PBC No: 51/2026

दक्षिणरेलवे Southern Railway
प्रधानमुख्यकार्मिकअधिकारीकार्यालय
Office of the Principal Chief Personnel Officer
प्रधान कार्यालय, कार्मिक विभाग,चेन्नै-600003
Headquarters, Personnel Department,Chennai-600003

सं/No: P(L)332/P/Elections दिनांक/Dated:30.03.2026

All PHODs/DRMs/CWMs/CEWE/CAO/CPM/PDA/Dy.CPOs/Sr.DPOs/Secy to GM, Chairman/RRB/MAS,TVC, Addl.Registrar/RCT/MAS, Secretary/RRT/MAS, Principal MDZTI/TPJ, SRCETC/TBM, ZETTC/AVD, DPOs/SPOs/WPOs/APOs of HQ/Divisions /Workshops/Units.

विषय/Sub: **Immediate action to be taken for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct after announcement of General Election to Legislative Assemblies of the states of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026 and by-elections to Assembly Constituencies of various States/UT – Reg.**

संदर्भ/Ref: **Rly Bd L. No. 2025/G/4/MCC (E:3488861) dated 23.03.2026.**

****

A copy of Railway Board's letter No.2025/G/4/MCC (E:3488861) dated 23.03.2026 along with enclosures on the above subject is enclosed for information, guidance and necessary action.

संलग्नक/Encl: As above

Digitally signed by
CHILAKALAPUDI ANJANI KUMAR
'Date: 2026.03.30 14:12:50 +05'30

(C. ANJANI KUMAR)
Asst. Personnal Officer/IR & Trg
For Principal Chief Personnel Officer

Copy to: The General Secretary/SRMU
The General Secretary/DREU
The General Secretary/AIOBCREA
The General Secretary/AISCTREA
The General Secretary/NFIR

IT Section/PB/HQ - to upload in the SR website.

MOST URGENT
ELECTION MATTER

No 2025/G/4/MCC (E: 3488861)

Sub: Immediate action to be taken for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct after announcement of General Election to Legislative Assemblies of the States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026 and by-elections to Assembly Constituencies of various States/UT -reg.

A copy of O.M No. 1/41/1/2025-Cab. dated 17th March 2026 along with enclosure letter No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2026/252 dated 15.03.2026, as received from Cabinet Secretariat, addressed to all Secretaries to the Government of India and Election Commission of India's two Press Notes No. ECI/PN/029/2026 and No. ECI/PN/030/2026, both dated 15th March 2026, on the above-mentioned subject are attached herewith for information and compliance thereto.

DA: As above.

(T. Srinivas)
Joint Secretary
Railway Board
23.03.2026

Chairman & CEO MF MI MTRS MOBD

Secretary/RB DG(HR) DG(RHS) DG(RPF) DG(Safety)

All AMs PED(IR)

Copy to:

EDPG/MR EDPG/MoSR(R) OSD/MoSR(S)

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MOST IMMEDIATE

No. 1/41/1/2025-Cab
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)
CABINET SECRETARIAT (MANTRIMANDAL SACHIVALAYA)

New Delhi, the 17th March, 2026

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: 1. Immediate action to be taken for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct after announcement of General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of the States of Assam, Kerela, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026.

2. Application of Model Code of Conduct – General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of the States of Assam, Kerela, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026 and bye-elections to Assembly Constituencies of various States/UT.

The undersigned is directed to enclose a copy each of the following letters received from Election Commission of India, for information and necessary action:

(i) Letter No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2026/252 dated 15.03.2026 on subject (1) above.

(ii) Letter No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2026/251 dated 15.03.2026 on subject (2) above.

(Anita Tripathi)
Director
Tele No. 23792204
Email: anita.tripathi76@gov.in

To

All Secretaries to the Government of India

By Spl. Messenger/Speed Post/E-mail

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA
NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110001

No. 437/6/1/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2026/252. **Dated: 15th March, 2026**

To

1. **The Cabinet Secretary,**
   Government of India,
   Rashtrapati Bhawan.
   New Delhi.

2. **The Chief Secretaries** to the Governments of
   (i) Assam, Dispur;
   (ii) Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram;
   (iii) Puducherry,
   (iv) Tamil Nadu, Chennai; and
   (v) West Bengal, Kolkata.

3. **The Chief Electoral Officers** of
   (i) Assam, Dispur;
   (ii) Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram;
   (iii) Puducherry,
   (iv) Tamil Nadu, Chennai; and
   (v) West Bengal, Kolkata.

Subject: Immediate action to be taken for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct after announcement of General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of the States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026- regarding.

Sir/Madam,

I am directed to state that the provisions of 'Model Code of Conduct' have come into effect with the announcement of schedule for General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of the States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026 by the Commission *vide* its Press Note No. ECI/PN/029/2026, dated 15th March, 2026. In view of the election, the Commission has issued following directions for effective enforcement of provisions of MCC:-

1. **Defacement of Property-** ECI instructions contained in letter No. 3/7/2023-SDR, dated 12th October, 2023(copy enclosed), provide for prevention of defacement of property. The Commission has directed to ensure strict compliance of its instruction and to take time bound action as prescribed below-

   (a) **Defacement of Government property-** For this purpose a Government premise would include any Government office and the campus wherein the office building, compound and establishment are situated. All wall-writing, posters/papers or defacement in any other form, including

cutout/hoardings, banners, flags etc., on Government property shall be removed **within 24 hours** from the announcement of elections by the Election Commission.

(b) **Defacement of public property and misuse of public space-** All unauthorized political advertisement, in the form of wall writing/posters/papers or defacement in any other form, cutout/hoardings, banners flags etc. at public property and in public space like railway station, Bus stands, Airports, railway Bridges, Roadways, Government buses, Electric/Telephone poles, municipal/local bodies' buildings etc., shall be removed **within 48 hours** from the announcement of elections.

(c) **Defacement of private property-** Subject to any local law and Court's direction, all unauthorized political advertisement displayed at private property shall be removed **within 72 hours** from the announcement of elections by the Election Commission.

2. **Misuse of official vehicle-** The ECI's Consolidated instructions contained in letter No. 464/L&O/2023/EPS(Use of Veh.), dated 26th June, 2023 (copy enclosed), among other things, provide that there shall be a total ban on use of official vehicle by any political party, candidate or any other person connected with election (except officials performing any election related official duty) for campaigning, electioneering or election related travel during elections (subject to certain exception mentioned therein). The expression 'official vehicle' means and shall include, any vehicle used or capable of being used for the purpose of transport, whether propelled by mechanical power or otherwise and will include trucks, lorries, tempos, jeeps, cars, auto rickshaws, e-rickshaws, buses, belonging to Central Government, State Government/UT Administrations, public undertakings of Central/State Government, Joint sector undertakings of Central/State Government, local bodies, municipal corporations, marketing boards, cooperative societies or any other body in which public funds, however small a portion of the total, are invested. The CEOs/DEOs shall take necessary action for compliance of ECI instructions **within 24 hours** of the announcement of the elections.

3. **Advertisement at the cost of public exchequer-** ECI instructions contained in letter No. 437/6/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024(ADVERTISEMENTS), dated 2nd January, 2024 provides that advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media and the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided. No advertisements shall be issued in electronic and print media highlighting the achievements of the Govt. at the cost of public exchequer. If any advertisement has already been released for telecast/broadcast or publication in the print media, it must be ensured that the telecast/broadcast of such ads on electronic media is stopped forthwith and that no such ad is published in any newspapers, magazines, etc., i.e. in print media, from the date of

announcement and it should be immediately withdrawn. The CEOs/DEOs have to take **immediate action** to remove/stop any advertisement. in the print/electronic media, showing the achievements of the Government soon after the announcement of elections.

4. **Photograph of political functionary at official website-** ECI instruction contained in letter No. 437/6/INST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/2024(MCC ENFORCEMENT), dated 2nd January, 2024, provides that all references of Ministers, Politicians or political parties available on central/state Government's official website shall be removed. The CEOs have to take **immediate action** to remove/hide the photographs of any political functionary from official websites of state department.

5. Development/construction related activities- within 72 hours of announcement of elections, the CEO/DEO shall obtain the following list of works for reference in case of validating any complaint on violation of MCC:
   (i) List of work which has already been started on ground.
   (ii) List of fresh work which has not started on ground.

6. Activities for Expenditure Monitoring and enforcement of MCC- Flying squad, FST, video team, intensive checking for liquor/Cash/Contraband drugs, flying squads of excise department to check illicit trafficking of Drug/Narcotics to be immediately activated after announcement.

7. Complaint Monitoring System- The poll going states shall have a complaint redressal mechanism based on website and call center. The toll free number of call center is 1950. Complaints can be registered by making calls to the toll free call center numbers or on the website. Complainants will also be informed of the action taken by SMS and by the call center. Complainants can also see the details of the action taken on their complaints. This system should be operational within 24 hours of the announcement. All complaints should be dealt promptly and properly. The 24x7 control Room at the district level must be activated and sufficient deployment of manpower and other logistics be ensured in particular, round the clock personnel should be deployed in the control room and their duty roster must be issued to avoid any evasion or confusion.

8. IT Application- All IT applications including official website and social media shall be operational with the announcement.

9. Dissemination of information for Awareness of Voters and political parties. Publicity of major election activity would be given through CEO/DEO/RO. For this purpose, all necessary information shall be disseminated through radio, TV, cinema, Government channel to display voter education material.

10. Active cooperation from Educational Institutions and Civil Societies- Cooperation can be sought from educational institutions and civil societies for giving wide publicity to the election related information to the general public and other stakeholders.

11. Media Centre-Efforts should be made for awareness among the voters, political parties and other stakeholder through media center about election system including use of EVM/VVPAT.

12. MCMC/DEMC- ECI instruction contained in letter no. 491/MCMC/5/2023/Communication, dated 24thAugust, 2023, provides that all registered political parties will approach the Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) at District and State level, as the case may be, for pre-certification of their political advertisements proposed to be issued on electronic media. The Commission has directed to ensure strict compliance of its instructions contained in above said letter.

13. Control Room- The 24x7 control room at district level must be activated immediately and sufficient deployment of manpower and other logistics be ensured by the DEO/CEO.

14. Hindi version will follow.

Yours faithfully,

(PRAFULL AWASTHI)
UNDER SECRETARY

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Tel. No. 011-23052144
Fax 011-23052001
Website: www.eci.gov.in

निर्वाचन सदन,
अशोक रोड, नई दिल्ली - 110001
Nirvachan Sadan,
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.

No. ECI/PN/029/2026

Dated:15th March, 2026

PRESS NOTE

Subject: General Election to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, 2026 – reg.

The term and strength along with seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) of the Assembly Constituencies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, as determined by the Delimitation Order, are as under:-

Name of State/UT	Term of Assembly	Total No. of ACs	Reserved for SCs	Reserved for STs
Assam	21.05.2021 to 20.05.2026	126	09	19
Kerala	24.05.2021 to 23.05.2026	140	14	02
Tamil Nadu	11.05.2021 to 10.05.2026	234	44	02
West Bengal	08.05.2021 to 07.05.2026	294	68	16
Puducherry	16.06.2021 to 15.06.2026	30	05	--

Election Commission of India (hereinafter ECI) is mandated to conduct elections to the Legislative Assemblies of state of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry before the cessation of their term, in exercise of the authority and powers conferred upon it under Article 324 read with Article 172 (1) of the Constitution of India and Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

2. The Commission has visited these states to review the poll

preparedness and the Commission interacted with the recognized political parties, enforcement agencies, all District Election Officers, District SPs/CPs, Divisional Commissioners, range DIGs/IGs, Chief Secretaries/DGPs and other Senior Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry.

3. The team of senior officers of the Commission also reviewed law and order situation, to ascertain specific areas of concern, to discuss the quantum of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) required in the States/UT and the overall preparedness of the election machinery. The cooperation of all authorities was sought for conducting elections as per law in these States under the overall superintendence, direction and control of the Election Commission.

