already been given to candidates under acknowledgement.
- 5.4 In cases, where the EVMs & VVPATs are required to be shifted to the Dispersal Centres, the movement of EVMs and VVPAT should be done after maintaining the security protocol.

- 5.5 SOP for P-2/P-3 dispatch and P+1 arrival of Polling Parties:
- 5.6 Earmark a Govt. building at the cluster point for polling parties and EVMs and VVPATs of P-2/P-3 dispatch Polling Stations following due protocol and RO will inform the same to all the contesting candidates in writing. Do not use Police Stations for such cluster points.
- 5.7 The candidates should also be informed about the movement of the EVMs & VVPATs to the Dispersal Centres. kindly refer latest edition of Manual of EVM/VVPAT.
- 5.8 Status and Responsibilities regarding storage and transportation of Reserve EVMs to be elaborated.

**6. EXPENDITURE MONITORING EXCISE ENFORCEMENT:**

- 6.1 All restrictions provided in excise law on the storage of liquor in unlicensed premises shall be vigorously enforced during the period of 48 hrs ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll.
- 6.2 Special drives should be launched to unearth illicit liquor making factories and information about seizures should be made available to the concerned District Election Officer and Returning Officer.
- 6.3 In view of the statutory provision contained in Section 135C of the R.P. Act, 1951, 'Dry Day' shall be declared and notified under relevant state laws as is appropriate during 48 hours, ending with the hours fixed for conclusion of poll as indicated in the Commission's notification with respect to polling day for an election in that polling area. This will include the dates of re-poll, if any.

**7. PERMISSIONS FOR USE OF LOUDSPEAKER:**

- 7.1 No loudspeaker shall be permitted to be used during the period of 48 hours ending with the poll closing time.

**8. MCC RESTRICTION ON PRESENCE OF POLITICAL FUNCTIONARIES IN CONSTITUENCY AFTER THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD IS OVER:**

- 8.1 During the course of campaign in General Election to Legislative Assemblies, the political parties mobilize their supporters, including from outside the constituency of poll, in order to bolster that campaign. In view of the fact that after the closure of campaign period, no campaign can take place within the constituency, presence of political functionary's/party workers/procession-functionaries/ campaign-functionaries etc., who have been brought from outside the constituency and who are not voters of his/her constituency, should not continue to remain present in the constituency as their continued presence after campaign ends may undermine the atmosphere for free and fair poll.

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- 8.2 The district election administration/police administration shall ensure that all such functionaries leave the constituency immediately after the campaign period is over.
- 8.3 However, the said restriction may not be insisted upon during the General Elections to State Legislative Assemblies in respect of the office bearer of Political party who is in-charge of the State. Such office bearer of the political party shall declare his place of stay in the State Headquarters and his movement during the period in question shall remain confined normally between his party office and place of his stay.
- 8.4 The Commission further directs that in order to ensure that the above instruction is carried out, the election administration/police administration may take all necessary measures which may include:
- 8.4.1 Checking of kalyan mandapams / marriage hall / community halls etc., where such people are kept housed and find out whether the outsiders have been accommodated in these premises.
  - 8.4.2 Verification of lodges and guesthouses to keep a track of the list of occupants.
  - 8.4.3 Set up check-posts in the constituency borders and track the vehicular movement from outside the constituency.
  - 8.4.4 Verify the identity of the people / group of people in order to find out whether they are voters or not and establish their identity.
  - 8.4.5 This shall be brought to the notice of all political parties, candidates and their agents, District Election Officers/Returning Officers/ Assistant Returning Officers in order to enable them to comply.



Checking of vehicles by FST

## 9. Media Matters

### 9.1 Section 126, Opinion Poll and Exit Poll:

- 9.1.1 **Section 126(1)(b):** No person shall display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus in any polling area during the period of forty-eight hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the poll for any election in the polling area. Here “election matter” means any matter intended or calculated to influence or affect the result of an election.
- 9.1.2 It also covers opinion polls which states that displaying any election matter including results of any opinion poll or any other poll survey, in any electronic media, is prohibited during the period of 48 hours ending with the hours fixed for the conclusion of the poll in connection with the General Election.
- 9.1.3 **Exit Poll: -** Under Section 126A of The Representation of the People Act, 1951, No person shall conduct any exit poll and publish or publicize by means of the print or electronic media or disseminate in any other manner, whatsoever, the result of any exit poll during the period commencing from the beginning of the hours fixed for poll on the first day of poll and continuing till half an hour after closing of the poll in all the States and Union territories.
- 9.1.4 **Standard operating procedure (SOP) for Social Media Updates:** To ensure constant flow and proper dissemination of information to build a positive narrative about the election activities in the state, SOP is prepared for strategic communication on pre-poll and poll day through CEO’s social media handles.
- 9.1.5 **Election Media Monitoring Center (EMMC):** The Commission has entrusted the Election Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) with the task of media monitoring of all election management related news (important events/MCC violation/search and seizure etc.). The monitoring is to be done on pre-poll day and the day of polling for submission of reports to the Commission on each phase of elections to be done on two hourly basis. EMMC will also send the reports to the CEO office simultaneously. The CEO office will ascertain status on the items of the reports and file ATR/Status report within two hours/before the generation of next reports to the Commission.
- 9.1.6 **Pre-Certification of Political Advertisement for Print Media:** No political advertisements would be published in print media on poll day and pre-poll day in all the phases without pre-certification of State/District MCMC. This has been done to avoid any offending or misleading political advertisements through Print Media in order to not vitiate the entire election process in the last stage of the elections.

Before every General/Assembly election, instruction in this regard is issued by the Commission. (No. 491/MCMC/3/2023/Communication, Dated: 9th February, 2023)



- 9.1.7 **Issuance of Authority Letters to Media-persons:** Authority letters will be issued only to the eligible persons, as sponsored by the competent authority, the list of which containing the detailed particulars and image of the media persons has to be approved by the Commission well in advance and the distribution of the Authority letters should have to be completed by P-2 day.



**Media Monitoring Cell**

## **10. Coordination**

- 10.1 In like manner, coordination is to be done with mobile/telephone service providers, electricity departments, public works department for providing uninterrupted services during poll days.
- 10.2 Railways, postal department, fire- brigade are also to be apprised for providing services during polls, as and when approached for elections work.
- 10.3 Liaison is to be maintained with electronic/print media, Doordarshan, All India Radio etc. as well for dissemination of election related information for the general public.
- 10.4 In order to deal with any event of natural calamity or for any unforeseen situation, disaster management department is to be apprised of the election plan well in advance, so that their services can be easily obtained in hours of crisis.

- 11. Publication of Criminal Antecedent:** Monitoring the publication of criminal antecedent in newspaper and TV by candidate in C1 format and by political parties in C2 format, as the last day of publication for the third trench within which the publication is to be completed is '2nd DAY PRIOR TO THE DATE OF POLL'.

## CHAPTER III LAST 24 HOURS (P-1)

### 1. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

**1.A RANDOMIZATION:** The ARO shall open the sealed covers containing result of randomization done on P-2 day in presence of observer only on P-1 day at the dispatch center in presence of observer, if the latter is present there.

