



Schedule for the General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh

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The term of the Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh is normally due to expire as follows:

Himachal Pradesh	07.01.2018
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By virtue of its powers, duties and functions under Article 324 read with Article 172(1) of the Constitution of India and Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Commission is required to hold general election to constitute the new Legislative Assembly in the State of Himachal Pradesh before expiry of its present term.

(1) Assembly Constituencies

The total number of Assembly Constituencies in the State of Himachal Pradesh and seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, as determined by the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 2008, are as under: -

State	Total No. of ACs	Reserved for SCs	Reserved for STs
Himachal Pradesh	68	17	3

(2) Electoral Rolls

The electoral rolls of all the existing Assembly Constituencies in the State of Himachal Pradesh are being revised, with reference to 01.01.2017 as the qualifying date. The dates of publication of the Final Rolls are indicated in the Table below and the details of the final publication will be made available on the ECI website. As per the draft rolls, the numbers of electors in the states are as follows:

State	Total No. of Electors in Draft Rolls- 2017 on 01/07/2017 w.r.t. 01/01/2017 as qualifying date	Total no of Electors as per Final Roll on 15/09/2017
Himachal Pradesh	4827644 (48.27 Lac)	4905677 (49.05 Lac)

(a) Improvement in the health of the electoral rolls: The Commission firmly believes that pure and updated electoral rolls are the foundation of free, fair and credible election and intensive and sustained focus is laid on improving their quality and fidelity. The Commission, after visiting the poll bound state, had directed the State election machinery to ensure a smooth, effective, accessible and time-bound completion of Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls with 01.01.2017 as the qualifying date, so as to ensure that all eligible un-enrolled electors in the State are duly registered. Special efforts were made to identify the critical gaps in the electoral rolls and targeted SVEEP activities were carried out to address them.

The Commission has been constantly endeavouring to improve the fidelity of electoral rolls by taking focused efforts for maximization of registration of eligible electors and removing the impurities in the rolls. In 2015, the Commission has launched a nationwide comprehensive programme, namely, NERPAP with an objective of bringing an error free and authenticated electoral roll. A similar programme called as NERP, 2016 was organized with the objectives of improvements of health of electoral roll and standardization of sections, polling station and part boundaries.

This year, in tune with the theme of 'No' voters to be left behind' the Commission utilized the period of continuous updation, for maximization of enrolment of young electors particularly 18-19 age group and removal of entries of registered dead voters.

Special Initiatives taken in Himachal Pradesh:

Second Special Summary Revision 2017 was organized in Himachal Pradesh from 1st July, 2017 to 15th September, 2017 during which 1.25 Lac no. of voters name have been added in the electoral rolls while 47,214 names have been deleted through form-7 after following the procedure of issuing notices.

Special drive to enroll left out voters was organized from 16th -30th September, 2017 in which BLOs have visited house to house of every family in the area and as a result total of 74885 new voters name have been added in the Electoral Roll in the State out of which 20437 new voters are belonging to 18-19 year age group.

(b) Photo Electoral Rolls

Photo Electoral Rolls will be used during this General Election and photo percentages in Photo Electoral Rolls of this State is 100%.

(c) Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC)

Identification of the voters at the polling booth at the time of poll shall be mandatory. Electors who have been provided with EPIC shall be identified through EPIC. Presently, the EPIC coverage in this State is as under:-

State	Percentage of EPIC
Himachal Pradesh	100%

All the residual electors are advised to obtain their Elector Photo Identity Cards from the Electoral Registration Officers of their Assembly Constituencies, urgently.

In order to ensure that no voter is deprived of his/her franchise, if his/her name figures in the Electoral Rolls, separate instructions will be issued to allow additional documents for identification of voters, if needed. Adhaar Card has also been included as an additional document for establishing the identity of voters at the Polling Stations.

(d) Photo Voter Slips

To facilitate the voters to know where he/she is enrolled as a voter at a particular polling station and what is his/her serial number in the Electoral roll, the Commission has directed that official **voter slip bearing the Photo of the elector (wherever present in the roll) will be distributed atleast 7 days before the date of poll** to all enrolled voters by the District Election Officer and a very close and rigorous monitoring of the distribution process shall be done by the DEO and General Observer concerned. The size, design and format of the Photo Voter Slip has also been substantially improved to enhance its utility and effectiveness in voter identification, awareness and guidance by increasing the size of the image, providing additional information along with polling station Nazri Naksha on the reverse of the slip and improvement in the quality of printing. It has also been directed that the said voter slip should be in the languages in which electoral roll is published for that Assembly Constituency. The Commission has laid a special emphasis on the systematic, efficient and timely distribution of the Photo Voter Slips through the Booth Level Officers (BLOs), who are under strict instructions to hand over the voter slip to the elector concerned only and not to any other person. The BLOs shall also maintain a Pre-Printed Register of Voters and take the signatures/thumb impression of person to whom the Photo Voter Slip is delivered.