4. The conduct of General Election in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry requires deployment of Central and State Police Forces to ensure peaceful election with fearless participation of electors, especially in vulnerable areas/pockets. Deployment and disengagement of these forces with optimal utilization involves complex planning and detailed analysis, carried out over several rounds of consultations with the senior officers of the Ministry of Home Affairs, CAPFs, Police Nodal Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry and Railway Ministry.

5. Electoral Rolls:

The Commission firmly believes that pure and updated electoral rolls are the bedrock of democratic process. Hence, intensive and sustained focus is placed upon improving its quality, health and fidelity. After the amendment in the Section 14 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 by the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021, there is a provision of four qualifying dates to enroll as a voter in a year. Accordingly, Commission has conducted the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Roll in Puducherry, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and Special Revision (SR) of Electoral Roll in Assam with

reference to 01.01.2026, as the qualifying date. After time-bound completion of SR and SIR of Electoral Rolls with reference to 01-01-2026 as the qualifying date, the final publication of electoral roll was done in Assam on 10.02.2026, in Puducherry on 14.02.2026, in Tamil Nadu on 17.02.2026, in Kerala on 21.02.2026 and in West Bengal on 28.02.2026. The copies of the draft and final electoral rolls have been shared with all recognized political parties and uploaded on website. The final list published in the State of West Bengal would be followed with Supplementary List(s) of electors as per orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. As per final publication of electoral rolls on above indicated dates, the number of electors in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry is:

Name of State	No. of General Electors	No. of Service Voters	Total No. of electors as per electoral rolls
Assam	2,49,58,139	63,269	2,50,21,408
Kerala	2,70,52,007	54,052	2,71,06,059
Tamil Nadu	5,67,07,380	67,056	5,67,74,436
West Bengal *	6,44,52,609	1,08,543	6,45,61,152
Puducherry	9,44,211	328	9,44,539

* May get augmented on account of publication of supplementary list(s) in pursuance of orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Number of young electors as per the final roll

Name of State	18-19 years age electors
Assam	5,75,258
Kerala	4,24,518
Tamil Nadu	12,51,749
West Bengal	5,23,229
Puducherry	23,033

Number of Electors marked as PwD, Third Gender and Senior Citizen (85+), in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry are:

Name of State	Total PwD Electors	Total Third Gender	Total Senior Citizens (85+)
Assam	2,03,709	343	1,04,238
Kerala	2,44,250	273	2,04,317
Tamil Nadu	4,63,398	7,617	3,99,668
West Bengal	4,16,089	1,152	3,78,979
Puducherry	12,204	139	6,034

The Commission, in order to maximize participation from all strata of society and improve the health of electoral roll has taken all possible efforts to include:

A. Focus on the enrolment of young voters especially who attained the qualifying age on 01.01.2026.

B. Rationalize Polling Stations with due diligence. Each and every polling station has been physically visited by Senior Officers and shifting of polling stations in new and better infrastructure building has also been considered after following due procedure.

C. Enforce the Assured Minimum Facilities along with accessibility friendly infrastructure for PWDs and senior citizens in the polling stations for which CEOs/DEOs have been directed to create permanent infrastructure such as ramps at the polling stations.

D. Polling Station Locations with 3 or more Polling Stations have been planned for separate entry and exit so as to avoid any untoward incidences related to any epidemic or disorder.

E. The Commission has encouraged the DEOs to use eco-friendly material and exhibit local culture and art to create Model Polling Stations. Each District should have at least one such Model Polling Station, as far as possible.

6. Photo Electoral Rolls and Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC): Photo Electoral Rolls will be used during the General Election to Legislative Assemblies of state of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry. EPIC will be used for establishing the identity of elector at the time of voting. All out efforts are being made to ensure 100% delivery of EPIC to all newly registered electors before the

last date of filing nomination.

7. Voter Information Slips (VIS):

To facilitate the voters in knowing the serial number of electoral roll in their polling station, date of poll, time etc., 'Voter Information Slip (VIS)' will be issued. VIS will include information like Polling Station, Date, Time etc. with QR code but not the photograph of the voter. To easily identify the polling station, the serial number and part number of the voter will be prominently displayed in larger font size at the top right corner of the VIS. VIS will be distributed at least 5 clear days before the date of poll to all enrolled electors, by the District Election Officer through BLOs. However, VIS will not be mandatory for voting nor allowed as proof of identity of voters.

8. Braille Voter Information Slips:

To ensure ease of participation and active engagement of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process, Commission has directed to issue Accessible Voter Information Slips with Braille Features to Persons with Visual Impairment, along with normal Voter Information Slips.

9. Voter Guide:

A Voter Guide (in Hindi/English/Local Language) shall be provided to every elector's household ahead of election, giving them information about the date and time of poll, contact details of the BLOs, important websites, helpline numbers, documents required for identification at the polling station besides other important information including the Do's and Don'ts for voters at the polling station. This Voter Guide will be distributed along with Voter Information Slips by the BLOs.

10. Measures to prevent Impersonation:

BLOs have done door to door survey and will prepare a list of voters found absent from the place of their ordinary residence in the process of distribution of VIS. Similarly, names of shifted and dead voters, whose

names could not be deleted, shall also be added to this list by BLOs. This list of Absent, Shifted or Dead (ASD) voters shall be given to the Presiding Officers on the poll day. Commission has issued instructions that voting will be allowed only after proper identification of voters. Identification shall be done on the basis of EPIC or other alternative identity documents permitted by the Commission. Presiding Officers are required to double check the identity of voters whose names are on the ASD list.

11. Identification of Voters at Polling Stations:

For identification of voters at Polling Station, the Voter shall present his/her EPIC or any of the following 12 original Photo identification documents (Identity Cards) approved by the Commission.

i. Aadhaar Card;
ii. MGNREGA Job Card
iii. Passbooks with photograph issued by Bank/Post Office;
iv. Health Insurance Smart Card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour/Ayushman Bharat Health Card;
v. Driving License;
vi. PAN Card;
vii. Smart Card issued by RGI under NPR,
viii. Indian Passport;
ix. Pension document with photograph;
x. Service Identity Cards with photograph issued to employees by Central/State Govt./PSUs/Public Limited Companies;
xi. Official identity cards issued to MPs/MLAs/MLCs and
xii. Unique Disability ID (UDID) Card, M/o Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.

12. Polling Stations and Special Facilitation:

(i) Maximum No. of electors in Polling Station:

It has been decided that there shall be a maximum of 1200 electors in a polling station. Accordingly, the changes in the number of Polling Stations in these States are as follows:

Name of State	No. of Polling Stations during Gen. Election to Lok Sabha, 2024	No. of Polling Stations in 2026
Assam	28,650	31,486
Kerala	25,231	30,471
Tamil Nadu	68,321	75,032
West Bengal	80,530	80,719
Puducherry	967	1,099

Extensive survey has been carried out during the exercise of rationalization of polling stations for setting up new polling stations in the High Rise/Group Housing societies/RWA colonies that have common facilitation area/community halls at ground floor within the premises and in slum dwelling clusters of urban areas. Auxiliary polling stations may be created for those polling stations where the elector strength exceeds 1200 where ever feasible, at the same location.

(ii) Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at Polling Stations:

The Commission has issued instructions to the Chief Electoral Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry to ensure that every Polling Station shall have accessible road in good condition leading to polling station building and is equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) like drinking water, waiting shed, toilet with water facility, adequate arrangements for lighting, ramp of proper gradient for the PwD electors and a standard voting compartment, proper signage etc. The Commission has directed the CEOs and DEOs to take efforts to make permanent ramp at every polling station with a gradient not exceeding 1:12 as per the existing guidelines issued by DePWD. **Further, they have been asked to provide benches for allowing voters to sit intermittently while waiting for their turn to vote at the polling station.**

(iii) Accessible Election - Facilitation for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and Senior Citizens:

The Commission has issued instructions to the Chief Electoral Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, to ensure that polling stations are located at ground floor/road entry level and ramps with proper gradient are provided for the convenience of differently abled electors and senior citizens with wheelchairs. Further,

in order to provide targeted and need-based facilitation to differently-abled voters, Commission has directed that all persons with disabilities and senior citizens in an Assembly Constituency are identified and tagged to their respective Polling Stations and necessary disability-specific arrangements made for their smooth and convenient voting experience on poll day. Identified PwDs and senior citizens electors will be assisted by volunteers appointed by RO/DEO. Special facilitation will be made for PwD and senior citizens electors at Polling Stations. Also, it has been directed that differently abled electors & senior citizens are given priority for entering polling booths, provision be made for designated parking spaces close to the entrance of polling station premises and special facilitation extended to electors with speech and hearing impairment. Special focus has been laid on sensitization of polling personnel regarding special needs of the differently abled electors.

The Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) that there should be proper transport facility for PwDs and senior citizens electors in each and every polling station on the day of poll. The PwD electors can request for wheelchair facility by registering on **Divyang (Saksham) Module of ECINET.**

At the Polling Station, visually impaired persons can take a companion along with them to cast their vote on their behalf as provided in Rule 49N of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. However, no person can act as a companion for more than one such voter. Besides, Dummy Ballot Sheets in Braille will be available in all Polling Stations. Any visually impaired voter can use this sheet and after studying contents of this sheet can cast his/her vote on his/her own using Braille facility on Ballot Units of EVMs without any help from companion.

(iv) Voter Facilitation Posters:

In order to fulfill 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 following four (04) kinds of uniform and standardized Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP) shall be prominently displayed at all Polling Stations: -

a) *Polling Station Details,*

b) *List of Candidates,*

c) *Do's and Don'ts and*

d) *Approved Identification Documents & How to Vote.*

(v) Voter Assistance Booths (VAB):

Voter Assistance Booths shall be set up for every polling station location, having a team of BLOs/officials in order to assist voters to correctly locate their polling booth number and serial number in the electoral roll of that concerned polling booth. The VABs will be set up with prominent signage and in such a manner that it will be conspicuous to the voters as they approach the polling premise/building to enable them to seek required facilitation on poll day. Alphabetic locator (as per English alphabet) generated with ERO-Net is placed at VAB to search the name easily and to know the serial number in the Electoral Roll.

(vi) Mobile Phone deposit facility at polling station:

Mobile phone deposit facility for voters will be provided outside the entrance of the polling station. Mobile phones will be allowed within 100 meters of a polling station only in switch off mode. The voter shall hand over the mobile phone (in switch off mode), before entering into the polling station, to the designated volunteer who shall issue a pre-numbered token to the voter. After casting the vote, the voter shall return the token and receive his/her mobile phone. The phone shall not be switched on within 100-meter periphery of the polling station. This facility may not be available at some polling stations due to prevailing law and order situation, criticality, vulnerability or non-availability of volunteer(s) or any other factor.

(vii) Standardized Voting Compartment to ensure Secrecy of Voting: In order to maintain the secrecy of vote at the time of poll, voting compartments having a height of 30 inches and a width and depth of 24 inches shall be used and it should be placed on a table whose height shall be 30 inches. Only corrugated sheet (flex board) of steel-grey colour which is completely opaque and reusable, shall be used for making voting compartments. The Commission hopes that the use of these standardized and uniform Voting Compartments in all the polling stations will translate into greater voter facilitation, ensure absolute

secrecy of vote and eliminate aberrations and non-uniformity in the preparation of Voting Compartment inside the polling stations. There will be sufficient lighting inside the voting compartment so that the voters can easily view the ballot unit while casting their votes. However, no direct sunlight/strong light should be placed directly over the EVM.

The voting compartments shall also be pasted with self-adhesive stickers on three sides of the voting compartment depicting name of election, Name of State/UT, AC Number & name, P.S. number and Name, date of poll etc.