### 1.B DISPERSAL CENTRE ARRANGEMENTS:

#### 1.1. Selection of Dispersal Centre Location:

- (i) The venue for Dispersal Centre should be carefully selected in advance to cater to the multifarious requirements and arrangements on P-1 day. It should be located in a premise with spacious area, having good connectivity and preferably, within the constituency area.
- (ii) The safety and security of the venue being paramount must be planned meticulously. Therefore, a fool proof three Tier cordon security arrangement to be made to prevent any unauthorized entry into the dispatch/receiving center (s).
- (iii) It should be free from any possible political or religious association/identity.
- (iv) Efforts must be made to use the existing structures of offices/ school/college buildings.
- (v) Ideally, the dispersal, reception and counting centre should be co-terminus for ease of functioning.



**Distribution of materials at Dispersal Centre**

**1.2. Arrangements in a Dispersal center, the following to be included:**

- (i) Enquiry counter
- (ii) Space for displaying decoded list of polling stations. Mentioning of MO, cameraman, webcasting should be made against the allotted PS.
- (iii) Material and EVM&VVPAT distribution counters
- (iv) Counter for tagging of Micro Observers.
- (v) Counter for tagging for camera person
- (vi) Space for tagging of reserved polling personnel
- (vii) Counter for 'training on demand'.
- (viii) Counter for tagging vehicles for movement to polling stations
- (ix) Counter for police/force tagging
- (x) Counter for supplying reserve materials
- (xi) Space for checking of EVMs/VVPATs & materials by polling parties
- (xii) Facilitation center for postal ballots
- (xiii) Strong rooms for EVMs & VVPATs and storage of other material.
- (xiv) Medical Aid
- (xv) SMS registration- facilitation
- (xvi) For the convenience of the personnel coming for election duty, emphasis needs to be given on single window service so that all information and materials are collected from one place and polling personnel do not get confused in shuttling from one counter to another.
- (xvii) Prominent signage indicating location of help desk, learning desk, sector wise counters, refreshment area, washrooms, vehicle parking and flow of movement, should be made for every counter/facility to guide the polling personnel.
- (xviii) Training of the DC staff and equipping them with check list is to be done in advance.
- (xix) Display of numbers of Help line, Sector Officers, SMS registration counter will also have to be made.
- (xx) Public Address system should be in place both within & outside DC premise. Reserve polling personnel & EVM /VVPAT technicians may be dispersed

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

at control rooms of Blocks / AROs on P-1-day afternoon for enabling ready availability on the Poll day.



**Checking of materials by polling parties at DC**

### **1.3. Training-on-demand Counter:**

- (i) At the dispersal center, a special counter should operate for ‘training-on-demand’. It must be established to provide assistance and address queries of the Presiding Officers/Polling Officers on usage and functionality of the EVMs & VVPATs.
- (ii) Senior Officers having expertise in EVM/VVPAT related matters should only be placed at the counters and all necessary stationeries like Address tags / Special Address Tags / Green Paper Seal should be made available at this counter.

### **1.4. Presence and involvement of Sector Officers:**

- (i) The Sector Officers should be asked to remain present at each Dispersal Centre in the morning and assist the polling personnel to find the polling station assigned to them from the decoded list.
- (ii) Sector Officers must be aware about the engagement of Micro-observers, Camera-persons, Web- casting team, VAB at the polling stations etc. and must make contact with all members of the polling team, micro observer and camera person (if deployed) and arrange for tagging of polling personnel.
- (iii) They will help the presiding officer and one of the polling officer to make SMS registration as per the given syntax in the Poll-day monitoring software in states where it is being used.
- (iv) Sector Officers should monitor collection of polling materials by the polling

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

parties of the sector and remind the polling personnel to check the following items:

- a. Marked copy (1 set) and working copy of integrated Electoral Roll (2sets) and duly authenticated by the ARO against #, Deleted, EDC or PB.
- b. Additional Information Sheet (AIS) containing the names of electors who have been issued with postal ballot.
- c. ASD list
- d. CSV list
- e. Polling parties to check at the dispatch centre. Ballot Unit and Control Unit of the EVM and VVPAT- particularly to check no and name of polling station in the address tags, current ID no in Green stickers, pink paper seals, placing of ballot paper, position of sliding switch, identification slips and functioning of the EVM.
- f. VVPAT to be not tested at DC. VVPAT knob to be kept horizontal while transporting.
- g. Green paper seal, Address tags, Special tag.
- h. Presiding Officers Diary, Declaration of Presiding Officer. Pr.O's report (I-V)
- i. Tendered ballot papers.
- j. Braille ballot paper
- k. Register of Voters (Form 17A)
- l. Indelible Inks
- m. Arrow Cross Mark
- n. Metal seal for Presiding Officer
- o. Distinguishing Mark
- p. List of contesting candidates in Form 7A
- q. Specimen signature of the candidate and election agents
- r. Electoral Roll in alphabetical order (in single/double booth premises)
- s. Statutory & Non-Statutory Booklets and Envelopes. (As per Commissions Instruction 464/INST/RPM/2023-EPS dated 28.06.2023)
- t. Other materials as per the specified list.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

- (v) Reserve EVMs / VVPATs should be allocated to the Sector Officers under due record.
- (vi) Sector vehicle carrying machines to be GPS tracked. Data of storage of reserve machines on P-1 day to be shared with candidates. Control room to monitor. No machines to be carried in vehicle other than assigned one and not be stored in building other than designated locations.
- (vii) The Sector Officers will enquire about the category and scale of deployment of security force at the polling stations whether it is CAPF/SAP/District Police.
- (viii) The Sector Officer should be asked to start for polling stations with police escort in earmarked vehicle and all efforts should be taken to reach polling stations by day light.
- (ix) The SO will settle accommodation problems of both Polling party and Security personnel at polling station, if any.



### Dispersal of polling parties to polling station

## 2. POLLING STATION ARRANGEMENTS:

- 1.1. The role of the Sector Officers is immensely important on P-1 day to ensure that all arrangements are tied up at the polling stations for smooth conduct of polling. The RO must ensure that the Sector Officer performs the following activities and checks and gives his report in a timely manner:
  - (i) Ensure that the security force has reached polling stations according to the force deployment plan.
  - (ii) Returning Officer should monitor the distribution of voter information slips with the help of Sector Officers and should ensure that all voter information slips are properly distributed and duly accounted for. Sector

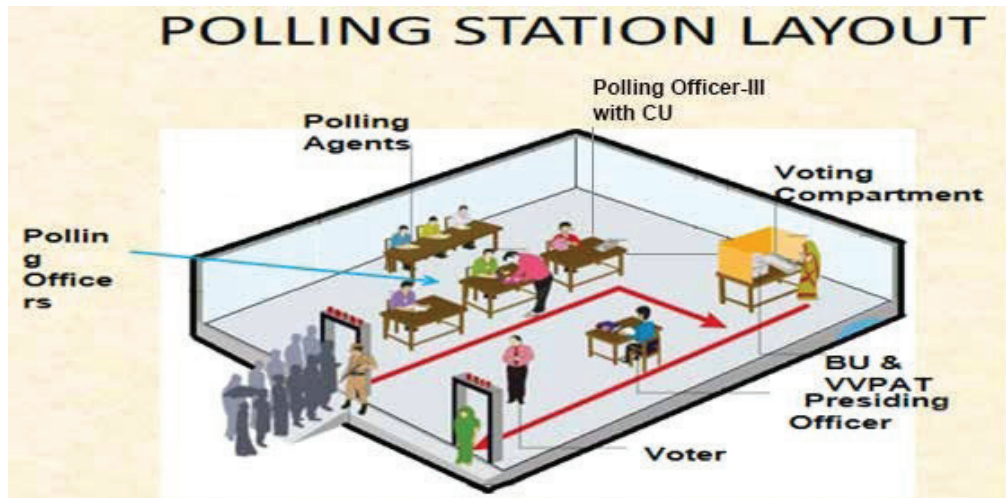
## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

Officers should randomly check that distribution of VIS, is being done as per latest instructions and if any discrepancy is found, it should be corrected immediately. Sector Officers should also verify from the VIS registers that all slips have been distributed and that signatures/ thumb impression of acknowledgement have been obtained on the register. A monitoring mechanism should be set up at the level of each Sector Officer and the RO/ARO, to receive complaints about improper distribution of VIS.