The residual undistributed Voter Slips shall be returned by the BLO to the concerned ERO, who shall keep the same in a sealed cover after making an alphabetical list of the undistributed PVS in respect of each Part/polling station. Two copies of such alphabetical lists shall be handed over to the RO of the concerned constituency, while sealed cover of undistributed photo voter slips shall remain in safe custody with the ERO. No further distribution of photo voter slips shall be done after the same are returned to the ERO.

(e) Voter Guide Brochure:

In this election, a **Voter Guide Brochure (in local languages)** shall be handed over to **every** household ahead of the elections, giving information about the date and time of polls, 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 Dont's for voters at the polling station. This Voter Guide Brochure will be distributed along with the Photo Voter Slips by the BLOs.

(3) Polling Stations and Special Facilitation

The number of Polling Stations of Himachal Pradesh are as follows:

State	No. of Polling Stations in 2012	No. of Polling Stations in 2017	% Increase
Himachal Pradesh	7252	7479	3.13%

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

The Commission has upgraded the status of facilities at the Polling Stations from the earlier concept of Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) to Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF). Accordingly, instructions have been issued to the Chief Electoral Officers of all these States to ensure that **every Polling Station is equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities** (AMF) like drinking water, shed, toilet, ramp for the physically challenged voters, a standard voting compartment etc. for the convenience and facilitation of voters.

(b) Facilitation for PWDs

The Commission has issued instructions to ensure that as far as practicable, all polling stations are located at ground floor and sturdy ramps are provided for the convenience of differently-abled electors with wheel-chairs. Further, in order to provide targeted and need-based facilitation to differently-abled voters, the Commission has directed that all Persons With Disabilities (PwDs) 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 the poll day. Identified PWDs will be assisted by volunteers appointed by RO/DEO. Special facilitation will be made for PWDs electors at Polling Stations. Also, it has been directed that differently-abled electors are given priority for entering polling booths, provision made for designated parking spaces close to the entrance of polling premise and special care to be provided to electors with speech and hearing impairment. Special focus has been laid for the sensitization of the polling personnel regarding the unique needs of the differently-abled.

(c) Assured Minimum Facility Polling Stations:

In order to enhance the quality of voting experience for the esteemed electors, both in terms of the ease and comfort of voting, as well as their constructive association with the voting process, the Commission has directed that, as far as practicable, Model Polling Stations shall be set up in all the constituencies of the poll bound states. The Model Polling Stations envision the enhancement in electoral participation experience of the voters through a three-pronged strategy of improved physical structure and facilities of polling premises, systematic and hassle-free queue management and courteous and polite behaviour and conduct of the polling personnel.

(d) 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 uniform and standardized Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP) shall be displayed on all Polling Stations for greater facilitation and awareness of the voters. A total of FOUR (4) Posters have been designed to capture voter-centric information relevant on the poll day like details of the Polling Booth, polling area specified for that particular polling booth, list of contesting candidates, contact details of the important election functionaries, list of prescribed identification documents, illustrative voting procedure, items prohibited around the polling booth and important Do's and Don'ts to be observed on the poll day. The Commission has directed that these four VFPs shall be prominently displayed at each polling booth in the poll-going States.

(e) Voter Assistance Booths (VAB):

Voter Assistance Booths shall be set up for **every polling station location**, having a team of BLO/officials with the objective of facilitating the voter to locate his/her polling booth number and serial number of that voter 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 the poll day.

(f) Secrecy of Voting- Increase in Height of Standardized Voting Compartment:

In order to maintain the secrecy of vote at the time of poll and uniformity in use of voting compartments, the Commission has issued revised instructions to increase the height of the Voting Compartments to 30 inches. It has been, further, directed that the Voting Compartment should be placed on a table whose height shall be 30 inches and only corrugated plastic sheet (flex-board) of steel-grey colour, which is completely opaque and reusable, shall be used for making the voting compartments. The Commission hopes that the use of these standardized and uniform Voting Compartments in all the polling booths will translate into greater voter facilitation, enhance the secrecy of vote and eliminate aberrations and non-uniformity in the preparation of Voting Compartment inside the polling booths.