13. Initiatives/Facilities for PwD Voters, 85+ Senior Citizens, and Electors employed in essential services and COVID suspect/affected voters:

(i) Rule 27A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 has been amended to provide the optional postal ballot facility to "Absentee Voters". "Absentee Voter" has been defined in clause (aa) of Rule-27A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, and includes person who is employed in essential services [AVES], senior citizens (above 85 year of age)[AVSC], Persons with Disability (with benchmark or above disability)[AVPD] and COVID 19 suspect or affected persons[AVCO]. The category of essential services is notified by the Election Commission under Section 60(C) of the R.P. Act, 1951 in consultation with the Government.

The following procedures have also been made in the existing Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by Absentee Voters in the category of Senior Citizens, PwDs and Covid-19 suspect or affected persons: -

A. An Absentee Voter wishing to vote by Postal Ballot has to make application to the Returning Officer (RO) of the constituency concerned, in Form-12D appended to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, giving all requisite particulars. Such applications seeking postal ballot facility should reach the RO during the period from date of announcement of election to five days following the date of notification of the election concerned.

B. 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.

C. Distribution of Form 12D by BLO:

(a) BLO will visit the houses of the absentee voters in category of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO, as per details provided by the RO, in the Polling Station area and deliver Form 12D to the concerned electors and obtain acknowledgements from them.

(b) If an elector is not available, BLO shall share his/her contact details and revisit to collect it within five days of the notification.

(c) 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 the same with the RO forthwith.

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

D. Sharing list of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO with contesting candidates: Further, the RO shall share list of all such AVSC, AVPD and AVCO, 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.

(ii) A polling team comprising of 2 polling officials out of which at least one should be not below the rank/level of the official appointed as polling officer for polling station and one micro observer along with a videographer and security will then go to the elector's address along with a Voting Compartment and get the elector to vote using 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.

(iii) This is an optional facility and does not involve any Postal Department for mailing arrangement.

(iv) Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam,

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry to take necessary steps for the dissemination of information and extending facilitation to the above categories of Voters.

14. Polling stations managed by Women and Persons with Disabilities:

As part of its firm commitment towards gender equality and greater constructive participation of women in the electoral process, the Commission has also directed that, to the extent possible, at least one polling station each managed exclusively by women and Persons with Disabilities shall be set up in every Assembly Constituency in poll going States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry. In such women managed Polling Stations, all election staff, including police and security personnel, will be women. Minimum one Model Polling Station per Assembly Constituency shall also be set up using and depicting local material and art forms.

At least one Polling Station per district shall be managed by the Polling teams consisting of available youngest eligible employees of that district.

15. Nomination Process:

Brief description about filing of nomination is as given below:

(i) Additional option to facilitate *online mode* in nomination has been provided:

A. Nomination form will also be available on the online portal at https://suvidha.eci.gov.in. By creating an account, candidates can fill out the Nomination form, deposit the security amount, check availability of time slots and appropriately plan their visit to Returning Officer. Any intending candidate may fill it online and take its print for submission to the Returning Officer as specified in Form-1 (Rule-3 of the Conduct of Elections Rules 1961).

B. Affidavit may also be filled online. Once it is filled, candidate has to take its printout and get it notarized and submit along with the nomination Form before the Returning Officer.

C. Candidate may deposit security money through online mode at the designated platform. However, a candidate will continue to have the option of deposit in cash in the treasury.

D. Candidate may also exercise the option to seek his/her elector

certification for the purpose of nomination online.

(ii) Further, Commission has directed the following:

A. Returning Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation.

B. Returning Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates.

C. All steps required to be taken for the submission of nomination Form and affidavit shall continue to operate as per the provisions contained in the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

16. Affidavits of Candidates:

(i) All Columns to be filled in:

In pursuance of the judgment dated 13th September 2013 passed by the Supreme Court in Writ Petition (C) No. 121 of 2008, which among other things makes it obligatory for the Returning Officer to check whether the information required is fully furnished (by the candidate) at the time of filing of affidavit with the nomination paper, the Commission has issued instructions that in the affidavit to be filed along with the nomination paper, candidates are required to fill up all the columns (including Column for E-mail Addresses). If any column in the affidavit is left blank, the Returning Officer will issue a notice to the candidate to file the revised affidavit with all columns duly filled in. After such notice, if a candidate still fails to file affidavit complete in all respects, the nomination paper will be liable to be rejected by the Returning Officer at the time of scrutiny.

(ii) Format of Nomination Form and Affidavit in Form 26:

Latest copies of Nomination Forms and Affidavit are available on the Commission's website https://eci.gov.in> Menu > Candidate nomination & other Forms.

(iii) No Dues Certificate:

A. As per the directions of the Delhi High Court in judgment dated 07.08.2015 in WP(C) no. 4912/1998, a candidate who has been in occupation of accommodation provided by the Government any time during the last 10 years before the date of notification of the election, has to give details of the government dues accrued to him of various departments dealing with government accommodation i.e. towards (a)

rent, (b) electricity charges, (c) water charges and (d) telephone charges. The date of 'No Dues Certificate' should be the last date of the third month prior to the month in which election is notified or any date thereafter. The 'No Dues Certificate', wherever applicable, has to be submitted before the Returning Officer along with the Affidavit latest by 3:00 PM on the last date of making nominations in the constituency concerned.

B. In order to protect the statutory right of the candidate to contest the election, the Commission has directed the Chief Secretary of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry to issue suitable instructions to the agencies/authorities/departments dealing with the (a) rent, (b) electricity charges, (c) water charges and (d) telephone charges, to immediately provide/ensure the following, if approached by any intending candidate: -

(a) Issue "No Dues Certificate" by all the concerned agencies/authorities/departments to such person within 48 hours of the receipt of the request letter in case where dues are not pending or are not due by law.

(b) Provide details of dues accrued to such persons within 48 hours of submitting of application to the agencies/authorities /departments.

(c) Issue 'No Dues Certificate' by the agencies/authorities /departments within 24 hours of clearing of dues, if any, as communicated as per (b) above, by such persons on submitting of application.

C. An institutionalized mechanism shall be put in place immediately after promulgation of Model Code of Conduct and a nodal officer shall be appointed to receive and handle such requests from prospective candidate(s) and work as a single window system to dispose of applications as per timelines provided above.

17. Candidates with Criminal Cases:

(i) Candidates with criminal antecedents are required to publish information in this regard in newspapers and through television channels on three occasions during the campaign period. A political party that sets up candidates with criminal antecedents is also required

to publish information about criminal background of its candidates, both on its website and also in newspapers and television channels on three occasions.

(ii) Commission vide its letter No. 3/4/2019/SDR/Vol.IV dated 16th September, 2020 has directed that the period specified will be decided with three blocks in the following manner, so that electors have sufficient time to know about the background of such candidates:

A. Within first 4 days of date of withdrawal of Nominations.

B. Between next 5th – 8th days.

C. From 9th day till the last day of campaign (the second day prior to date of poll)

*(**Illustration:** If the last date for withdrawal is 10th of the month and poll is on 24th of the Month, the first publication shall be done between 11th and 14th of the Month, and second and third publication shall be between 15th and 18th and between 19th and 22nd of that Month, respectively.)*

This requirement is in pursuance of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Writ Petition(C) No. 784 of 2015 and Writ Petition (Civil) No. 536 of 2011.

18. Political Parties setting up candidates with Criminal Cases:

(i) In pursuance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court Order dated 13.02.2020 in Contempt Petition (C)No. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) No. 536 of 2011, it is mandatory for political parties (at the Central and State election level) to upload on their website detailed information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases (including the nature of the offences and relevant particulars such as whether charges have been framed, the concerned Court, the case number etc.) who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates. The reasons as to selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate concerned, and not mere "winnability" at the polls.

(ii) This information shall also be published in:

A. One local vernacular newspaper and one national newspaper;

B. On the official social media platforms of the political party, including Facebook & Twitter.

(iii) These details shall be published within *48 hours of the selection of the candidate and not prior to two weeks before the first date of filing of nominations*. The political party concerned shall then submit a report of compliance with these directions with the Election Commission within 72 hours of the selection of the said candidate. If a political party fails to submit such compliance report with the Election Commission, the Election Commission shall bring such non-compliance by the political Party concerned to the notice of the Supreme Court as being in contempt of this Court's orders/directions. The Commission's instruction issued vide letter no. 3/4/2020/SDR/Vol.III dated 6th March, 2020 available on the Commission's website may be seen.

(iv) The Hon'ble Supreme Court in Contempt Petition (C) No. 656/2020 in Contempt Petition (C) No. 2192/2018 in WP(C) No. 536/2011 issued some additional directions vide judgment dated 10.08.2021, which has been circulated vide Commission's letter No. 3/4/2021/SDR/VOL.III dated 26.08.2021, which is available on the Commission's website. Following are the directions which are concerned with the political parties: -

A. *Political parties are to publish information regarding criminal antecedents of candidates on the homepage of their websites, thus making it easier for the voter to get to the information that has to be supplied. It will also become necessary now to have on the homepage a caption which states "candidates with criminal antecedents";*

B. *We clarify that the direction in paragraph 4.4 of our Order dated 13.02.2020 be modified and it is clarified that the details which are required to be published, shall be published within 48 hours of the selection of the candidate and not prior to two weeks before the first date of filing of nominations; and*

C. *We reiterate that if such a political party fails to submit such compliance report with the ECI, the ECI shall bring such noncompliance by the political party to the notice of this Court as being in contempt of this Court's Orders/directions, which shall in future be viewed very seriously.*

19. District, AC Level and Booth Level Election Management Plan: The District Election Officers have been asked to prepare a

comprehensive District Election Management Plan in consultation with SSPs/SPs and Sector Officers, including the route plan and the communication plan for conduct of election. These will be vetted by the Observer, taking into account vulnerability mapping exercise and mapping of critical polling stations, in accordance with Election Commission of India's extant instructions.

20. Communication Plan:

The Commission attaches great importance to preparation and implementation of a perfect communication plan at the district/constituency level for the smooth conduct of election and to enable concurrent intervention and mid-course correction on the poll day. For the said purpose, the Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officers of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry to coordinate with the officers of Telecommunication Department in the State headquarter, BSNL authorities, the representatives of other service providers in the State so that network status in the State is assessed and communication shadow areas be identified. The CEOs have also been instructed to prepare the best communication plan in their State and make suitable alternate arrangements in the communication shadow areas, if any.

Further, the Commission has also directed to improve the condition of connecting roads for smooth movement of polling parties, security forces, voters and other election machineries.

21. Eco-friendly election:

The Election Commission has issued advisories on several occasions urging political parties and candidates to use only environment-friendly material and to avoid single-use plastic and non-biodegradable material in their election campaign activities. Protecting the environment is not an individual task but a collective responsibility and hence the Commission urges all the political parties to avoid the use of plastic/polythene and similar non-biodegradable materials for preparation of posters, banners, etc. during election campaign in the interest of environment and human health. In this connection, on 18.08.2023, Commission has issued a compiled instruction to all CEOs and political parties to make our election eco-friendly.

Further, NGT has also asked all concerned for close monitoring of

Election Commission of India's instructions in this regard.

22. Prohibition of Child Labour:

As per Section 3(1) of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 as amended vide the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016; no child shall be employed or permitted to work in any occupation or process. The Commission has also taken strong exception to use of children in any way in election related work, instruction has been issued in this regard on 5th February, 2024.

23. Model Code of Conduct:

(i) Model Code of Conduct comes into effect immediately from the announcement of schedule. All the provisions of the Model Code will apply to the whole of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry with regard to all candidates, political parties and the State Governments of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry. The Model Code of Conduct shall also be applicable to the Central Government so far as announcements/policy decisions pertaining to/for Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry are concerned.

(ii) The Commission has made elaborate arrangements for ensuring the effective implementation of MCC Guidelines. Any violation of these Guidelines would be dealt with strictly and the Commission re-emphasizes that the instructions issued in this regard from time to time should be read and understood by all political parties, contesting candidates and their agents/representatives, to avoid any misgivings or lack of information or inadequate understanding/interpretation. The State/UT Governments of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry have also been directed to ensure that no misuse of official machinery/position is done during the MCC period.