- (iii) Check that the Presiding Officer has sent report on arrival of polling teams at the polling stations to the RO control room.
- (iv) Confirm availability of assured minimum facilities at the polling stations like drinking water, lighting arrangement, furniture, toilet, signage of the polling station, shed for voter's queue, ramp, wheelchair, volunteers for assistance of PwDs and old age voters etc.
- (v) The Sector officers should visit each Polling Stations/Locations within his /her jurisdiction to assess whether it is use worthy.
- (vi) Observe that the voting compartment is made in such a way that secrecy of voting can be ensured by all means.
- (vii) Voting compartment is not placed near open window or door and it shall be set up as per ECI's instructions.
- (viii) Ascertain that the polling team is well conversant in the use of the EVM & VVPATs, provide support, wherever required and ensure that the EVM & VVPATs is properly switched off.
- (ix) Check and ensure that no wall writing, graffiti or any vestige of political campaign is visible within 100 m of polling station.
- (x) Since quick communication is an essence of good management on the poll day to nip any trouble in its bud, the Sector Officers are to collect the mobile numbers of presiding and polling officers, sector police officers, control room, Zonal Magistrate, RO/ AROs, EVM/VVPAT technicians, Micro Observers which may come into use in times of crisis. The Technicians should be stationed at various convenient locations within the AC/AS and have to be assigned with specific sectors/PS. Contact nos. of both assigned technicians and allotted sector officers have to be shared with each other.
- (xi) It must be ensured that EVMs & VVPATs are kept under adequate security at the polling station at all times.

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- (xii) Webcasting demo testing to ensure smooth functioning- The web- camera/ laptop should be set up at the polling station on the P-1 day and a dry run of the webcasting should be done under the supervision of R.O. The name and number of Polling Stations along with date of Poll should be pasted at such a place so that it is displayed in camera view throughout the polling day till completion and sealing. The Booth Level Officer and the Sector Officer concerned should give polling station- wise certificate to the Returning Officer that webcasting arrangements have been made as specified above and are functioning properly.
- (xiii) SMS Poll monitoring may be streamlined to have instant reports from PS on safe arrival report, Mock poll, Poll start, Poll % at 2 hrs gap, Queue information, Poll close and VTR information.



3. **CAPFs MEASURES:** CAPF shall continue to carry out effective and focused flag marches for area domination, point patrolling and other confidence building measures. These forces may also be used as a part of SSTs/FSTs/QRTs etc. for surveillance purpose. Such flag marches by CAPF should be more on foot; and there should be some interaction with local population. This will help to instill public confidence in general law and order. The CAPF shall be provided with a list of anti-social elements and vulnerable pockets to keep a watch on unlawful activities.
4. **LAW AND ORDER SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS:**
- 4.1 Ban on carrying of licensed arms shall continue to operate till declaration of results and no license for arms shall be issued till elections are over.
- 4.2 Strict vigil shall be maintained by police, thorough checking of lorries, light vehicles and all other vehicles, preferably by setting up equipped check posts,



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from the day of announcement of elections to ensure that no undesirable elements or arms and ammunition are being transported into the constituency from outside and to apprehend them and take appropriate action under law if they are doing so.

- 5. ASSURED MINIMUM FACILITIES:** The Commission's latest instruction on Assured Minimum Facilities shall be referred to for detailed guidelines/directions and all the necessary arrangements to be taken as per the guidelines/instruction/direction of the Commission should be ensured.
- 6. INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION TO BE COMPLETED:**
  - 6.1 On the P-1 day, Health department is to make camp at the Dispersal Centre with emergency medicines and medical team to meet up medical requirements of the election personnel.
  - 6.2 If elections are held in peak summer season, ORS may be given to the polling personnel, advance tie-ups are to be made with the Health Department for the supply of the same.
  - 6.3 Mobile medical vans/ambulances may also be put on service on the poll day to provide emergency medical assistance to the persons, fallen sick on the poll day.
  - 6.4 In like manner, coordination is to be done with mobile/telephone service providers, electricity departments, public works department for providing uninterrupted services during poll days.
  - 6.5 Railways, postal department, fire- brigade are also to be apprised for providing services during polls, as and when approached for elections work.
  - 6.6 Liaison is to be maintained with electronic/print media, Doordarshan, All India Radio etc. as well for dissemination of election related information for the general public.
  - 6.7 In order to deal with any event of natural calamity or for any unforeseen situation, disaster management department is to be apprised of the election plan well in advance, so that their services can be easily obtained in hours of crisis.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLL DAY (P-0)

Poll day is the touchstone of the quality and professionalism of the entire election management exercise conducted by the field election machinery under the leadership and guidance of the DEO/RO. The following is a synopsis of the major issues/points to be borne in mind while traversing the challenges on the poll day:

#### 1. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

##### 1.A POLLING STATION FACILITIES:

- 1.1. A VAB to be set up for every Polling Station location with a team of BLOs/ Officials to facilitate voters in locating their particulars.
- 1.2. Roll in alphabetical order, in English, to locate quickly to be made available and in case of one or two PSs in a premise, this list (in addition to marked copies) be given to Pr.O for easy identification.
- 1.3. Volunteers for assistance of PwD and old age electors' voters should be deployed.
- 1.4. Sector Officer to keep in touch with the presiding Officer for a check on any untoward incidents. They shall continuously visit the polling stations assigned at the shortest possible periodic intervals.
- 1.5. Security shall be deployed as per approved District Deployment Plan on static and mobile duties.
- 1.6. In case CAPF does not reach the assigned polling stations due to any reason, the poll shall not commence in the polling station.
- 1.7. There shall be requisite monitoring done with the help of IT tools in place for Poll Day Monitoring activities vetted by ECI.

##### 1.B FACILITIES FOR THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED ELECTORS

- 1.8. They should be given priority for entering PS without having to wait in queue.
- 1.9. Full facility like ramps and railings to be provided to take the wheel chairs inside the PS.
- 1.10. Presiding Officer should follow the provisions of Rule 49N - regarding companion of blind/infirm voter.
- 1.11. Wide publicity about the facilities to be given to such voters.