(4) Special Arrangement For Women:

All-Women Managed Polling Stations: 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, 'All- women Managed Polling Stations' shall be **set up in two polling stations for each Assembly Constituency** where the entire polling staff, including the police and security personnel, shall be women. Total 136 Women managed Polling Stations will be setup for the entire state of Himachal Pradesh for the first time.

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

The poll in the State will be conducted at all polling stations using EVMs and VVPATs. The Commission has already made arrangements to ensure availability of adequate number of EVMs and VVPATs for the smooth conduct of election. The **First Level Check of EVMs and VVPATs** has been completed in the presence of representatives of political parties. A **two-stage randomization of EVMs and VVPATs** will also be done. In the first stage, all the EVMs and VVPATs stored in the district storage centre will be randomized by the District Election Officer (DEO) in the presence of the representatives of the recognized political parties for Assembly Constituency-wise allocation. Second randomization of EVMs and VVPATs will be done at RO level before preparation of EVMs and VVPATs for polling station-wise allocation. This is done in the presence of Observer contesting candidates/their agents. EVMs and VVPATs will be prepared and set for election after finalization of the contesting candidates, At this stage also, candidates or their agents/representatives will be allowed to check and satisfy themselves in every manner about the error-free functionality of the EVMs and VVPATs. On a pilot basis, VVPAT from One (1) Polling Station in each Assembly Constituency will be randomly selected to count VVPAT paper slips for verification of the result obtained from the Control Unit. Thus paper slip for 68 polling stations will be counted in Himachal Pradesh.

(a) Mock Poll: Mock poll was conducted in EVMs and VVPATs during the First Level Checking in the presence of the representative of Political Parties. Mock poll shall also be conducted in the presence of candidates/their agents during the commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs. Further, on the poll day, Mock Poll shall be conducted by the Presiding Officer at each Polling Station before the commencement of actual polling in the presence of the Polling Agents set up by the contesting candidates and a **Certificate** of successful conduct of the Mock Poll shall be made by the Presiding Officer. Immediately after the conduct of Mock Poll, the **CLEAR Button shall be pressed** on the EVM to clear the data of the Mock Poll and the fact that no votes are recorded in the Control Unit shall be displayed to the Polling Agents present. The Commission has issued directions for ensuring **proper training** to all the polling personnel regarding the conduct of Mock Poll, as well as to **create awareness** amongst the political parties, contesting candidates, their polling agents and other stakeholders about the Mock Poll process.

(b) None Of The Above (NOTA) In EVMs and VVPATs: In its judgment dated 27th September, 2013 in Writ Petition (C) No. 161 of 2004 (People's Union for Civil Liberties Vs Union of India and another), the Supreme Court has directed that there should be a "None of the Above" (NOTA) option on the ballot papers and EVMs and VVPATs.

On the Balloting Unit, **below the name of the last candidate**, there will now be a button for NOTA option so that electors who do not want to vote for any of the candidates can exercise their option by pressing the button against NOTA. The **Commission has provided a new symbol for the NOTA option**, which was designed by National Institute of Design (NID). This new symbol will facilitate the voters in casting of their votes.



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NOTA Symbol

The Commission is taking steps to bring this to the knowledge of voters and all other stakeholders and to train all field level officials including the polling personnel about the provision of NOTA and its symbol.

(c) VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail)

VVPATs will be used along with EVMs in all the 68 Assembly Constituencies of poll going state of Himachal Pradesh to enhance the transparency and credibility of the election. A comprehensive SVEEP programme has already been launched in Himachal Pradesh to increase voters' awareness and education about the VVPATs.

(d) Photographs Of Candidates On EVM Ballot Paper

In order to facilitate the electors in identifying the candidates, the Commission has prescribed an additional measure by way of adding provision for printing the photograph of candidate also on the ballot to be displayed on the EVM (Ballot Unit) and on Postal Ballot Papers. This will also take care to avoid likely confusion when candidates with same or similar names contest from the same constituency. For this purpose, the candidates are required to submit to the Returning Officer, their recent Stamp Size photograph as per the specifications laid down by the Commission. Many of the poll-bound states will be using the photograph of the candidates on the ballot papers for the first time. Instructions have also been issued to ensure necessary publicity of this instruction

(6) Deployment of Polling Personnel And Randomization

Polling parties shall be formed randomly, through the special randomization IT application. **Three-stage randomization** will be adopted. First, from a wider district database of eligible officials, a shortlist of a minimum 120% of the required numbers will be randomly picked up. This group will be trained for polling duties. In the second stage, from this trained manpower, actual polling parties as required shall be formed by random selection software in the presence of General Observers. In the third randomization, the polling stations will be allocated randomly to these polling parties just before the polling party's departure. There shall be such randomization for Police personnel and Home Guards also, who are deployed at the polling stations on the poll day.