(iii) The Commission has also issued instructions for swift, effective and stringent action for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct during the first 72 hours of announcement of the election schedule and also for maintaining extra vigilance and strict enforcement action in the last 72 hours prior to the close of polls. These instructions have been issued in the form of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for compliance by the field election machinery.

24. Videography/ Webcasting/CCTV Coverage:

All critical events will be video-graphed. District Election Officers will arrange sufficient number of video and digital cameras and camera teams for the purpose. The events for videography will include filing of nomination papers and scrutiny thereof, allotment of symbols, First Level Checking, preparations and storage of Electronic Voting Machines, important public meetings, processions etc. during election campaign, process of dispatching of postal ballot papers, polling process in identified vulnerable polling stations, storage of polled EVMs and VVPATs, counting of votes etc. Additionally, CCTVs will be installed at important Border Check Posts and Static Check Points for effective monitoring and surveillance. Commission has issued instructions for Webcasting inside and outside of all polling stations of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry for the purpose of monitoring of the poll process.

25. Measures to Prevent Public Nuisance:

(i) The Commission has directed that the use of public address system or loudspeakers or any sound amplifier, whether fitted on vehicles of any kind whatsoever, or in static position to be used for public meetings for electioneering purposes, during the entire election period starting from the date of announcement of election and ending with the date of declaration of results, shall not be permitted at night between ***10:00 PM to 06:00 AM.***

(ii) Further, no loudspeakers fitted on vehicles of any kind or in any other manner whatsoever shall be permitted to be used during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the poll in any polling area.

26. Advisory to Political Parties regarding silence period:

(i) For reviewing the working of Section 126 in the context of advancements in communication technology and rise of social media, a Committee was constituted by the Commission with the mandate of studying the provisions of Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and other related provisions and to make suitable recommendation in this regard. The Committee submitted its report to the Commission on 10th January, 2019. Among other proposals, the Committee has proposed for an advisory to political parties for

compliance with the letter and spirit of the provisions of Section 126. While accepting, the recommendations, the Commission issued an advisory on 15th March, 2019 calling upon all political parties to instruct and brief their leaders and campaigners to ensure that they observe the silence period on all forms of media as envisaged under Section 126 of the R.P. Act, 1951, and their leaders and cadres do not commit any act that may violate the spirit of Section 126.

(ii) Besides, in a multi-phased election, the silence period of last 48 hours may be on in certain constituencies while campaign is ongoing in other constituencies. In such event, there should not be any direct or indirect reference amounting to soliciting support for parties or candidates in the constituencies observing the silence period.

(iii) The Commission further advises that during the silence period, star campaigners and other political leaders should refrain from addressing the media by way of press conferences and giving interviews on election matters.

27. Law and Order, Security Arrangements and Deployment of Forces:

(i) Conduct of elections involves elaborate security management, which includes not just the security of polling personnel, polling stations and polling materials, but also the overall security of the election process. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are deployed to supplement the local police force in ensuring a peaceful and conducive atmosphere for the smooth conduct of election in a free, fair and transparent manner.

(ii) Based on the assessment of the ground situation, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and State Armed Police (SAP) drawn from other States will be deployed during the election. The CAPFs shall be deployed well in advance for area domination, route marches in vulnerable pockets, point patrolling and other confidence building measures to re-assure and build faith in the minds of the voters, especially those belonging to the weaker sections, minorities etc. CAPFs shall be inducted well in time for undertaking area familiarization and hand-holding with local forces and all other standard security protocols for movement, enforcement activities etc. in these areas will be strictly adhered to. The CAPFs/SAP shall also be deployed in Expenditure

Sensitive Constituencies and other vulnerable areas and critical polling stations as per the assessment of ground realities by the CEO of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry in consultation with various stakeholders. On the eve of poll, the CAPFs/SAP shall take position and control of the respective polling stations and will be responsible for safeguarding the polling stations and for providing security to the electors and polling personnel on the poll day. Besides, these forces will secure the strong rooms where EVMs and VVPATs are stored and for securing the Counting Centers and for other purposes, as required. The entire force deployment in the assembly constituency shall be under the oversight of the Central Observers deputed by the Commission.

(iii) To ensure optimum and effective utilization of State Police Officials and CAPFs, Commission has directed to constitute a Committee of CEO, State Police Nodal Officer (SPNO) and State CAPF Coordinator to jointly decide the State Deployment Plan and to ensure randomization of deployment of State Police. Randomization for deployment of police personnel at the polling stations shall be carried out in the presence of Police Observers.

28. Protection to Electors of SC/ST and Other Weaker Sections:

As per Section 3(1) of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (as amended in 2015), whoever, not being a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, forces or intimidates a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe not to vote or to vote for a particular candidate or to vote in a manner other than that provided by law, or not to stand as a candidate etc., shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to five years and with fine. The Commission has asked CEOs of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry to bring these provisions to the notice of all concerned for prompt action. In order to bolster the confidence of the voters hailing from vulnerable sections especially SCs, STs etc. and enhance their conviction and faith in the purity and credibility of the poll process, CAPFs/SAP shall be extensively and vigorously utilized in patrolling and conducting route marches and undertaking other necessary confidence building measures under the supervision of the

Central Observers.

29. Election Expenditure Monitoring:

(i) Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been issued, which include deployment of Expenditure Observers, Assistant Expenditure Observers, formation of Flying Squads (FSs), Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs), Video Surveillance Teams (VSTs), Video Viewing Teams (VVTs), Accounting Teams (ATs), Media Certification & Monitoring Committee (MCMC), District Expenditure Monitoring Committee (DEMC), District Grievance Committee (DGC) and involvement of enforcement agencies viz. State Police Dept., State Excise Dept., Income Tax Dept., FIU-IND, RBI, SLBC, DRI, CGST, SGST, Customs, ED, NCB, RPF, CISF, SSB, BSF, ICG, BCAS, AAI, Department of Post, State Forest Dept., State Transport Dept. and State Co-operative Dept.

(ii) State Excise Department has been asked to monitor movement, distribution, sale and storage of liquor and inducements in the form of free goods during the election process. The functioning and operations of the FSs/SSTs shall be closely monitored using GPS Tracking. For greater transparency and for ease of monitoring of election expenses, candidates would be required to open a separate bank account and incur their election expenses from only that account. The Income Tax Dept. has been asked to activate Air Intelligence Units (AIUs) in the airports of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry and also to gather intelligence and take necessary action to check movement of large sums of money in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry. Control room and Complaint Monitoring Centre with 24 hours toll free numbers shall be operative during the entire election process.

(iii) District Election Officers (DEOs) have been directed to obtain information regarding unusual and suspicious cash withdrawal or deposit of cash exceeding Rs. 1 Lakh from banks for due verification followed by necessary action. If the amount is more than Rs. 10 Lakh, then DEOs shall pass on such information to Income Tax Department for necessary action. FIU-IND has been requested to share Cash Transaction Reports (CTRs) and Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) with CBDT for effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the

candidates.

(iv) Some new initiatives taken by the Commission to strengthen the Expenditure Monitoring mechanism are:

A. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for seizure and release of cash: For the purpose of maintaining purity of election, the Election Commission of India has issued a Standard Operating Procedure for Flying Squads and Static Surveillance Teams, constituted for keeping vigil over excessive campaign expenses, distribution of items of bribe in cash or in kind, movement of illegal arms, ammunition, liquor, or antisocial elements etc. in the constituencies during election process. Furthermore, in order to avoid inconvenience to the public and also for redressal of their grievances, if any, the Commission has issued instruction to constitute a District Grievance Committee in each district comprising three officers of the District, namely, (i) CEO, Zila Parishad/CDO/P.D. DRDA, (ii) Nodal Officer of Expenditure Monitoring in the District Election Office (Convener) and (iii) District Treasury Officer. The Committee shall *suo-moto* examine each case of seizure made by the Police or SST or FS and where the Committee finds that no FIR/Complaint has been filed against the seizure or where the seizure is not linked with any candidate or political party or any election campaign etc., as per SOP, it shall take immediate steps to order release of such cash etc. to such persons from whom the cash was seized after passing a speaking order to that effect. In no case, shall any matter relating to seized cash/seized valuables shall be kept pending in Malkhana or treasury for more than 7 (seven) days after the date of poll, unless any FIR /Complaint is filed.

B. Accounting of the expenditure incurred for campaign vehicles: It has come to the notice of the Commission that the candidates take permission from the Returning Officer for use of vehicles for campaign purpose, but some candidates do not show the vehicle hiring charges or fuel expenses in their election expenditure account. Therefore, it has been decided that unless the candidate intimates the R.O. regarding withdrawing vehicles from campaigning, the notional expenditure on account of campaign vehicles will be calculated based on the number of vehicles for which

permission has been granted by the Returning Officer.

C. Account Reconciliation Meeting: A Contesting Candidate can avail opportunity to get issue addressed relating to the election expenditure, if any, during Account Reconciliation Meeting which shall be convened by the DEOs on the 26th day of the declaration of results.

D. Accounting of Expenditure on publicity of criminal antecedents: In pursuance of Hon'ble Supreme Court Judgement dated 25.09.2018 in WP(C) No. 536 of 2011, the candidates as well as the concerned political parties shall issue a declaration, in the format prescribed, in widely circulated newspapers and on electronic media in the state regarding the criminal antecedents of the candidates at least thrice after filing of the nomination papers. Candidates are required to maintain expenditure incurred by them in this regard in their accounts and the same shall be reflected in their Abstract Statement of election expenses (Schedule 10) to be submitted by them to the concerned DEOs along with their accounts of election expenses within 30 days of declaration of results. Political parties are also required to show the amount incurred by them in this regard in Schedule 23A, 23B in their Full Election Expenditure Statement to be submitted by them to ECI (recognized political party)/CEO (unrecognized political party) within 75 days of completion of Assembly Election.

E. Expenditure incurred on candidates' Booth/Kiosk and on TV/Cable Channel/Newspaper owned by party for promoting the electoral prospects of the candidate in the account of the candidate: The Commission, on further examination of the relevant provisions of section 77(1) of the R. P. Act, 1951, had decided that the candidates' booths set up outside the polling stations should hereinafter be deemed to have been set up by the candidates as part of their individual campaign and not by way of general party propaganda and as such all expenditure incurred on such candidates' booths shall be deemed to have been incurred/authorized by the candidate/his election agent so as to be included in his account of election expenses. Further, the Commission, after taking into consideration various

references/complaints from various sources in the above matter, has directed that if the candidate(s) or their sponsoring parties utilize TV/Cable Channels/Newspapers owned by them for promoting the electoral prospects of the candidate, the expenses for the same, as per standard rate cards of the channel/newspaper, have to be included by the candidate concerned in his Election Expenditure Statement, even if they actually do not pay any amount to the channel/newspaper. In pursuance of the Commission's aforesaid decisions, Schedule 6 and Schedule 4 & 4A in Abstract Statement of Election Expenses have been amended and incorporated accordingly in the Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure Monitoring.

F. Accounting of Expenditure on Virtual Campaign: Candidates are required to maintain expenditure incurred by them in this regard in their accounts and the same shall be reflected in their Abstract Statement of election expenses (Schedule 11) to be submitted by them to the concerned DEOs along with their accounts of election expenses within 30 days of declaration of results. Political parties are also required to show the amount incurred by them in this regard in Schedule 24A and 24B in their Full Election Expenditure Statement to be submitted by them to ECI (recognised political party)/CEO (unrecognised political party) within 75 days of completion of Assembly Election.