1.12. Free Transportation facilities should be ensured to the PwD and Senior citizen voters for voting.

1.13. Accessible toilets and any other material as prescribed by ECI should be in place to facilitate the PwD voters

### **1.C FACILITATION AND WELFARE MEASURES FOR POLLING PERSONNEL:**

The Commission's latest instruction on facilitation and welfare measures such as Nodal officer for coordinating and supervising these measures, health facilities, facilities at training center, arrangements at dispatch/receiving center, help desk, transport facility, facilities at polling stations etc. for polling personnel shall be referred to ensure that all the measures required to be taken for facilitation and welfare of polling personnel are taken well in stipulated time.

**1.D ASSURED MINIMUM FACILITIES:** Commission's latest instruction on Assured Minimum Facilities shall be referred to ensure that all the assured minimum facilities are provided such, provision for ramp, drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, shade, display of voter facilitation posters, voter assistance booths, medical kits, transport facility, queue management etc.

## **2. POLL DAY ACTIVITIES**

### **2.A POLL PROCESS:**

#### **2.1. General Arrangements:**

2.2. District Control room consisting of mainly three components: Communication Control Room, Media Control Room and webcasting Control Room shall be functional.

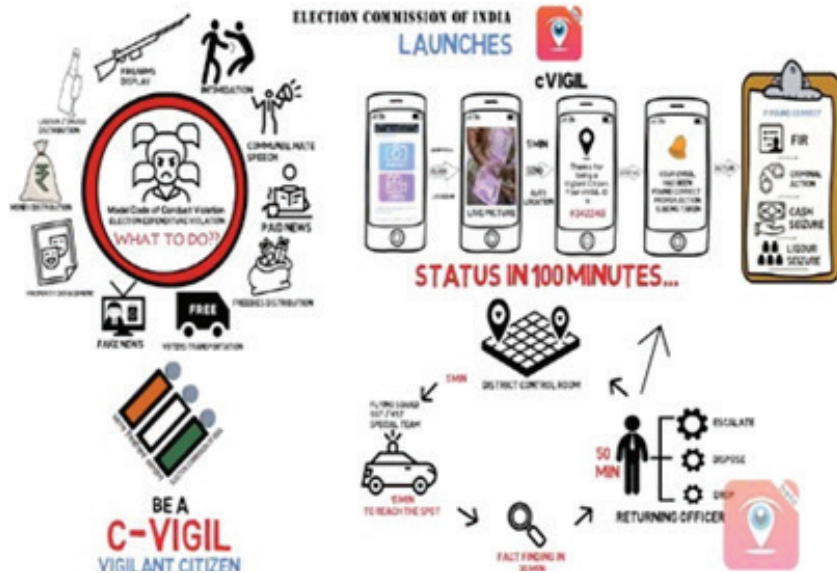
2.3. QRTs to be checked and it should be ensured that they address to situation promptly and also ascertain facts quickly.

2.4. At CEO level a control room should be set up to keep a close watch on webcasting data for the entire polling period.

2.5. Communication arrangements to be checked and mobile to be switched on all the time and to be kept in silent mode by PrO and Micro Observer.

2.6. Complaint handling arrangements: C –Vigil, NGS, Voter Helpline app to be popularized. Team handling all these to be geared up for poll day.

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS



### C-VIGIL Operation

- 2.7. Arrangement for deploying reserve staff to be in place.
- 2.8. Arrangement for EVM/VVPAT replacement to be checked.
- 2.9. Arrangement for deployment of technical personnel at the polling stations for mitigating trouble shooting issues.
- 2.10. Arrangement of videographers at polling stations to be made.
- 2.11. Arrangements be made to collect sealed polled EVMs & VVPATs and other election material.
- 2.12. Arrangement for escorting of the polled EVMs & VVPATs and election material with intimation to be made.
- 2.13. Before Commencement of Poll:
  - a) Presiding Officer to demonstrate the EVM and VVPAT to Polling agent and other staff.
  - b) Marked copy of roll and Register of Voters also to be demonstrated
  - c) before the polling agents present and their signatures be taken.
  - d) Mock poll shall be conducted one and half hour (90 Minutes) before the scheduled hour of commencement of poll by casting least 50 votes with minimum one vote to each candidate including NOTA.
  - e) Presiding Officer, polling agents and Polling Officers shall sign the Mock Poll Certificate and seal the CU and VVPAT.

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- 2.14. All contesting candidates should be informed in writing well in advance in this regard.
- 2.15. RO through SO shall track the conduct or otherwise of mock poll and ascertain the mock poll status within 30 minutes.
- 2.16. After the entire process of mock poll and sealing of control Units, the Presiding Officer shall ensure the drop box of the VVPAT is empty and seal the drop box.
- 2.17. The sealing and preparation of the EVM and VVPAT shall be done as per the latest instruction of ECI
- 2.18. **During Poll Process:**

Before the first voter signs in Form 17-A (Register of voters) the polling Officer-I shall check with the Presiding Officer and record in ink in Form-17A (Register of Voters) "Total in the control Unit checked and found to be zero".

- (i) **Things to be done by Presiding Officer:**
  - a. Presiding Officer to regulate the voters, and maintain purity of election.
  - b. To make oneself aware with tendered votes, challenged votes, etc. and follow the procedures laid out.
  - c. Presiding Officer to maintain overall supervision of poll process.
  - d. He shall keep track of the voter turn-out and send report/SMS every 2 hours through the channel approved by the DEO.
  - e. He shall maintain the movement sheet of polling agents.
  - f. In case of ASD Voters, Pr. O will verify his/her identity, left hand thumb impression has to be taken in addition to signature in Form 17A, photograph to be taken and record maintained wherever possible.
- (ii) Special attention to be given where mock poll had to be conducted in the absence of Polling agents.
- (iii) Identification of voters shall be made through EPIC or alternate documents approved by ECI. Minor discrepancies can be overlooked.
- (iv) **First Polling Officer:** PO- 1st - Marked copy of roll - Responsible for identification- read aloud the name of elector- check the ID document- a line shall be drawn in red ink, diagonally across the

## SOP FOR LAST 72 HOURS

box containing the particular pertaining to an elector in the marked copy of the PER. Further, for easy verification and calculation of number of male and female voters, the serial number of the voter will be rounded off in the case of female voters.

- (v) **Second Polling Officer:** PO- 2nd -Apply Indelible Ink - Register of voters- Take signature/LTI of elector in Col 4- write the last four digit of number of ID document in last column- issue voter slips.
- (vi) **Third Polling Officer:** PO- 3rd -Check indelible ink- collect voter slip- custodian of Control unit- release ballot by pressing BALLOT button in CU guide voter to voting compartment - He will sit near Pr. O - Same table for Pr. O + PO-3rd.