(7) Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for Service Voter:

During De-Nevo registration of Service voters of various services have been uploaded in xml files with details of Service voters and provisionally accepted cases have been published in draft on 4th October, 2017. Election Commission of India has directed that Records Officers shall upload all signed and authenticated forms by 13.10.2017 for all applications which have been provisionally accepted so that they may be included in the final rolls.

Further, to ensure maximum enrolment of service voters, a special drive have been organized to include balance Service voters during continuous updation phase from 19th October onwards for a fortnight period.

Commission has implemented ETPBS on pilot basis in four states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Manipur and in the entire state of Goa in the State Assembly Elections conducted during Feb-March, 2017 and would extend it in ensuing Himachal Assembly elections too.

(8) Affidavits Of candidates:

(a) 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 (Resurgence India Vs Election Commission of India and Another), 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 columns. 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. The Chief Electoral Officers have been directed to brief all Returning Officers about the judgment of the Supreme Court and the Commission's instructions.

(b) Additional Affidavit along with 'No Demand Certificate':

The Commission has, in pursuance to the Judgment of Hon'ble Delhi High Court in W.P.(C) No. 4912/1998 (KRISHAK BHARAT VS UNION OF INDIA AND ORS), directed that at every elections to either the House of Parliament or to the State Legislature, every candidate, at the time of filing nomination paper, shall also file an additional affidavit in the prescribed format along with the 'No Demand Certificate' from the agencies providing electricity, water and telephone with also rent, in case he had been in occupation of any Government accommodation during the last 10 years. This Affidavit would be in addition to the affidavit required to be filed in Form-26, and shall be got attested by an Oath Commissioner or Notary Public or Magistrate of the First Class. The outer limit for filing this Affidavit would

be 3.00 PM on the last date of filing nomination papers. It is also specified that failure to file the affidavit along with the 'No Demand Certificate' would be treated as a defect of substantial nature for the purposes of Section-36 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.

(c) Introduction of additional facility of E-Filing of Candidate Affidavits: The Commission has provided to the candidates an additional facility for online submission (e-filing) of their Affidavit. The candidate can go online to ECI website (eci.nic.in) and can submit their affidavit online through any of the services of NIC or NSDL. Candidate need to take print out of the affidavit submitted online and then get it notarized and submit it to Returning officer (RO). RO is required to verify the printed copy with the submission done by the candidate. Further, trained **Election Commission Return Preparers** will be available in each district to assist candidates in e-filing of affidavits and abstract statements and expenses on the same will be borne by the Commission.

(d) Changes in the Format of Nomination Form:

Vide a notification dated 16th September, 2016 issued by the Ministry of Law & Justice, Government of India, the format of nomination paper (Forms 2A to 2E) has been partially amended. In the new format, there is a requirement of **affixing the photograph of the candidate** and a provision has been inserted for the **candidate to make a declaration that he/she is a citizen of India and has not acquired citizenship of any other country**. The format of nomination papers has been further amended vide M/o Law notification dated 16.09.2016.

(9) District Election Management Plan (DEMP)

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 communication plan for conduct of elections. These plans will be **vetted by the Observers** taking into account vulnerability mapping exercise and mapping of critical polling stations, in accordance with Election Commission of India's extant instructions.

(10) 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 elections and to enable concurrent intervention and mid-course correction on the poll day. For the said purpose, the Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officer of Himachal Pradesh to coordinate with the officers of Telecommunication Department in the State headquarters, BSNL/MTNL authorities, the representatives of other leading service providers in the States so that network status in the States is assessed and communication shadow areas be identified. The CEO has also been instructed to prepare the best communication plan in the State and make suitable alternate arrangements in the communication shadow areas by providing Satellite Phones, Wireless sets, Special Runners etc.

(11) Model Code of Conduct

The Model Code of Conduct **comes into effect immediately** from now onwards. All the provisions of the Model Code will apply to the whole of Himachal Pradesh and will be applicable to all candidates, political parties and, the State Government of Himachal Pradesh. The Model Code of Conduct shall also be applicable to the Union Government insofar as announcements/policy decisions pertaining to/for this State is concerned.