G. Part and Full Election Expenditure Statement required to be submitted by Political Parties: The National and State Recognised Political Parties are required to submit their Full Election Expenditure Statements with the Election Commission of India, New Delhi whereas Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) are required to submit their Full Election Expenditure Statements with the Chief Electoral Officers of the States/UTs concerned where party HQ is situated within 75 days of completion of Assembly Election. In addition to Full Election Expenditure Statements, the political parties are also required to file Part Election Expenditure Statements in respect of lump-sum payments made by the party to the candidate(s) within 30 days of declaration of results of Assembly election. The Part and Full Election Expenditure Statements of

National & State Recognised Political Parties and RUPPs will be uploaded on the ECI website and CEO website respectively for public viewing.

H. Integrated Expenditure Monitoring Software (IEMS): A new tech enabled portal https://iems.eci.gov.in/ to facilitate online filing of Contribution Report, Election Expenditure Statement (Part and Full) and Audited Annual Accounts by the Political Parties has been started. This facility has been created to enable the political parties to file the statutory and regulatory compliances, reports and statements in a hassle free, smooth manner. All Political Parties are urged to file their above-mentioned financial reports through the IEMS portal.

I. Election Seizure Management System (ESMS): A mobile app has also been launched to digitize data for intercepted/seized items (Cash/Liquor/Drugs/Precious Metals/Freebies/other items).

J. Ceiling of Election Expenses for Candidates: The election expenses ceiling for candidates has been revised by the Government of India vide Notification dated 06th January, 2022. As per the revised ceilings, the maximum limit of election expenses for an Assembly Constituency is Rs. 40.00 Lakh per candidate for Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu & West Bengal and Rs. 28.00 Lakh per candidate for Puducherry.

The Commission has decided that an election expenditure/either by/to candidate(s) or political parties exceeding Rs. 10000/- (Ten Thousand) in all the situations be incurred by crossed account payee cheque or draft or by RTGS/NEFT or any other electronic mode linked with bank account of the candidate opened for election purpose.

30. Effective use of Media:

(i) Media Engagement:

The Commission has always considered Media as an important ally and a potent force multiplier in ensuring effective and efficient election management. Hence, the Commission has directed Chief Electoral Officers to take the following measures for positive and progressive engagement and interaction with the media:

A. Regular interaction with the media during election and maintaining an effective and positive line of communication with the media at all times.

B. Effective steps to sensitize media about the Election Code.

C. Authority letters will be issued to all accredited media for the polling day and day of counting.

(ii) Pre-Certification of Political Advertisements and monitoring of suspected cases of paid news:

Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) are in place at all the Districts and State level. All political advertisements proposed to be issued on electronic media shall require pre-certification from the concerned MCMC. Political advertisements in all electronic media/TV Channels/Cable Network/Radio including private FM channels/Cinema halls/audio-visual displays in public places/voice messages & bulk SMS over phone and social media & internet websites shall come within the purview of pre-certification. Commission requests all Political Parties/candidates/Media to follow pre-certification instructions.

MCMCs will also keep a strict vigil on suspected cases of paid news in the media and suitable action will be taken in cases confirmed after following all due procedures.

(iii) Use of Social Media in election:

Keeping in view increasing incidents of misuse of Social Media & menace of Paid News and as a result of ECI's vigorous persuasion, major Social Media Platforms agreed to observe Voluntary Code of Ethics formulated by them in March, 2019. This will be applicable in this election as well. Provisions of model code of conduct and related instructions of the Commission issued from time to time shall also apply to the content being posted on the internet, including social media websites, by candidates and political parties.

The Commission requests all Political Parties and candidates to ensure that their supporters do not indulge in hate speeches and fake news. Strict watch on social media posts is being kept by MCMCs to ensure that the election atmosphere is not vitiated. Media may also play an active role in curbing the menace of fake news.

All political parties shall ensure responsible communication

during elections. The Commission has advised the parties against misuse of AI based tools to create deep fakes that distort information or propagate misinformation, emphasizing the need to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

Further, all Political Parties and their leaders, candidates and star campaigners shall take necessary measures for prominent labeling of AI-generated/synthetic content, if any, being shared for campaigning through their social media platforms using clear notations such as "AI-Generated", "Digitally Enhanced", or "Synthetic Content". Additionally, all such campaign materials whether in the form of advertisements or promotional content must carry appropriate disclaimers wherever synthetic content is used.

(iv) Monitoring of Electronic and Social Media:

All the election management related news on all the major national and regional news channels during election would be monitored vigorously. If any untoward incident or violation of any law/rule is noticed, action would be taken immediately. Reports of monitoring would also be forwarded to the CEO. Office of the CEO will ascertain status on each and every item and file ATR/Status Report.

(v) Media restrictions during silence period and on Exit polls:

Section 126 (1)(b) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, prohibits displaying any election matter by means, inter alia, of television or similar apparatus, in any polling area during the period of forty-eight hours (silence period) ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the poll for any election in that polling area. Election matter referred hereinabove is defined as any matter intended or calculated to influence or affect the result of an election appearing in any electronic media during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for conclusion of poll.

Section 126A of the R.P. Act 1951, prohibits conduct of Exit poll and dissemination of their results by means of print or electronic media during the period mentioned therein, i.e. between the hour fixed for commencement of poll in the first phase and half an hour after the time fixed for close of poll for the last phase. Violation of Section 126 of the R.P. Act, 1951 is punishable with imprisonment upto a period of two years, or with fine or both.

All Media houses are advised to follow instructions in this regard keeping its spirit.

31. Training of Election Officials:

India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), the premier training institute of the Election Commission of India (ECI), has undertaken a comprehensive and structured capacity-building programme for election functionaries of the poll-going States/UTs. This initiative aims to ensure that all levels of election machineries are thoroughly trained, well-prepared, and equipped to conduct elections in a free, fair, and efficient manner. In line with this objective, the following key activities have been proposed for the upcoming elections:

1. Online Pre-Assessment of Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs):

As part of the preparatory activities, IIIDEM conducted an online Pre-Assessment for ROs and AROs on 9th January 2026 in multiple time slots. The assessment aimed at gauging the baseline knowledge, skills and preparedness of election officials prior to the commencement of formal training programmes. The assessment was conducted through Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) using an online platform, with questions drawn from a role-specific Question Bank and structured with 30% easy, 50% medium and 20% difficult questions.

TRAINING AT IIIDEM

2. Workshop of National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs): Based on the assessment findings, IIIDEM has developed customized training material with the support of core experts, covering 22 major election themes. The training materials have been prepared in accordance with IIIDEM pedagogy, incorporating structured lesson plans, presentations, handouts, case studies, practical exercises and clearly defined learning outcomes. Stakeholder-specific customization has been ensured to address operational requirements effectively. A workshop of National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs) for finalization of the training material for ROs/AROs and DEOs as per the IIIDEM

pedagogy has been conducted from 10th to 12th February, 2026 and subsequent workshop organized from 5th –7th March, 2026.

3. Training of Trainers (SLMTs):

As part of the overall training strategy for the conduct of elections, the IIIDEM is conducting special refresher and capacity-building programmes for State Level Master Trainers (SLMTs) of the poll-going States/UT. These programmes are aimed at updating SLMTs on the latest legal provisions, procedures, and best practices, and at strengthening their facilitation skills to ensure effective cascading of training to district and field-level election functionaries. In order to assess the existing knowledge base and training needs of the participants, a pre-assessment of SLMTs was conducted on 13th February, 2026. An Online training program for SLMTs will also be conducted from 16th to 18th March, 2026.

TRAINING AT STATE

4. Training of State Police Nodal Officers (SPNOs) and Nodal Officers:

Targeted training programmes are being conducted for State Police Nodal Officers (SPNOs) and other Nodal Officers of the poll-going States/UT to sensitize them on election-related instructions, security arrangements and coordination mechanisms, with the objective of ensuring effective and flawless discharge of responsibilities from 10th March to 16th March, 2026.

5. Training of District Election Officers (DEOs) including Dy. DEOs:

Recognizing the critical role of District Election Officers (DEOs) in the conduct of elections, IIIDEM will organize structured training programmes for DEOs and Deputy DEOs from 12th March to 30th March, 2026 supported by online Pre-Assessments and Post-Assessments to ensure effective capacity building.

6. Training of Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs):

Specialized training programmes are being conducted for ROs and

AROs from 9th February to 27th March, 2026 to strengthen procedural knowledge, legal understanding and decision-making capabilities. These programmes are supported by online Post-Assessments to evaluate learning outcomes and identify areas for further improvement.

7. Online Post-Assessment and Implementation Framework: Online Post-Assessments will be conducted after completion of training programmes to measure knowledge gained and training effectiveness. IIIDEM has put in place a detailed implementation framework covering pre-assessment checklists, infrastructure readiness, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and feedback mechanisms to ensure systematic execution.

8. The NLMTs and SLMTs will conduct trainings of DLMTs and ALMTs who alongwith the ROs/AROs will conduct the multiple trainings of polling staff. DEOs have been asked to personally supervise the training programmes.

9. These comprehensive training and assessment initiatives are aimed at ensuring that election functionaries across the poll-going States/UT are well-prepared, confident and competent, thereby contributing to the smooth, transparent and lawful conduct of the forthcoming General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies.

32. Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP):

Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation is a multi-intervention program that reaches out to educate citizens about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation.

For enhancing Electoral participation, the Commission has directed to take the following new initiatives:-

(i) *Low Voter Turnout (LVT) analysis:*

The CEO/DEOs have been directed to identify Low voter turnout PSs/ACs and take focused initiatives to address specific issues.

(ii) *Identification of district specific themes of PS:*

As the Polling Station is the basic unit of election machinery, it has been directed to focus on district wise PSs for targeted interventions

reaching out to various groups like women, PwDs, Transgender, PVTGs etc.

(iii) *Engagement and Utilisation of local Icons:*

The State has been directed to identify and engage local influential non-political personalities as Election Icons. This would add value to the message of voter awareness as well as increase the general outreach in the specific region.

(iv) *Focus to address Urban and Youth Apathy:*

As has been recently observed, the issue of Urban and Youth Apathy is a major concern for the Commission. Relatively low turnouts in urban areas need to be addressed by special interventions. Similarly, for youth, the awareness and engagement is required to be increased via appropriate mediums like ELCs, special registration camps, etc.

Furthermore, Comprehensive SVEEP Plan, as per the new strategy document (SVEEP-IV) is directed to be prepared. Partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders should be forged for greater outreach. Ensuring inclusion of all marginalized sections through targeted interventions, technological solutions and policy changes should be done. To enhance the quality of electoral participation, steps may be taken to promote informed and ethical voting through IMF-EEE (Information, Motivation, Facilitation, Engagement, Education and Empowerment) paradigm. Model Polling stations may be decorated keeping in view NVD theme of the year.

33. Deployment of Central Observers:

(i) General Observers:

The Commission will deploy IAS officers as General Observers in adequate number to ensure smooth conduct of election in consultation with the CEOs of the poll going State(s)/UT. The Observers will keep a close watch on every stage of the electoral process to ensure that the election is conducted strictly as per Law, Rules and instructions of the Commission.

(ii) Police Observers:

The Commission would deploy IPS officers as Police Observers in consultation with the CEOs of the poll going State(s)/UT at District/AC level, depending upon the need, sensitivity and assessment of ground situation of the District/AC. They will monitor all activities relating to

force deployment, law and order situation and co-ordinate between Civil and Police administration to ensure free and fair election.

(iii) Counting Observers:

In addition to the already deployed General Observers, the Commission may also deploy additional officers as Counting Observers at District/AC-level, depending upon the requirement in consultation with the CEOs of the poll going State(s)/UT. They will oversee the Counting Centre arrangements and monitor all activities relating to counting of votes.

(iv) Special Observers:

In exercise of the plenary powers conferred on it by Article 324 of the Constitution of India, the Commission also deploys Special Observers who belong to All India Services and various Central Services if seems necessary.

(v) Expenditure Observers:

The Commission has also decided to appoint adequate number of Expenditure Observers who will exclusively monitor the election expenditure of the Contesting Candidates.

(vi) Commission has decided that all observers will reach their respective districts/constituencies by the date of notification.