**Polling Station arrangement**

- (vii) **REPLACEMENT PROTOCOL OF MACHINES:** (All 'ERROR' messages for BU, CU & VVPAT will be displayed on CU only. Please read message and act accordingly)
- **If issue arises in the machines, during Mock Poll –**
  - BU not functioning: Replace BU only.
  - CU not functioning: Replace CU only.
  - VVPAT not functioning: Replace VVPAT only.
- **If issue arises in the machine, during Actual Poll-**
  - BU or CU not functioning: Replace BU+CU+VVPAT
  - Presiding Office to do mock poll in new set of BU+CU+VVPAT by casting 1 vote to each contesting candidate button including NOTA and to follow other mock poll process.
  - VVPAT not functioning: Replace VVPAT only. **No mock poll is required in this case.**

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- (viii) Adequate reserve EVMs/VVPATs to be available with sector officers EVM/VVPATs to be replaced within half an hour wherever necessary.
- (ix) In order to ensure that no voter has committed any mischief by pasting any paper, tapes etc., on the symbol/names/ballot button, the Presiding Officer may from time to time make an inspection of Ballot Unit (BU) - but he should make it a point to do so in the immediate presence of polling agents when there is no voter inside the voting compartment.
- (x) All supervisory visits to the polling booths by sector officers, candidates, election agents etc. must be recorded in the Visit Sheet.
- (xi) At the time of closure of poll the Presiding Officer shall press the 'Close' button and make a note of the Poll end date and time displayed on the CU in the presiding officer's diary.
- (xii) Check that number of voters who are allowed to vote as reflected in the register of voters and tally it with number of voters polled in CU. In case there is any difference immediately intimate the RO.

### **2.19. After close of poll:**

- (i) Presiding Officer will issue serially numbered slips/token only to the voters standing in the queue (from the last person in the queue to the first one), to enable them to cast their vote after the scheduled time of closure of voting.
- (ii) Press CLOSE button of the CU of the EVM after the voting is complete.
- (iii) SMS/report to be sent on close of poll.
- (iv) Check the number of votes recorded in the EVM by pressing TOTAL button and Tally 17A, 17C and EVM count.
- (v) Battery of VVPAT to be taken out before sealing VVPAT in the VVPAT carrying case.
- (vi) BU and CU also to be sealed in the respective carrying case.
- (vii) Packaging of Statutory and Non-Statutory Forms and Envelopes shall be done by the PrO.

### **2.20. Supervisory Visits by Sector Officers etc:**

- (i) Sector Officer shall visit all the polling stations during the first two

hours of poll and give the poll commencement report to the RO for polling stations under his jurisdiction.

- (ii) Sector Officer shall ensure replacement of any EVM & VVPAT that would not operate for whatsoever reason at the start and during the poll hours:
- (iii) Sector Officer shall oscillate between his/her polling stations and make himself/herself available/contactable to every Presiding Officer under his/ her jurisdiction and ensure that the poll is conducted in a free and fair manner and without interruptions.
- (iv) He shall ensure that all the vulnerable electors have participated in voting.
- (v) Sector Officer will deposit defective unpolled machine and reserve machine at designated counters.

## **2.B ACTIVITIES OF POLLING AGENTS:**

- 2.21.** At every election, each candidate or his election agent can appoint one polling agent and two relief polling agents at each polling station through Form-10.
- 2.22.** Only one of them can, however, remain present inside the polling station at a time. They can relieve each other from time to time. Any relieving agent can take the place of the polling agent whenever he goes out. Whichever of them is inside the polling station is treated as polling agent of the candidate for the time being and has the same rights and responsibilities as given to the polling agent by law.
- 2.23.** Polling agents shall be the voter of the same Assembly Constituency.
- 2.24.** He must carry EPIC or any of the alternative documents allowed by the Commission.
- 2.25.** No polling agent shall be allowed to leave the polling station or allowed substituting themselves by their relieving agents after 3.00 p.m. The polling agents may be allowed to go out of the polling stations even after 3.00 p.m. to attend to nature's calls, etc. and come back inside the polling station. However, it may be ensured that only the polling agent of a candidate or his substitute can be present inside the polling station at a time.
- 2.26.** It is reiterated that the Presiding Officer shall brief the polling agents to remain present in the polling station till the voting is over to oversee the ceiling procedure of EVMs & VVPAT and sign the declaration.



- 2.27. A “polling agents/relieving agents movement sheet” should be provided to each polling station, in which each and every polling agent shall be required to sign, indicating the time of arrival at the polling station and time of departure
- 2.28. The Observer, Sector Magistrate, senior officers who visit the polling station during the course of poll shall also ensure that the aforesaid sheet is being properly maintained.
- 2.29. The contact nos. of ROs/ AROs/Key Police Officers/ Sector Officers/ Control Rooms shall be displayed at all the polling stations so that if polling agents have any complaint, they can establish contact to register it for immediate intervention.
- 2.30. Polling Agent is allowed to carry his/her copy of electoral rolls inside the polling station and make tick marks whenever voters cast their vote. Under no circumstances, the polling agent should be allowed to bring his/her copy of the electoral roll outside the polling station, either by himself or through the relieving agent, during the course of the polling and till the polling is closed. Further, they cannot be allowed to send slips outside indicating the serial numbers of the voters who have voted or not voted.

## 2.C POLL DAY REPORTING:

- (i) Arrival of polling parties and start of proceedings to be intimated.
- (ii) Information related to conduct of mock Poll at all the Polling Stations of AC to be communicated.
- (iii) Information related to commencement of Poll.
- (iv) Information relating to % of poll at 9 AM, 11AM, 1PM, 3PM and 5 PM on Poll Day.
- (v) Information relating to EPIC Voter at 7PM of Poll Day.
- (vi) During the course of polling, the RO will maintain a separate register to identify such polling stations and even before the arrival of the polling party at the reception center and a hoarding or a notice board at reception centre indicating number and details of the polling stations that would be handled at the special counter. Special counters to be opened where polling has held with one polling agent.

## 2.D. COMMUNICATION PLAN

- 2.31. The CEO will form a dedicated team for each poll going district at the

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State level to monitor the smooth flow of communication and complaint redressal.

- 2.32. At the district level, the DEOs will have a control room with dedicated teams for the administrative unit-wise tracking at Tehsil/Block level, whichever is convenient.
- 2.33. Similarly, Tehsil/Block level dedicated officer will be tracking each and every polling station. In this process, from CEO offices up to the polling station there should be effective communication.
- 2.34. At each and every stage, the dedicated groups will track the events and keep the district control room and CEO control room informed.
- 2.35. As per the Commission's instructions, the Presiding Officers and Micro Observers are permitted to carry their mobile phones in silent mode.
- 2.36. The contact number of the control room should be duly registered in their mobile phones.
- 2.37. The Micro Observers shall also orally brief the General Observer on anything of importance that had happened during the day. If he notes any deviation of the Commission's instructions and feels that the poll is being vitiated for any reason, he will immediately bring the same to the notice of General observer through any means of communication available to him including mobile phone, police wireless etc.
- 2.38. Besides, the district control room will have the phone number of each Micro Observer so that they can directly contact them.
- 2.39. The Commission has, further, directed that in case of any untoward incident or complaint, quick response shall be ensured. The response should take place within 30 minutes and facts may be quickly ascertained.
- 2.40. Sector arrangements, control room arrangements, reserve vehicles and reserve officers shall be arranged in such a way that this aspect of the Commission's instructions is complied without any deviation.

### **2.E GRIEVANCE HANDLING ON POLL DAY:**

- 2.41. A well-organized complaint handling mechanism should be put on place at the level of Block/Tehsil, so that all complaints and queries can be addressed immediately.
- 2.42. Returning Officers /Assistant Returning Officers should remain personally involved in disposal of complaints.