The Commission has made elaborate arrangements for ensuring the effective implementation of the MCC Guidelines. Any violations of these Guidelines would be strictly dealt with 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 governments of the poll-bound States have also been directed to ensure that no misuse of official machinery/position is done during the MCC period.

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.

(12) 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. Further, the Commission has directed that Webcasting, CCTV coverage, Videography and Digital cameras will also be deployed inside critical polling booths and polling booths in vulnerable areas to closely monitor the proceedings on the poll day without violating secrecy of voting process.

(13) Measures to Prevent Public Nuisance:

(a) Usage of eco-friendly substances for preparing election campaign/publicity material- Considering the long-term deleterious impact of materials like plastics, polythene etc on the life-giving and life-sustaining environment, the Commission, has directed that all political parties, contesting candidates and their authorized agents etc, **shall desist from utilizing environmentally hazardous materials** like plastics, polythene etc for the preparation and usage election-related publicity materials during the ensuing General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh. The DEOs and ROs are directed to emphasize the importance of environment protection and preservation during the meetings with the political parties and contesting candidates and ensure that the instructions of the Commission with regard to the usage of non-eco-friendly materials like plastics, polythene etc during electioneering shall be adhered to by all concerned. The CEO shall impress upon the importance of using eco-friendly and bio-degradable materials for campaign material to various political parties in their respective states/UT and issue necessary instructions in this regard.

(b) Restrictions on the use of loudspeakers:

The Commission is genuinely concerned about the serious 'noise pollution' and great disturbance to the peace and tranquility of the general public by the reckless, widespread and flagrant use of loudspeakers during election canvassing and campaign by candidates, political parties and their agents. In particular, the student community, gets seriously disturbed and adversely impacted as their studies are badly hampered because the loudspeakers start blaring from very early hours in the morning and continue to do so throughout the day and till extremely late hours in the night. Similarly, the aged, the infirm and the sick whether in institutions, hospitals, etc. or at home, are 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 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 p.m. and 6.00 a.m."**

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.

Moreover, for maintenance for law and order and prevention of loudspeaker use for inciting tension in a politically surcharged atmosphere, District Administrations is advised to consider any application for permission to use loudspeakers after the aforesaid prohibitory period of 48 hours, on merit of each application and keeping in view the need to maintain proper law and order till the completion of election.

(c) Also, the Commission solicits the cooperation and collaboration of all the esteemed stakeholders notably the political parties and contesting candidates to **refrain from using loudspeakers and sound amplification in the vicinity of educational institutions** like schools and colleges; hospitals, senior citizens homes, sanatoriums and other facilities tending to the sick, infirm or the needy.

(14) Law and Order, Security Arrangements and Deployment of Forces

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 elections in a free, fair and credible manner. In view of the same, the very preparation of poll schedule, sequencing of multi-phase elections and choice of constituencies for each phase had to follow the logic of force availability and force management.

The Commission has taken various measures to ensure free and fair elections by creating a conducive atmosphere in which each elector is able to access the polling station and cast his vote without being obstructed or being unduly influenced/ intimidated by anybody.

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 these elections. 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. In the insurgency-affected areas, 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 the Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies and other vulnerable areas and critical polling stations** as per the assessment of ground realities by the CEO of the State, in consultation with the various stakeholders. On the Poll-eve, the CAPFs/SAP shall take position in 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 be used for securing the strong rooms where the EVMs and VVPATs are stored and for securing the counting centers and for other purposes, as required.

The CEOs will ensure a **day-to-day monitoring** of the activities and deployment of the CAPFs/SAP in these States to optimize the usage and effectiveness of these forces for conducting peaceful and transparent elections and inform the Commission periodically. Further, the entire force deployment in the assembly segments shall be under the **oversight of the Central Observers** deputed by the Commission.

The Commission lays a special emphasis on the advance preventive measures to be taken by the District Magistrates and Police authorities to maintain the Law & Order and to create atmosphere conducive for the conduct of free and fair elections. The Commission will be constantly monitoring the ground situation closely and will take appropriate measures to ensure peaceful, free and fair polls in these States.

(15) 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 the State Governments 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 such areas, conducting route marches and undertaking others necessary confidence building measures under the supervision of the Central Observers.

(16) Election Expenditure Monitoring:

Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been issued, which include formation of Flying Squads (FS), Static Surveillance Teams (SST), Video Surveillance Teams (VST), involvement of Investigation Directorates of Income Tax Deptt. etc. State Excise Departments and police authorities have been asked to monitor production, distribution, sale and storage of liquor and other intoxicants (including narcotics) during the election process. The functioning and operations of the Flying Squads/Mobile Teams 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 that very account. The Investigation Directorate of Income Tax Dept. has been asked to open Air Intelligence units in the airports of these states and also to gather intelligence and take necessary action against movement of large sum of money in these states.