34. IT applications being used in election management:

The Commission has enhanced usage of IT Applications, to usher in greater citizen participation and transparency. Election Commission of India has operationalized the new digital platform *ECINET* that is a unified platform with a unique data delivery dashboard as per the role of each stakeholder. *ECINET* is the integration of over 40 existing mobile and web applications of ECI such as MCC Violation, Polling trends, ENCORE, ETPBMS, etc. *ECINET* is one of the various initiatives taken up by ECI recently for the timely and updated disclosure of election information for the benefit of the voters and other stakeholders. *ECINET* has enabled quick sharing of information, increased transparency and a significant reduction in time lag in publishing voting trends. The unified portal can be accessed at https://ecinet.eci.gov.in/ and *ECINET* App can be downloaded from Google Play store and Apple App Store. A brief of key modules under *ECINET* are as below:

(i) Model Code of Conduct Complaint (cVIGIL) Module of ECINET App for filing Model Code of Conduct Violation cases by Citizen: This module provides time-stamped evidentiary proof of the Model Code of Conduct/Expenditure Violation by empowering every citizen to click a photo or video using their smartphone. The application is based on GIS technology and the unique feature of auto location provides fairly correct information which can be relied upon by flying squads to navigate to the right spot of incidence and take prompt action. This app prioritizes the speedy and effective actions by authorities and promised user status reports within 100 minutes.

(ii) Suvidha 2.0: This application has both a portal and mobile app. It provides various facilities to candidates/ political parties for online nomination, permissions etc. as given below:-

A. Candidate Online Nomination:

- To facilitate filling of nominations, the Election Commission has introduced an online portal for filling the nomination & affidavit. The Candidate can visit https://suvidha.eci.gov.in/ to create his/her account, fill nomination form, deposit the security amount, check availability of time slot and appropriately plan his visit to the Returning Officer.

- Once the application is filled through the online portal, the candidate only needs to take a printout, get it notarized and submit the application along with relevant documents to the Returning Officer in person.

- The Online Nomination Facility is an optional facility to facilitate ease of filing and correct filing. The regular offline submission as prescribed under the law shall continue too.

B. Candidate Permissions module:

Permission module allows the candidates, political parties or any representatives of the candidate to apply online for the campaign related permissions for meetings, rallies, loudspeakers, temporary offices, and others through SUVIDHA Portal https://suvidha.eci.gov.in/. The Candidates can also track their application status through the same portal.

- The latest upgrade makes the SUVIDHA module under ECINET, a

one-stop solution for seeking, tracking and downloading all campaign related permissions. ECINET app allows users to download the necessary application forms, declarations and other documents to apply for any campaign related permission.

- A reference ID will be generated that will help users to track the status of their requests. After a decision has been made on the permission request, the order copy on the request can also be downloaded from the app.

- The user will be facilitated by many other features such as tracking the status of the nomination, election schedules and the regular updates which were earlier only available on the ECI website.

(iii) Candidate Affidavit Portal: Candidate Affidavit portal under ECINET is a web portal that allows citizens to view the complete list of Candidates who have filed nominations for the election. The citizen, political parties and media houses, to know about the candidates, access this portal. A complete candidate profile with photo and affidavit is made public as and when the Returning Officer enters the data. The Complete list of Contesting Candidates with their profile, nomination status and the affidavits will be available for public view through Candidate Affidavit Portal. This portal can be accessed using https://affidavit.eci.gov.in/

(iv) Know Your Candidates Module of ECINET App: The Election Commission of India has developed a dedicated "Know your Candidate" module in ECINET for informing about "Criminal Antecedents" status of candidates. This allows citizens to browse candidates with/without Criminal Antecedents and empowers the citizens to know the criminal antecedents of the candidates.

(v) Polling Trends (Voter Turnout) Module of ECINET App: Polling Trends (Voter Turnout) Module of ECINET App will be used to display two hourly as well as at close of poll approximate voter turnout trends of each Assembly Constituency/Parliamentary Constituency entered by Returning Officer (Assembly Constituency)/ Assistant Returning Officer (Assembly Segment). Approximate polling trends data of each phase of the elections will be displayed through this app.

(vi) Module for election officials (Previously known as ENCORE):

The ENCORE module of ECINET portal for all election officials (CEO, DEO, RO & ARO) has a well-defined responsibility to perform various activities. This module has multiple sub-modules listed below with a brief introduction:

A. Candidate Nomination Module

The returning officer will fill all the required details to register the profile of the candidate in the system that will be used at multiple levels of conduct of election process. For all the received nominations, the returning officer needs to upload the affidavit against each nomination.

B. Candidate Scrutiny & Finalization Module

This system provides facility of marking nomination as Accepted/Rejected during scrutiny and marking of withdrawal if any candidate withdraws his/her candidature. After last date of withdrawal, the returning officer can also generate Form 7A through the system.

C. Election Permission Module

Permission module allows the election officials to process the permission request received by the candidates, political parties or any representatives of the candidate who applied the permission using SUVIDHA portal or submitted the permission request physically to election office.

D. Election Counting Module

The ENCORE counting application is an end-to-end application for AROs/ROs to digitize the EVM and postal ballot votes polled, tabulate the data of each round to declare the result of the election.

E. Online Index Card

A facility has been provided to the Returning Officer to fill Index card online after counting. It contains each detail of election from the schedule of election to the declaration of results such as data on nomination, turnout and counting. ECINET module will now facilitate publishing of the index card within 72 hours post declaration of results.

F. Expenditure Monitoring

Every contesting candidate at an election shall lodge true copy of account of his election expenses kept by him or by his election agent with the District Election Officer within thirty days from the date of election of the returned candidate u/s 78 of the R. P. Act, 1951. This expenditure-monitoring module provides facility to all the DEOs to submit the DEO's Scrutiny Reports and Summary Reports in online mode apart from physical submission of the said reports to the Commission. DEOs shall finalize the candidate-wise Scrutiny and Summary reports in the prescribed format by 37th day from the date of declaration of result and shall forward the same to the CEO office by 38th day and should reach the Commission within 45 days of declaration of result. DEOs shall get the data entered in the said software within 3 days of finalization of candidate-wise Scrutiny Reports.

(vii) Results Website and Results Trends TV: The timely publication of the round-wise information is vital for establishing a single source of data. The counting data entered by respective Returning Officers is available as 'Trends and Results' for public view through 'ECI Results website' http://results.eci.gov.in/. **The result website has been upgraded with enhanced features including map view for better user experience.**

The results are shown with the Infographics and displayed with auto-scroll panels through large display screens outside the counting hall or any public place through Trends TV. The trends & results are also available on ECINET under result section.

(viii) EVM Management System (EMS 2.0):

EVM Management System is designed to manage inventory of EVM units. One of the important modes to ensure a fair and transparent process in EVM management is the administrative protocol of the randomization of the machines before they are deployed in the Polling stations. The two-stage randomization is done in the presence of Political Parties'/candidates representatives.

(ix) Voters' Service portal:

Through https://ecinet.eci.gov.in/, an elector can avail and

access various services such as access the electoral list, apply for voter id card, apply online for corrections in voter's card, track form status, view details of Polling booth, Assembly Constituency and Parliamentary constituency, and get the contact details of Booth Level officer, Electoral Registration Officer among other services.

(x) ECINET App: Citizens can avail and access various services such as apply for voter id-card, corrections in Voter's ID Card, view details of Polling booth, Assembly Constituency and Parliamentary Constituency, and get the contact details of Booth Level officer, Electoral Registration Officer among other services. The ECINET will also provide access to the various Stakeholders of ECI to provide input and get the information depending on the assigned roles and responsibilities. ECINET App can be downloaded from Google Play Store and Apple App Store. They can also "Book A Call" with their BLO for any query/grievance.

(xi) Divyang (Saksham) Module of ECINET: Divyang (Saksham) Module of ECINET is meant for Persons with Disabilities. PwD electors can make requests for marking them as PWD, request for new registration, request for migration, request for correction in EPIC details, request for wheelchair, Pick & Drop facility, assistance, register a complaint etc. It utilizes the Accessibility features of mobile phones for voters with blindness and hearing disabilities.

(xii) BLO Module under ECINET: BLO module is a dedicated module for BLOs under ECINET App for performing their tasks digitally. Following are the main features of this module:

a. Checklist/Field Verification of Forms;

b. Collection of details of Assured Minimum Facility (AMF) and Extended Minimum Facility (EMF) at polling stations;

c. Capturing of GIS co-ordinates of Polling Stations;

d. Update of Photos of Polling Stations;

e. Form Submission on behalf of Electors;

f. House to House Verification through online BLO Register.

g. Digitize Enumeration Form

h. Verify electors and upload supporting documents for SIR

(xiii) Electoral Roll module of ECINET Portal (previously ERONET):

- This module is a web-based system for around 10 lakh Electoral officials, in 14 languages and 11 scripts, to handle all processes pertaining to Form 6/6A/7/8.
- It standardizes forms processing, standard database scheme, and a standard template for E-Roll printing.
- It automates the process of electoral roll management starting from elector registration, field verification of electors, decision support system for Electoral Registration Officers and for providing extensive integrated value-added services.
- All 28 States and 8 UTs are sharing common infrastructure at National Level. The URL of the platform is **https://ecinet.eci.gov.in/**

(xiv) Service Voter Portal: The Service Voter Portal is a web-based application for registration of service electors. In India, there are more than 19 lakh registered service voters in the system. The service voter registration process is different from the general electors. The responsibility of enrollment of a service voter is given to the Record Officer of that service voter. The record office ensures the filling of forms and uploads the XML in the required format on the Service Voter portal. Thereafter, EROs are responsible to enroll the service electors following the due process. The URL of system is **https://svp.eci.gov.in/**

(xv) Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Management System (ETPBMS) for Service Voter: The upgraded version of ETPBS is having enhanced features and Dashboard & Reporting modules for all stakeholders.

The system is used to generate and transmit Postal Ballot through Electronic means to the Service Voters. The system has also been integrated with Department of Posts so that Service voter can send his/her Ballot after casting vote, through speed post without paying any charges.

Detailed instructions are sent, along with Postal Ballot, to each service elector. On the day of counting, the same system will be used to validate the Postal Ballot received by post to verify whether the received *ePostal Ballot* is generated by the system or not.

The Postal ballots sent to service electors electronically are called Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballots (ETPBs). The return of ETPB is

through postal services. Earlier, the envelopes for postal ballot were forwarded by the CEO to the Record Officers in order to dispatch polled ETPBs by the service voters through post. Now, the Commission has decided that the CEOs are not required to send envelopes to the Record Officers for this purpose.

The Record Officer/Unit Officer/Commandant or any other competent authority, as the case may be, shall procure the envelopes and provide them to the Service Voters for dispatching their polled ETPBs to the respective Returning Officers. The URL of system is **https://etpbms.eci.gov.in/**

(xvi) National Grievances Services Portal: The Election Commission has developed a National Grievance Service Portal (NGSP). This system is developed in such a manner that in addition to providing redress to the complaints of the Citizens, Electors, Political Parties, Candidates, Media and Election Officials at National, State and District level, it also serves as a common interface for providing services.

The application provides for a single interface for handling complaints by the Election officials. All Electoral Officers, District Election Officers, CEOs and ECI Officials are part of the system. Thus, issues are directly assigned to the respective user upon registration. The citizen can use this service using **https://ngsp.eci.gov.in/**

(xvii) Election Seizure Management System (ESMS) module of ECINET: In order to ensure free and transparent elections, Election Commission of India has embedded technology into the monitoring process through the Election Seizure Monitoring System (ESMS) module of ECINET Mobile App which is proving to be a catalyst, as it brings a wide array of Central and State enforcement agencies together for better coordination and intelligence sharing.

App is being used to digitize data for intercepted/Seized items (Cash/Liquor/Drugs/Precious Metal/Freebies/Other Items) direct from field. This enables stakeholder to get automated desired reports in required format; avoid duplicate data entry by Agencies and do analysis on received data at CEO Level.