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- 2.43. Deployment of competent personnel, capable of taking appropriate decisions should be made at the control rooms on the poll day.
- 2.44. The control room should be equipped with telephone/internet connection and the telephone number of the control room along with the numbers of DEO/Returning Officers, Observers and Zonal Magistrates should be well publicized and put up in the district election website so that general public can contact the election administration.
- 2.45. District-wise poll day tracking team dedicated for each poll going district should be constituted by CEO.
- 2.46. Setting up of 3 separate control rooms at CEO/DEO level
- i. Communication Control Room
  - ii. Media Monitoring Control Room
  - iii. Webcasting Control Room
- 2.47. Any complaint received from polling agents at any level shall be inquired immediately. The RO/Observer shall also scrutinize the documents related to such polling stations carefully and record their views specifically.
- 2.48. The teams for handling c –vigil must be sensitized to handle the cases in speedier way on poll day.
- 2.49. Quick response mechanism be established by making proper sector arrangements, control room arrangements., reserve vehicles and reserve officers etc. to ensure that in case of any untoward incident the facts could be got ascertained within 30 minutes.
- 2.50. The DEO/SP shall brief the CAPF/ State Police about provisions of Section 131 of the R.P. Act, 1951. For this, there should be proper co-ordination between the Presiding Officer and CAPF/ State Police posted in a polling station.
- 2.51. During trainings, the Presiding Officers shall be apprised of the powers conferred on them under Section 131 of the R. P. Act, 1951 and use the presence of CAPF /State Police personnel suitably in case of occurrence of any untoward incident affecting the free and fair poll

### **2.F ALLEGATIONS AGAINST POLLING STAFF:**

- 2.52. Whenever specific allegations of a serious nature are made in writing against the Presiding Officer or the polling staff about his/her conduct during polling at an election, RO should inquire into the matter as soon

as practicable and send the papers, along with DEO report, to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commission.

### **3. CAPF/CIVIL (NON CAPF) MEASURES:**

#### **3.1 Role of CAPF:**

- (i) Guarding the polling stations, poll materials, poll personnel and the poll.
- (ii) Patrolling duty on assigned routes covering a fixed cluster of polling stations and patrolling duty in vulnerable pockets of identified area.
- (iii) Patrolling duty as 'flying squads' in a defined area with surprise element.
- (iv) Escorting duty of polled EVM & VVPATs.
- (v) Guard duty of Polled EVMs & VVPATs and other documents until counting.

#### **3.2. Role of state police:**

- (i) Maintenance of the general law and order in the catchment area of the polling stations and inside and outside of the polling premises (as different from polling stations).
- (ii) Ensure safety of Voters, polling personnel and polling material.

### **4. VIDEOGRAPHY, STILL-PHOTOGRAPHY/WEB-CASTING:**

- (i) Cameras shall be placed in such a manner that they can record the voters in the queue, and the proceedings in the Polling Station, including the process of identification of voters, application of indelible ink, end of poll sealing processes etc.
  - (ii) It must be ensured that secrecy of voting is not violated by the camera in any manner.
  - (iii) All video teams should be under the personal supervision and guidance of a senior election officer.
- 4.2. The videographer/ photographer shall make sure that all important events such as mock poll, sealing of EVMs & VVPATs, signing by polling agents on the seals of EVMs & VVPATs, etc. are properly recorded. Any untoward incident at the Polling Station must also be recorded. Specially the following must be recorded:
- (i) Attempts of intimidation of voters.
  - (ii) Attempts of inducement / bribing of voters.

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- (iii) Canvassing within 100 metres of Polling Stations.
- (iv) Positioning of voting compartment
- (v) Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at the Polling station
- (vi) Presence of polling agents
- (vii) Mock Poll.
- (viii) Clearing of Mock Poll.
- (ix) Sealing of EVMs & VVPATs (Pre-poll and Post-poll)
- (x) Process of identification of voters.
- (xi) Voters in queues.
- (xii) The length of queue at the time fixed for close of poll.
- (xiii) Any dispute of any nature at the Polling Station.
- (xiv) Visit by Sector Officers, Observers and other electoral functionaries or any important person including the candidates.
- (xv) Replacement of EVM and VVPATs, if any.
- (xvi) Any incident at the Polling Stations.
- (xvii) All video and photography should be done with date and time recording so that the real time and date can be verified.

### 4.3. WEBCASTING:

Webcasting simply means live streaming of video on the Internet. It does not involve use of complicated technology. webcasting shall be done in all critical polling stations and all polling stations in vulnerable areas or at least in 50 % of total polling stations including auxiliary polling stations, whichever is higher

- (i) All that is needed is a video camera connected to the Internet.
- (ii) Any video camera including a webcam capable of being connected to the Internet can be used for web casting.
- (iii) **Recording in case of Webcasting:**
  - a. In all cases where webcasting is done, the video of the entire day's proceedings must be recorded, especially Mock Poll, sealing of EVM & VVPATs, application of indelible ink, sealing of EVMs & VVPATs

after close of poll etc.

- b. The camera should be placed in such a way that inside of the polling station particularly the voting compartment is seen and at the same time secrecy of voting is not compromised.
- c. Webcasting in polling stations is restricted for viewing only by the election machinery in keeping with the spirit of Rule 93(1) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961
- d. Webcasting of critical and vulnerable polling station to be done as per ECI instruction

(iv) **Monitoring of webcasting:**

Monitoring of webcasting shall be normally two tier, in addition to viewing by the Commission, as below:

- a. **State Control Room:** A separate control room within State Control Room shall be set up to monitor webcasting for appropriate action through District Control Room.
- b. **District Control Room:** A separate control room within State Control Room shall be set up to monitor webcasting for appropriate action through Returning Officer or Sector Officers or QRTs or any other mechanism.

4.4. CCTV Coverage:

- (i) CCTV coverage as a non-CAPF can be used as an effective tool, particularly in the vulnerable areas, where threat perception or rate of breach of election laws is historically very high.
- (ii) While using the CCTV as a Non-CAPF measure, it must be ensured that all the instructions/parameters mentioned above for the use of Video and Still cameras and Webcasting are to be, ad seriatim, scrupulously followed in the case of CCTV coverage also.

**5. L&O SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS:** No Election Booth shall be set up within a radius of 200 meters from the Polling Station. Even where more than one Polling Station has been set up in the same Polling Station Location or premises, there shall be only one Election Booth of a candidate for such group of Polling Stations beyond a distance of 200 meters from such premises.

- (i) No electioneering shall be allowed within the 200-meter area around the Polling Stations on the date of poll.
- (ii) No person other than Observers appointed by the Commission and authorized election/police officials shall be allowed to either carry or use mobile phones,

wireless sets, etc., in the 100-meter perimeter of the Polling Stations described as the "Polling Station Neighborhood" (*Section 130 Representation of the People Act 1951*) and within the Polling Station.

**(iii) Possession of Arms near the Polling Station:**

The provisions of Section 134 B of the Representation of People Act, 1951 provides that, except those expressly permitted by that section, no one else carries any arms or indulges in show of arms in Polling Stations or Polling Station Neighborhood, so that the conduct of elections can take place in a free and fair manner without any intimidation of voters, or threat perception to them. No person, even if a recipient of any form of security from any quarter, should enter into any Polling Station or Polling Station Neighborhood, accompanied by such security personnel.