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

- (a) Standard Operating Procedure for Seizure and release of cash:** For the purpose of maintaining purity of elections, the Election Commission of India has issued the 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 constituency during election process.

In order to avoid inconvenience to the public and genuine persons and also for redressal of their grievances, if any, the Commission has instructed vide its instruction no. 76/Instructions/EEPS/2015/Vol-II dated 29.05.2015, that a committee shall be formed 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 (Convenor) and (iii) District Treasury Officer. The Committee shall suo-motu 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 Standard Operating Procedure, it shall take immediate step to order release of such cash etc. to such persons from whom the cash was seized after passing a speaking order to that effect. The Committee shall look into all cases and take decision on seizure. In no case, the matter relating to seized cash/seized valuables shall be kept pending 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 - on the basis of permissions granted:

It had 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. for withdrawing the permission, the notional expenditure on account of campaign vehicles will be calculated based on the number of vehicles for which permissions is granted by the Returning Officer.

(c) Filing of part statement of Election Expenditure by Political parties in 30 days: The political parties will be required to file a part expenditure statement in respect of the lump sum payments made to the candidate, within 30 days after declaration of results. The recognized political parties shall have to submit their accounts of election expenses with the Election Commission of India and the unrecognized political parties with the Chief Electoral Officer of the concerned State.

(d) Account Reconciliation Meeting: In order to reduce litigations relating to expenditure accounts, a reconciliation meeting will be convened by the DEOs before final submission of the accounts, on the 26th day after the declaration of the results.

(e) All expenditure incurred by those candidates, their party agents or party leaders on their travel, boarding, lodging etc. who travel to overseas countries for the purpose of canvassing in their favour to seek votes of overseas electors residing there, would be deemed to be the expenditure incurred or authorized by the candidates in connection with their election and will have to be included in their account of election expenses. Moreover, any inducement to overseas electors by way of air tickets or any other documents to inducements to them, in cash or kind, to come to India for the purpose of voting at the election would amount to the electoral offence of 'bribery' within the meaning of section 171B of the IPC as also the corrupt practice of 'Bribery' within the meaning of section 123(1) of the R.P. Act, 1951.

(f) Candidate' Booth/ (Kiosk) Outside Polling Station- Expenditure to be Included in Candidates' Election Account:

In order to ensure effective, accurate and credible election expenditure monitoring and to ensure that the candidates' expenditure accounts faithfully represent the actual spending on electioneering, the Commission has decided that 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 all such 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. The DEOs have been asked to notify the rates of the candidates' booths set up outside polling stations after due consultation with the political parties as per the Commission's instruction to all Chief Electoral Officers vide letter no. 6/ECI/INST/FUNC/EEM/EEPS/2016/Vol.IX dated 23.12.2016. Further, Schedule-6 of account of election expenses to be submitted by each contesting candidate has also been modified accordingly.

(g) Ceiling Of Election Expenses For Candidates:

The election expenses ceiling for candidates has been revised by the Government of India vide Notification dated 28th February, 2014. **As per the revised ceilings, the maximum limit of election expenses for the Assembly Constituencies is Rs. 28 lakh per candidate for the state of Himachal Pradesh.** All candidates are required to furnish their accounts of expenditure within 30 days of declaration of results.

(h) Final Accounts By Political Parties:

All Political Parties sponsoring candidates for the Legislative Assembly elections are required to maintain day-to-day accounts of all election campaign expenses and submit the accounts to the Commission within 75 days of the completion of such elections. Such accounts will be uploaded on the website of the Commission for public viewing.

(17) Effective use of Media:

(a) Media Engagement:

The Commission has always considered the media as an important ally and a potent force multiplier in ensuring an effective and efficient election management. Hence, the Commission has directed the CEO of poll-going state to take the following measures for positive and progressive engagement and interaction with the media:

- a) Regular interaction with the media during the elections and maintaining an effective and positive line of communication with media at all times.
- b) A strong and concerted focus on the creation of an effective information dissemination system to the media at the State and district level to ensure timely and due access to election-related data and information by media by appointment of a Nodal Officer and Spokesperson at State Level.
- c) Effective steps to sensitize the media about the Election Code.
- d) Authority letters will be issued to all accredited media for the polling day and day of counting.