(xviii) Integrated Election Expenditure Monitoring System (IEMS):

Integrated Election Expenditure Monitoring System (IEMS) is a user-friendly, secure online platform which enables Political Parties to

submit online prescribed document like Contribution report (Form 24A), Annual Audit Account, Election Expenditure. Key features for IEMS are as follows:

- Digitize details of contribution received and submit online;
- Real-time compliance status on Dashboard;
- Capture Mandatory Info/Validations/Verification to increase data quality;
- Bulk import feature to quickly upload data through Excel format;
- Email/SMS based alerts/acknowledgements to increase compliance;
- Aadhaar based e-Sign.

(xix) Observer Portal:

➢ Observer portal under ECINET is an online portal for data management of all types of observers i.e. general observer, police observer and expenditure observers.

➢ The deployment schedule of the observer, report submission and many other activities are completed with the help of this portal. The observers also get multiple facilities like filling & submission of reports, notification from the Commission, downloads of all the required documents and many more. Parallel to the web portal, a mobile app is also provided that includes all the features that are available in the web application. Portal is accessible through URL **https://ecinet.eci.gov.in/**

(xx) PRO module in ECINET (For Presiding Officer):

➢ The PRO module, developed under the ECINET platform, is a simple and intuitive application designed for Presiding Officers. It enables seamless execution of Poll Day activities with minimal effort, including reporting of polling party arrival status, conducting mock polls, starting the poll, monitoring polling trends, and closing the poll on P-1 and Poll Day.

➢ This app helps capture near real-time voter turnout data under PRO module and is used by the ECI, CEOs, DEOs, and ROs to closely monitor polling progress across constituencies. It ensures the timely, accurate, and efficient dissemination of poll percentage data to all stakeholders, thereby supporting effective decision-making,

transparency, and smooth conduct of the electoral process.

35. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs):

(i) EVMs and VVPATs: The Commission shall deploy Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) along with Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at every polling station in the General Elections to Legislative Assemblies in States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry to enhance the transparency and credibility of the election process as VVPAT allows the voters to verify their vote. Arrangements have already been made to ensure availability of adequate number of EVMs and VVPATs for the smooth conduct of election.

(ii) Awareness on EVM and VVPAT: Extensive awareness on EVMs has been conducted for the general public across all polling locations through Mobile Demonstration Vans(MDV) and at DEO/RO Offices through EVM Demonstration Centers(EDC) including casting of mock poll by them. Digital outreach for awareness on use of EVMs and VVPATs will be continued.

(iii) Randomization of EVMs and VVPATs: EVMs/VVPATs are randomized twice using "EVM Management System **(EMS 2.0)**" while being allocated to an Assembly Constituency and then to a polling station, ruling out any pre-fixed allocation. The First Randomization of EVMs and VVPATs is conducted by the District Election Officer to allocate the units Assembly Constituency wise in the presence of the representatives of the recognized political parties. The lists containing unique IDs of machines are shared with them. After finalization of list of the Contesting Candidates, the Second Randomization of EVMs and VVPATs will be conducted by the Returning Officer to allocate the units polling station-wise in the presence of the contesting candidates or their representatives. Lists of randomized EVMs/VVPATs are also shared with contesting candidates.

(iv) Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs: After finalization of list of the Contesting Candidates and Second Randomization of EVMs and VVPATs, the commissioning (candidate setting) of EVMs and VVPATs is done in the presence of the Contesting Candidates or their representatives. TV/Monitor will be installed in commissioning hall for simultaneous viewing of symbol loading in VVPATs by Candidates or

their representatives for greater transparency. After commissioning (candidate setting) of EVMs and VVPATs in every EVM and VVPAT, mock poll with one vote to each Candidate including NOTA is done. Additionally, mock poll of 1000 votes is conducted in 5% randomly selected EVMs, as well as VVPATs. The electronic result is tallied with paper count. Candidates or their representatives are allowed not only to select 5% machines randomly but also to do mock poll themselves.

After commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs, Symbol Loading Units (SLU) will be sealed and kept under the custody of the District Election Officer concerned till Election Petition period. Only reserve SLU (not used for symbol loading) will be returned back to the authorized BEL/ECIL engineer on P+1 Day. In case of Election Petition, used SLUs will be kept till final disposal of Election Petition.

(v) GPS tracking of movement of EVMs and VVPATs: The Commission has instructed the Chief Electoral Officers of all State/UTs that end-to-end movement of all EVMs and VVPATs including reserve shall be carefully monitored at all times, for which any vehicle carrying EVMs and VVPATs shall mandatorily be fitted with GPS tracking system.

(vi) Mock Poll on Poll Day:

A. On poll day, 90 minutes before start of actual poll, mock poll is conducted by casting at least 50 votes ensuring that votes are recorded for each of the contesting candidates including **NOTA** at every polling station, in the presence of polling agents of the candidates and the electronic result of the Control Unit and the VVPAT slips count are tallied and shown to them. A certificate of successful conduct of mock poll shall be made by the Presiding Officers in Presiding Officer's Report.

B. Immediately after mock poll procedure, the CLEAR button on Control Unit (CU) is pressed to clear the data of the mock poll and the fact that no votes are recorded in the CU, is displayed to the Polling Agents present in the polling stations. The Presiding Officer also ensures that all mock poll slips are taken out from the VVPAT slip compartment, stamped as "MOCK POLL SLIP" and kept in separate sealed black envelope before the start of actual Poll.

C. After mock poll, EVMs and VVPATs are sealed in the presence of polling agents and signature of polling agents are obtained on seals,

before starting actual poll.

(vii) Poll Day and Storage of polled EVMs and VVPATs at Strong Rooms:

A. After completion of poll, Presiding Officer shall press the "CLOSE" button of the Control Unit of the EVM so that no further vote can be cast. EVMs and VVPATs are sealed in the respective carrying cases in the presence of polling agents and signature of polling agents are obtained on seals.

B. After close of poll, a copy of Form-17C Part-I having details of total polled votes, seals (unique number), serial numbers of EVMs and VVPATs used in polling stations is provided to polling agents of candidates, present at the polling station at the close of poll.

C. Polled EVMs and VVPATs are escorted back to the strong room for storing in double lock system in the presence of candidates/their representatives under videography. Candidates/Polling Agents are also allowed to follow the vehicles carrying polled EVMs and VVPATs from polling stations to Reception Centre for the purpose of storing in the Strong Room.

D. Candidates or their representatives can also camp in front of the strong room. These strong rooms are guarded 24x7 in multilayers, with CCTV coverage facilities.

(viii) Counting of Votes at Counting Centers:

A. On the day of counting, strong room is opened in the presence of Candidates, their authorized representatives, RO/ARO and ECI Observer under videography.

B. Only Control Units of the polled EVMs are brought to the Counting Hall(s) under security, under CCTV coverage and in the presence of Candidates or their agents.

C. Round-wise CUs are brought to the counting tables from Strong Rooms under continuous CCTV Coverage.

D. On the counting day, before retrieving the result from the Control Units, the seals are verified, and unique serial number of CU is tallied before the counting agents deputed by the candidates.

E. During counting, Counting Agents can verify the polled votes displayed on CU with that entered in Part-1 of Form-17C. Candidate-wise polled votes are recorded in Part-II of Form-17C and signature of

counting agents are obtained thereof.

F. The penultimate (second last) round of EVM counting shall not be taken up until the counting of postal Ballot Papers is completed at the counting center. This will be applicable only at the counting centers where Postal ballot Paper counting is being done.

G. VVPAT Slips will be counted in case of non-deletion of mock poll data from Control Unit (CU), non-removal of mock poll slips from VVPAT or mismatch between votes recorded in Control Unit and Part-1 of Form 17C. CUs of such polling stations will be set aside during regular counting; their tables will remain vacant. After all regular rounds of counting through Control Units are completed, VVPAT slips from these stations will be counted at the VVPAT Counting Booth. Each VVPAT count is treated as a separate round of counting and candidate-wise votes obtained from VVPAT slips count of all these polling stations shall be added to the candidate-wise tally and the final result compiled.

H. EVMs & VVPATs are stored back in Strong Room in the presence of candidates/their representatives till the completion of the Election Petition period.

(ix) Mandatory Verification of VVPAT Paper Slip:

In pursuance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's Order dated 8th April, 2019, the Commission has mandated VVPAT slips count of Five (5) randomly selected Polling Stations in each Assembly Constituency or Segment of the Parliamentary Constituency of the State/UTs by the Returning Officer, by draw of lots in presence of candidates/their counting agents & ECI Observer, for verification of the result obtained from the Control Unit. This mandatory verification of VVPAT slip count of five (05) Polling Stations in each Assembly Constituency shall be in addition to the provisions of Rule 56(D) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

(x) None of the Above (NOTA) in EVMs, VVPATs and Postal Ballot:
As usual, there will be 'None of the above' option for the electors. On the BUs, below the name of the last candidate, there will be a button for NOTA option so that voters who do not want to vote for any of the candidates can exercise their option by pressing the button against NOTA. Similarly, on Postal Ballot Papers there will be a NOTA Panel after

the name of the last candidate. The symbol for NOTA as given below will be printed against the NOTA Panel.



As part of the SVEEP, there are awareness programs to bring this option to the knowledge of electors and all other stakeholders.

(xi) Photographs of Candidates on EVM Ballot Paper:

Earlier the candidate's photographs were printed in black and white on the EVM ballot unit for identifying the candidates. Now, ECI has decided to print the color photograph of the candidates on the EVM ballot unit. It has also been prescribed that candidate's face will occupy three-fourths of the photo space for better visibility. Serial numbers of candidates/NOTA will be printed in the international form of Indian numerals. The font size of serial number will be 30 and in bold for greater clarity. Further, to ensure uniformity, the names of all candidates/NOTA will be printed in the same font type and font size large enough for easy readability.

36. Deployment of Polling Personnel, Randomization, their voting facilities and increased remuneration/ honorarium:

(i) Polling parties shall be formed randomly, through the special randomization IT application.

(ii) There shall be such randomization for Police personnel and Home Guards also, who are deployed at the polling stations on the poll day.

(iii) All persons appointed on election duty who are not able to cast their vote at the polling station where they are enrolled as a voter are entitled to the facility of either an EDC or a Postal Ballot.

(iv) In case, they are put on election duty in the same constituency in which they are enrolled as a voter, they are entitled to get an EDC which entitles them to vote at the polling station where they are on duty.

(v) The Commission, vide letters dated 08.08.2025, has increased the

remuneration and honorarium being given to officials on election duty. The rates were last revised majorly in 2014/2016. The Commission has taken this decision to recognize the hard work of our field election machinery and to compensate them suitably for the duties rendered by them during elections.

37. Voters' Facilitation Centers for Polling Personnel:

As per new Rule 18A inserted in the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, a Voter on Election Duty, who has applied for postal ballot, shall receive his postal ballot, record his vote thereon and return the same at the Facilitation Center set up by the Returning Officer. Therefore, in view of the extant rule position, all the Voters on Election Duty, deployed in a constituency where they are not enrolled as a voter, shall cast their votes only at the Facilitation Centers and not in any other manner. They shall sign the declaration in Form 13A in presence of, and have the signature attested by, any Group A or Group B officer or the presiding officer of the polling station at which they are on election duty.

38. Conduct of Officials:

The Commission expects all officials engaged in the conduct of election to discharge their duties in an impartial manner without any fear or favour. They are deemed to be on deputation to the Commission and shall be subject to its control, supervision and discipline. The conduct of all Government officials who have been entrusted with election related responsibilities and duties would remain under constant scrutiny of the Commission and strict action shall be taken against those officials who are found wanting on any account.

39. New initiatives of the Commission:

The Commission has taken many initiatives during past one year. List of initiatives taken during the past one year include:

I. Convenience of Electors

1. Mobile Deposit Facility for voters at Polling Stations for convenience on polling day.
2. Not more than 1,200 electors per Polling Station to reduce crowding.
3. Voter Information Slip (VIS) design modified to carry Serial number and Part number of voter more prominently.