**(iv) Security Arrangements:**

Commissioner of Police/ Superintendent of Police shall deploy police forces, including CAPF, as per approved District Deployment Plan on static and mobile duties. All police forces, including CAPF, deployed for polling station security shall take positions in and control of the respective Polling Stations on the day prior to the poll day.

- a. In case CAPF has not reached the assigned Polling Station, due to any reason, the poll shall not commence in that Polling Station.
- b. Manual on Force Deployment in Elections (*Latest Edition*) shall be referred to for detailed guidelines on force deployment.
- c. At the polling station where CAPF personnel are deployed according to District Deployment Plan, one personnel of the CAPF deployed for the Polling Station shall be placed at the door of the Polling Station, either in static or oscillating mode, in order to observe the proceedings inside the Polling Station (*Janak Singh V/s Ram Das Rai & Other in CA 9228 of 2003: SC*). Moreover, the Company Commanders of CAPF shall also move for area domination and confidence building measure in the sectors assigned to them.
- d. The State Police shall remain solely responsible for maintenance of the general law and order inside and outside of the Polling Station premises (as different from polling stations).
- e. State Police Force shall not replace the CAPFs at the Polling Stations, in contravention of District Deployment Plan, under any circumstances. No officer of the local state police, with or without contingent, shall position himself at the Polling Station and exercise any supervision and control over the CAPF at the Polling Station.

**6. MCC- GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON POLL DAY:**

- (i) One vehicle each for candidate, election agent and for candidate's workers/ party workers be allowed.

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- (ii) Not more than 5 persons including drivers be allowed in a vehicle.
- (iii) If candidate is absent from constituency, no other person shall be allowed to use the vehicle allotted to him.
- (iv) No other vehicle should be allowed to be used by any leader.
- (v) Permits be issued by DEO - Permits be displayed on wind screen of vehicles.
- (vi) Carrying of voters by these vehicles - Corrupt practice u/s 133 and penal action u/s 123(5) of RP Act, 1951.
- (vii) Providing free conveyance to voters to and from the polling stations by a candidate/his agent is a corrupt practice and strictly forbidden.
  - a. The aforementioned restrictions shall apply to all vehicles propelled by mechanical power or otherwise, including but not restricted to taxis, private cars, trucks, tractors with or without trailers, auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws, scooters, motorbikes mini buses, station wagons etc., also, and shall be made applicable for a period of 24 hours before the time fixed for closure of poll and till the completion of poll.
  - b. Penal action, both under the provisions of the R.P. Act, 1951 and the Indian Penal Code shall be taken against anyone offending the above directions, in addition to action under the Motor Vehicles Act. All vehicles being used in violation of these directions shall be confiscated.
  - c. Private vehicles may be used by the owners for their private use, not connected with elections;
  - d. Private vehicles being used by owners either for themselves or for members of their own family for going to the polling booth to exercise their franchise, but not going anywhere within a radius of 200 meters of a polling station;
  - e. Vehicles used for essential services namely hospital vans, ambulance, milk vans, water tankers, electricity emergency duty vans, police on duty, officers on election duty shall be allowed to ply.
  - f. Public transport carriages like buses should ply between fixed terminals and on fixed routes.
  - g. Taxis, three-wheeler scooters, rickshaws etc. for going to airports, railway stations, interstate bus stands, hospitals for journeys which cannot be avoided;
  - h. Private vehicles may be used by sick or disabled persons for their own use;
  - i. Vehicles being used by the Govt. officers on duty to reach their duty point shall be allowed to ply.



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- 6.2. Cellular phones, cordless phone etc., not to be allowed except officers on duty in the 100 meters of a PS.
- 6.3. Voter slips to be plain white slips without name of candidate/party markings/symbol.
- 6.4. No campaign related posters or banners within 100 meters of the Polling Booth.
- 6.5. During polling, PrO and other staff shall keep their mobile silent in the PS. If required they can talk from outside the polling booth.
- 6.6. Booth Level Officer to be stationed outside the polling booth at the Voter Assistance Booth (VAB). He should keep with mobile phone switched on, along with the Alphabetical roll locator for the PS, near the polling stations.
- 6.7. Prohibition of loudspeakers, mega phones etc and disorderly conduct - within 100 mtrs of a PS:**
  - (i) Amplifying or reproducing the human voice by any apparatus not allowed within 100 mts of PS.
  - (ii) Shouting or otherwise, acting in disorderly manner, is not allowed.
  - (iii) None except authorized security personnel can enter within 100 meters of any polling station.
  - (iv) Security personnel attached to any person not to be allowed inside the polling booth.
  - (v) Exception to the above only in case of person covered under Z+ security which is one security person in simple clothes and with one concealed arms.

## 7. RECEIVING CENTRE ARRANGEMENTS:

- 7.1. Proper arrangements at Reception Centre must be ensured for lighting, drinking water, first aid and other medical facilities, refreshments, transport arrangements etc.
- 7.2. Strong Rooms should have proper security as per the prescribed norms.
- 7.3. Telephone, Internet, Computer section, Room for Observers, Generators/power back-ups etc.
- 7.4. Observers to verify the arrangements.
- 7.5. There should be no crowding - If required set up separate AC-wise counters for specific numbers of PSs.
- 7.6. Deposit and Storage of polled EVMs and VVPAT:

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- (i) Ensure that all the Presiding Officers should deposit voting machines and election papers and other materials at Receipt Centers without any avoidable delay.
- (ii) The Polling parties carrying election material from polling booth to Receiving centre/Strong Room shall be accompanied by security and shall travel in designated vehicle and through the designated route.

### **6.7 Separate Special Counter for election papers of following Polling Booths:**

- (i) Where polling percentage has crossed the prescribed percentage, about which complaints had been received.
- (ii) In which significant events such as violent incidents, breakdown of EVMs & VVPAT reported.
- (iii) EVMs & VVPAT replacement had taken place etc.
- (iv) Proper Signage indicating such PSs at reception centre - PrO shall be relieved only after obtaining the EVMs & VVPAT and document after proper verification and discussion with RO/Observer.
- (v) Special Check shall be carried out before receipt to ensure PrO's diary is properly filled up and visit sheet attached thereto, EVM/VVPAT is sealed, Form 17C is given to Polling Agents, and all documents/material as per PrO checklist are available.
- (vi) Receipt of documents and polling material as per printed checklist should be signed by the Receiving Officer.

## **8. SECURITY MEASURES FOR POLLED EVMs & VVPAT:**

### **8.1. Security of Strong Room:**

- (i) Strong Room shall have only one door and no other door or opening. In case there are other doors or opening, they shall be closed using brick masonry.
- (ii) Strong room shall be locked and sealed as per the latest instructions.
- (iii) Arrangements should be made for fire and flood safety.
- (iv) Strong room shall be under 24X7 CAPF guard either out of existing deployment available in the State or using the CAPF ordered to be retained out of Central pool.
- (v) Strong room shall be under 24X7 CCTV coverage.
- (vi) One control room adjacent to the strong room should be operative round the clock.