Commission expects the media to play a positive, pro-active and constructive role in supplementing and facilitating the efforts towards delivery of free, fair, transparent, participative, peaceful and credible elections.

(b) Use of Social Media:

The Commission has decided to enhance its interaction and involvement with all the stakeholders in the electoral processes by inducting the use of social media at the State as well as the District level. Necessary instructions in this regards have been issued to Chief Electoral Officers of all States/UTs. The CEO and DEOs are expected to activate their official accounts on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube for establishing a more interactive system. Social Media Cells at CEO and DEO offices will professionally handle the Social Media and disseminate all the necessary information regarding voters' awareness, pre-certification, MCC, etc. Complaints received on this platform would be promptly responded to. A Social Media Cell at ECI level has also been set up to monitor the performance of the State/UTs and District and to guide them to maximize the use of Social Media, making it more interactive and interesting for the general public.

(c) Paid News:

To deal with the menace of 'Paid News', a mechanism has been laid out with three tier Media certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMCs) at District, State and ECI level. Revised comprehensive instructions on 'Paid News' are available on the Commission's website.

Necessary instructions have been issued to the CEO of Himachal Pradesh to ensure briefing of political parties and Media in the districts about 'Paid News' and the mechanism to check 'Paid News'. The MCMCs have been trained to do their job.

(d) Pre-Certification of Political Advertisements:

The Commission has decided that the bulk SMSs/Voice messages on phone and in election campaigning shall also be in the purview of pre-certification of election advertisements as in case of all electronic media/TV Channels/Cable Network/Radio including private FM channels/Cinema halls/audio-visual displays in public places and political advertisement in social media.

(e) Monitoring of Electronic and Social Media:

All the election management related news would be monitored vigorously on all the major national and regional news channels during elections. 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 concerned. Office of CEO will ascertain status on each and every item and file ATR/Status Report. Various Social Media platforms shall also remain under the close and stringent vigil of the Commission for any content aimed at vitiating the electoral process or designed to disturb peace, tranquility, social harmony and public order.

(18) Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP):

Comprehensive measures for voters' education and awareness were taken up during the Special Roll Revision process. These measures will continue and will be further augmented during the ensuing electoral process.

10% of the lowest turnout Polling Stations in each district have been identified and possible reasons for the lower turnout analyzed. **KAP (Knowledge, Attitude and Practices) Survey** has already been undertaken by the Chief Electoral Officer and targeted interventions based on the findings towards enhanced IMF (Information, Motivation and Facilitation) have been meticulously planned and rolled out to meet the objective of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'. This includes special outreach measures for Persons with Disability and identified marginal segments in the States and Districts.

Chief Electoral Officer of Himachal Pradesh has been directed to ensure wide dissemination of election related information, as well as ensure adequate facilitation measures for ensuing wider participation of people in polling. Model polling stations will be set up in each of the assembly constituencies. Voter helplines, Voters' Facilitation Centres, web and SMS based search facilities are active for assistance of voters. Reminder services on poll days have been meticulously planned.

As per the directions of the Commission, **Booth Awareness Groups** have also been activated at the Polling Stations for educating the voters and motivating them for informed and ethical voting. Campus Ambassadors have been activated in educational institutions for facilitating electoral participation amongst youth.

Partnerships have been nurtured with Departments, PSUs, CSOs and Media for maximum outreach of SVEEP initiatives. Customized informational and motivational messaging has been designed to cater to different segments of the electorate. All available platforms of information dissemination are being utilized including electronic, digital, outdoor, print, folk, inter-personal and social media.

(19) Certification Programme for Returning Officers:

The Returning Officers are required to be constantly updated on the various rules and instructions related to conduct of polls. With this in mind the Commission for the first time introduced an in-depth **Certification Programme for all Returning Officers**. Also all the Election Trainers, who would be training various category of officials involved with the conduct of elections, have been trained in training techniques and methodology through **Train the Trainers & Facilitators (TTF)** programmes. Team Leaders at various levels have also been given Leadership Training. It is expected that the election officials in the State would thus be far better equipped to manage elections in a smooth manner.

(20) Deployment of Central Observers:

(a) General Observers

The Commission will deploy General Observers in adequate number to ensure smooth conduct of elections. The Observers will be asked to keep a close watch on every stage of the electoral process to ensure free and fair elections. Their names, addresses within the district/constituency and their telephone numbers will be publicized in local newspapers so that the general public can quickly approach them for any grievance redressal. The Observers will be given a detailed briefing by the Commission before their deployment. The Observers will fix a suitable time every day for meeting the political parties, candidates and other stakeholders to redress their election related grievances.