4. Candidate Booths allowed just beyond 100 meters of PS for voter facilitation.
5. EVMs to have colour photos of candidates for better visibility.
6. "Book a call with BLO" facility provided in ECINET.

II. Strengthening and clean-up of Electoral Systems

7. Delisting of 808 Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs) in two rounds for continually failing to meet essential conditions of registration.
8. Identification and mapping of roles of 28 ECI stakeholders in line with the Constitution of India, RPA 1950 & 1951 Registration of Electors Rules-1960, Conduct of election rules-1961, and various ECI instructions.
9. Standard Photo ID Cards issued to BLOs.
10. Technical and Administrative SOPs for checking and Verification of burnt memory/microcontroller of EVM post announcement of election results.
11. National Conference with Legal Counsels & CEOs to strengthen and re-orient ECI's legal framework.
12. Appointment of District Force Coordinator to coordinate the CAPF Forces deployed in the district during elections.
13. Randomization of the State Police Personnel deployed at the polling station on the day of Poll shall also be done in the presence of Police Observer(s) deployed for the constituencies in that District.

III. Proactive engagement with Political Parties

14. 4,719 all-party meetings held nationwide at EROs, DEOs and CEOs levels.
15. Meetings of the Election Commission with 28 recognized National/State Political Parties held so far.

IV. Enhanced use of Technology

16. Launched ECINET, a one-stop Digital Platform subsuming 40+ apps/websites for the electors and its other stakeholders.
17. 100% Webcasting at all Polling Stations to ensure constant monitoring of poll process.

18. Presiding Officer (PrO) will directly enter voter turnout on the new ECINET App every two hours on polling day in order to reduce time lag.

19. Streamlined Index Card and Statistical reports generation to ensure faster sharing of election-related data at the constituency level.

20. VVPAT Counting to be ensured in each and every case of mismatch between Form 17C and EVM.

V. Purity of Electoral Rolls

21. Special Intensive Revision in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and West Bengal and Special Revision in Assam to ensure that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible person is included in the Electoral Roll.

22. Linking Death Registration Data to ensure EROs receive timely information about registered deaths.

23. Same EPIC numbers for different persons eliminated.

24. New SOP to ensure EPIC Delivery within 15 days of an update in Electoral Roll with SMS notification at each stage of delivery.

VI. Capacity building for

25. In a first, over 7,000 BLOs and BLO Supervisors trained at IIIDEM, New Delhi.

26. Training for Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by all recognised Political Parties from Bihar, TN and Puducherry for the first-time at IIIDEM, New Delhi.

27. Training for Media & Communication Officers of offices of 36 State/UT CEOs.

28. Training of Police Officers for poll-preparedness in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry.

29. Enforcing discipline, digitisation of workflow and better utilisation of resources in ECI Headquarters.

30. Remuneration doubled for BLOs, enhanced for BLO Supervisors and polling/counting staff, CAPF, monitoring teams and micro-observers.

40. Schedules of General Elections:

The Commission has prepared the Schedule for holding General

Election to the Legislative Assemblies of state of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry after taking into consideration all relevant aspects, like Major Festivals, academic calendar, Board Examinations, prevailing law and order situation, availability of Central Armed Police Forces, transportation and timely deployment of forces and in-depth assessment of other relevant ground realities.

The Commission, after considering all relevant aspects has decided to recommend to the Hon'ble Governor of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry to issue notifications for the General Elections under the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as per the ***Annexure- I to V***

The Commission seeks the active cooperation, close collaboration and constructive partnership of all the esteemed stakeholders in the electoral process and strives to employ the collective synergies towards delivering lawful, peaceful, participative and festive General Election to Legislative Assemblies of state of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry, 2026.

15/3/2026

(SANJEEV KUMAR PRASAD)
SECRETARY

Annexure-I

SCHEDULE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ASSAM

(All 126 Assembly Constituencies)

Poll Events	Date and Day
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	16.03.2026 (Monday)
Last Date for making Nominations	23.03.2026 (Monday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	24.03.2026 (Tuesday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	26.03.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	**09.04.2026 (Thursday)**
Date of Counting	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

Annexure-II

SCHEDULE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF KERALA

(All 140 Assembly Constituencies)

Poll Events	Date and Day
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	16.03.2026 (Monday)
Last Date for making Nominations	23.03.2026 (Monday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	24.03.2026 (Tuesday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	26.03.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	**09.04.2026 (Thursday)**
Date of Counting	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

Annexure-III

SCHEDULE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUDUCHERRY

(All 30 Assembly Constituencies)

Poll Events	Date and Day
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	16.03.2026 (Monday)
Last Date for making Nominations	23.03.2026 (Monday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	24.03.2026 (Tuesday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	26.03.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	**09.04.2026 (Thursday)**
Date of Counting	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

Annexure-IV

SCHEDULE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF TAMIL NADU

(All 234 Assembly Constituencies)

Poll Events	**Date and Day**
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	30.03.2026 (Monday)
Last Date for making Nominations	06.04.2026 (Monday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	07.04.2026 (Tuesday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	09.04.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	**23.04.2026 (Thursday)**
Date of Counting	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

Annexure-V

SCHEDULE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF WEST BENGAL

Poll Events	**FIRST PHASE (152 ACs) Date and Day**	**SECOND PHASE (142 ACs) Date and Day**
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	30.03.2026 (Monday)	02.04.2026 (Thursday)
Last Date for making Nominations	06.04.2026 (Monday)	09.04.2026 (Thursday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	07.04.2026 (Tuesday)	10.04.2026 (Friday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	09.04.2026 (Thursday)	13.04.2026 (Monday)
Date of Poll	**23.04.2026 (Thursday)**	**29.04.2026 (Wednesday)**
Date of Counting	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/030/2026 Dated:15th March, 2026

PRESS NOTE

Subject: Schedule for Bye-election to 8 (Eight) Assembly Constituencies of Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Tripura – reg.

The Commission has decided to hold bye-election to fill vacancies in the following Assembly Constituencies of Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Tripura:

Sl. No.	Name of State/UT	No. and Name of AC	Reason of vacancy
1.	**Goa**	21-Ponda	Death of Sh. Ravi Naik
2.	**Gujarat**	111-Umreth	Death of Sh. Govindbhai Raijibhai Parmar
3.	**Karnataka**	24-Bagalkot	Death of Sh. Meti Hullappa Yamanappa (H. Y. Meti)
4.		107-Davanagere South	Death of Sh. Shamanur Shivashankarappa
5.	**Maharashtra**	223-Rahuri	Death of Sh. Shivaji Bhanudas Kardile
6.		201-Baramati	Death of Sh. Ajit Anatarao Pawar
7.	**Nagaland**	28-Koridang (ST)	Death of Sh. Imkong L. Imchen
8.	**Tripura**	56-Dharmanagar	Death of Sh. Biswa Bandhu Sen

The Schedule for the bye election is enclosed at ***Annexure-I***.

1. ELECTORAL ROLLS

Commission firmly believes that pure and updated electoral rolls are the foundation of free, fair and credible elections. Hence, intensive and sustained focus is placed upon improving

its quality, health and fidelity. After the amendment in Section 14 of the Representation of the People Act-1950 by the Election Laws (Amendment) Act-2021, there is a provision of four qualifying dates to enroll as a voter in a year. Accordingly, the Commission conducted the Special Summary Revision/ Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Roll in the States.

Name of States	No. and Name of AC	Date of Final Publication of E-Roll of the AC
Goa	21-Ponda	21-02-2026
Gujarat	111-Umreth	17.02.2026
Karnataka	24-Bagalkot	14-02-2026
	107-Davanagere South	
Maharashtra	223-Rahuri	14-02-2026
	201-Baramati	10.03.2026
Nagaland	28-Koridang (ST)	14-02-2026
Tripura	56-Dharmanagar	28-02-2026

However, the process of continuous updation of electoral rolls will continue till the last date of filing nominations, with respect to proximate qualifying date, in respect to applications received till 10 days before last date of filing nomination.

2. ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMs) & VVPATs

The Commission has decided to use EVMs and VVPATs in the bye-election in all the polling stations. Adequate numbers of EVMs and VVPATs have been made available and

all steps have been taken to ensure that the poll is conducted smoothly with the help of these machines.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF VOTERS

Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) shall be the main document of identification of a voter. However, any of the below mentioned identification documents can also be shown at the polling station:

i. Aadhar Card;
ii. MGNREGA Job Card;
iii. Passbooks with photograph issued by Bank/Post Office;
iv. Health Insurance Smart Card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour/Ayushman Bharat Health Card;
v. Driving License;
vi. PAN Card;
vii. Smart Card issued by RGI under NPR;
viii. Indian Passport;
ix. Pension document with photograph;
x. Service Identity Cards with photograph issued to employees by Central/State Govt./PSUs/Public Limited Companies;
xi. Official identity cards issued to MPs/MLAs/MLCs; and
xii. Unique Disability ID (UDID) Card, M/o Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.

4. MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Model Code of Conduct shall come into force with immediate effect in the district(s) in which the whole or any part of the Assembly constituency going for election is included, subject to provision of the instruction vide Commission's letter No. 437/6/1NST/ECI/FUNCT/MCC/ 2024/ (BYE ELECTIONS) dated 2nd January, 2024 (available on the Commission's website).

5. INFORMATION REGARDING CRIMINAL ANTECEDENTS

Candidates with criminal antecedents are required to publish information in this regard in newspapers and through Television channels on three occasions during the

campaign period. A political party that sets up candidates with criminal antecedents is also required to publish information about criminal background of its candidates, both on its website and also in newspapers and Television channels **on three occasions**.

Commission vide its letter No. 3/4/2019/SDR/Vol. IV dated 16th September, 2020 has directed that the period specified will be decided with three blocks in the following manner, so that electors have sufficient time to know about the background of such candidates:

a. Within first 4 days of withdrawal.
b. Between next 5th - 8th days.
c. From 9th day till the last day of campaign (the second day prior to date of poll)

(Illustration: If the last date for withdrawal is 10th of the month and poll is on 24th of the Month, the first publication of declaration shall be done between 11th and 14th of the Month and second and third publication shall be between 15th and 18th and 19th and 22nd of that Month, respectively.)

This requirement is in pursuance of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Writ Petition (C) No. 784 of 2015 and Writ Petition (Civil) No. 536 of 2011.

The political parties shall also publish in newspapers and its official social media platforms and upload in its website, the details and the reasons for selecting candidates having criminal background within 48 hours of selection of such candidate. The details are contained in letter no. 3/4/2021/SDR/Vol.III dated 11.01.2022 available on the Commission's website.

This information will also be available on ECINET titled, '**Know Your Candidates**'.

6. NO DUES CERTIFICATE

The Commission has issued directions to facilitate, if approached by any intending candidate, who has been in occupation of accommodation provided by the Government any time during the last 10 years before the date of notification of the election, to obtain "No dues certificate" from agencies/authorities/departments dealing with (a) rent, (b) electricity charges, (c) water charges and (d) telephone charges. The instructions are contained in Commission's letter no. 3/ER/2023/SDR/Vol.IV dated 03.05.2024 and is available in the Commission's website.



(SANJEEV KUMAR PRASAD)
SECRETARY

Annexure-I

SCHEDULE FOR BYE-ELECTION

Poll Events	Date and Day (For ACs of Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland, Tripura)	Date and Day (For ACs of Gujarat and Maharashtra
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	16.03.2026 (Monday)	30.03.2026 (Monday)
Last date for making nominations	23.03.2026 (Monday)	06.04.2026 (Monday)
The date for the scrutiny of nominations	24.03.2026 (Tuesday)	07.04.2026 (Tuesday)
The last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	26.03.2026 (Thursday)	09.04.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	**09.04.2026 (Thursday)**	**23.04.2026 (Thursday)**
Date of Counting of Votes	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**	**04.05.2026 (Monday)**
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)