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- (vii) A Gazetted officer along with a police officer should be put on duty round the clock for monitoring the security arrangements of strong room.
- (viii) It should be ensured that there is uninterrupted power supply at the strong room locations during the entire period wherein EVMs & VVPAT are stored. CEO may address the Chairman of Electricity Board concerned separately regarding this. Local Electricity Board officials should be asked to ensure the same. Contingency arrangement of stand by generators should be made to ensure uninterrupted power supply.
- (ix) Guarding of strong rooms: There shall be a two tier guarding system for strong rooms: First tier, which is the innermost perimeter, shall be CAPF guard. This shall be a 24x7 CAPF armed guard. Minimum one section of CAPF armed guard shall be on duty 24X7 in Strong Rooms in Non LWE areas.. For this purpose, minimum one platoon of CAPF shall be provided to guard the Strong Room round the clock. In LWE/Militancy/ Insurgency area the strong room shall be manned by 1 platoon each in 3 shifts.
- (x) Second tier shall be from the State SAP.
- (xi) All contesting candidates should be intimated in writing to depute their representatives to keep a close watch on security arrangement of strong room.
- (xii) If there is no direct view to the strong room, CCTV should be arranged at the location, so that they can see the strong room door on CCTV. In such a case, they may be taken periodically to the inner perimeter in batches to see for themselves and verify the strong room security.
- (xiii) The phone nos. of CEO, Addl. CEOs, control rooms setup by CEO/DEO/RO and the DEO/SP/concerned should be given to the candidates, who may provide the same to their people keeping vigil at the strong room location. They may be advised by the candidate to contact the officials in case of any need.

### **8.2. Protocol to be followed to enter the inner perimeter: No one should be allowed to enter the inner perimeter without following the protocol, as under:**

- (i) The log book shall be maintained by the CAPF in which entry should be made about date, time, duration and name(s) of any one crossing the second security ring i.e. the middle perimeter. This includes visits by the Observers or DEOs or SPs or candidates or their agents or any other persons.
- (ii) Video cameras should be provided to the CAPF contingent to record all visits made by such visitors.

- (iii) No vehicle, including that of any official or ministers or any other political functionary should be allowed inside the secured campus where the EVMs are stored. Alighting point for the vehicles should be marked clearly ahead of the outer security perimeter itself; beyond it should be a pedestrian zone only.

### **8.3. Supervision by Returning Officers and DEOs:**

- (i) Returning Officers should visit the storage campus (upto the inner perimeter only) every day in the morning and evening and check the log book and videography and send a report to the DEO on the status every day.
- (ii) In case of strong rooms located in the district headquarters, the DEO should do the same.
- (iii) Where the strong rooms are situated outside the district Headquarters, DEO should visit the same as frequently as possible and at least once in 3 to 4 days.
- (iv) DMs and SPs shall be personally responsible for security of strong room within the district and meticulous implementation of the protocol.

### **8.4. Certification by DEO:**

- (i) The Commission has desired that DEO shall certify that the instructions of the Commission regarding the security of polled EVMs & VVPATs have been complied with. The CEO of the State shall obtain the certificate from DEOs and forward a consolidated report in this regard to the Commission.
- (ii) The Observers shall also be informed by the CEO to inspect and confirm that these instructions are scrupulously followed.

## CHAPTER V

### POLL DAY (P+1)

#### 1. SCRUTINY OF FORM-17A AND OTHER DOCUMENTS: (ECI No. 464/ INST-17A/2023-EPS dated 10.06.2023)

- 1.1. Scrutiny of Form-17A and other documents to be carried out for those polling booth which fulfill the criteria specified in the ECI Instructions.
- 1.2. Scrutiny of Form-17A along with other documents will be taken up preferably at 11:00AM on the day following the day of Poll.
- 1.3. Scrutiny to be done in presence of/under intimation to candidates and an advance notice to be sent informing them about the same.
- 1.4. Scrutiny to be conducted in the presence of the General Observer, RO.
- 1.5. Laid down procedure for scrutiny of documents to be strictly followed.
- 1.6. Cross check the entries of Form 17A, PO diary, visit sheet, complaint register of control room, diaries of Magistrates, marked copy of roll, remarks column of 17A, Form 17C, Micro Observer report.
- 1.7. If required, Micro- observers should remain available at the time of scrutiny, for the General Observer to seek any clarifications.
- 1.8. Video recording/ photographs / CCTV recording to be seen and videographers/ photographers to be available at the time of scrutiny-
  - 1.8.1. In case of any complaint with respect to any Polling Station, and videography/ photography has been done at that Polling Station, it should be viewed by the RO and Observer at the time of scrutiny,
- 1.9. The entire proceedings of the Scrutiny exercise shall be videographed uninterruptedly.
- 1.10. The scrutiny should be done taking adequate time encompassing the criteria envisaged in ECI guidelines.

## CHAPTER VI

### REPOLL-ADJOURNED POLL

#### 1.1. Recommendation for Re-poll/completion of adjourned poll:

- 1.1.1. Where necessary such recommendations for adjournment should be submitted in prescribed formats as per instruction no. 464/INST-17A/2023-EPS dated 10.06.2023.

#### 1.2. Adjournment of poll after death of a candidate -[Sec 52 of RP ACT 51].

- 1.2.1. RO on being satisfied about the fact should order such adjournment of poll.
- 1.2.2. State party recognized in other state, not to be treated as recognized political party within scope of section 52, even if that party has been granted concession under para 10 of Symbol Order to use its symbol.

#### 1.3. Arrangements in case of Re-poll - Adjourned poll

- 1.3.1. The EVMs & VVPATs required for re-poll shall be drawn from the reserve list and the CU/BU/VVPAT number shall be informed to the candidates/agents in writing and also to be entered in the EVM Management System(EMS).
- 1.3.2. Re-poll u/s 58 / 58A - Re-pollled EVMs & VVPATs be put back in same strong room where the polled EVMs/VVPATs have been placed.
- 1.3.3. Storage of category A, B, C, D EVMs shall be done as per the procedure laid down in the latest edition of EVM Manual.
- 1.3.4. Separate polling party shall be deployed for the re-poll.
- 1.3.5. Adjourned poll u/s 57 - Sealed packets containing marked copy of roll and the Register of Voters and new EVM& VVPATs will be provided to PrO. The PrO to open sealed packet in presence of polling agents present and initiate the process of polling.

#### 1.4. Re-pollled EVM and VVPAT:

- 1.4.1. In case of re-poll, a pre-printed self-adhesive sticker 'Re-poll EVM/VVPAT' shall be pasted on the EVM (BU & CU & VVPATs), as well as carrying cases of the EVM and VVPAT to be used for re-poll.
- 1.4.2. After re-poll, the strong room shall be re-opened in the presence of the candidates/their agents and observer for storage of re-poll EVM & VVPAT. This re-pollled EVM& VVPAT should be placed together with the old EVM& VVPAT which was used earlier in the original poll.
- 1.4.3. At the time of placing the "Re-Poll EVM/VVPAT" after re-poll in the strong room, pre-printed sticker with bold print "TO BE COUNTED" shall be pasted on the re-pollled EVM. Another pre-printed sticker "NOT TO BE COUNTED" shall be put on the old EVM, to remove any confusion at the time of counting.
- 1.4.4. The unique ID number of the CU, BU & VVPAT used in re-poll should be entered in the EVM Management System.





# भारत निर्वाचन आयोग Election Commission of India

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