(b) Police Observers.

The Commission may deploy senior IPS officers as Police Observers at district/AC level in the poll going State depending upon the need, sensitivity and assessment of ground realities and prevailing law and order and security scenario. 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.

(c) Expenditure Observers.

The Commission has also decided to appoint adequate number of **Expenditure Observers** and **Assistant Expenditure Observers** who will exclusively monitor the election expenditure of the contesting candidates. **Control room and Complaint Monitoring Centre** with **24 hours toll free numbers** shall be operative during the entire election process. Banks and Financial Intelligence Units of Government of India have been asked to forward suspicious cash withdrawal reports to the election officials. Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been separately issued by the Commission and are available at ECI website <www.eci.nic.in>.

(d) Micro Observers

As per the extant instructions, the General Observers will also deploy Micro-Observers, from amongst Central Government/PSUs Officials, to observe the poll proceedings on the poll day in critical/vulnerable polling stations. Micro-Observers will observe the proceedings at the polling stations on the poll day, right from the conduct of mock poll, to the completion of poll and the process of sealing of EVMs and VVPATs and other documents so as to ensure that all instructions of the Commission are complied with by the Polling Parties and the Polling Agents. They will report to the General Observers directly regarding any vitiation of the poll proceedings in their allotted polling stations.

(21) New IT Applications To Be Used For Forthcoming General Elections: (a) SAMADHAN: Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System

A comprehensive, robust and reliable Public Grievance Redress System has been developed by the Election Commission to provide a common platform for all complaints, grievances, concerns and suggestions lodged by any member of the public, including our various stakeholders like political parties, candidates, civil society groups etc. A citizen has the multi-modal facility to lodge any election-related complaint via bouquet of channels/sources like Website (<http://ceohimachal.nic.in>), Email, letter, fax, SMS, Call-centre (Call-center Number is “1950”) etc. A Mobile App shall also be made available for the people, so that they can submit complaints with photographs/videos on the common platform. SMS is sent to complainant on receipt/disposal of complaint and the complainant can track status and view ATR online or through the Mobile App. This system has been developed in such a manner that in addition to providing redress to the complaints of the public, it also serves as a common interface for providing services through a common interface. It is thus aimed as a complete G to C interface to provide seamless services to the citizens on election related matters.

(b) SUVIDHA: Single Window Permission System

A single window system for giving election-related permissions/clearances within 24 hours has been created. In this system, Candidates and Political Parties can apply for permissions for Meetings, Rallies, vehicles, temporary election office, loudspeakers etc at a single location, where back-end convergence of various authorities/departments has been done. This system is put in place at every RO level in each sub-division which will provide for applying, processing, granting and monitoring permissions in a synergistic manner. However, in case of permissions for Helicopter usage/landing and use of helipads, the application shall have to be submitted atleast 36 hours in advance.

(c) SUGAM: Vehicle Management System

It is an IT-based Vehicle Management System with the facility of issuance of requisition letters for vehicles, capturing of vehicle details with address, mobile number and bank details of owner and driver, transfer of vehicles from one district to another district etc.

(d) Webcasting/CCTVs at Polling Stations:

Webcasting at selected distant polling stations for LIVE monitoring of election process, to keep a check on illegal activities such as booth capturing, money distribution and bogus voting and to bring about complete transparency in the voting process shall be undertaken. Further, during the election process, CCTV monitoring and webcasting shall also be done at various border check-posts, check-nakas and other sensitive and critical locations across the constituencies to keep a strict vigil on any nefarious activities designed to vitiate the electoral process.

(e) Polling/Police Personnel Deployment System:

This application will be used for creating database of police/polling personnel, generation of command/appointment letters, sending SMS regarding deputation/ training, tagging of patrolling party with force, generation of application for postal ballot, formation of polling party/police party after randomization, for sending polling personnel/police force from one district to another district etc.

(f) E-Payment :

The Commission has directed to the Chief Electoral Officer of Himachal Pradesh to make Payments through e-payment gateway for (i) Timely Payment for all the Civilian Officials/Police Officials deployed for “Election Duties” (ii) Timely Payment to all the Owners of the Vehicles which are Requisitioned for Election Purpose , (iii) Timely Payment for all the Vendors who provide Goods and Services for Election related Duties in all the Assembly Constituencies.

(g) Voter Centric Information Dissemination Initiatives:

It is the constant endeavour of the Commission to facilitate the voters across the country in accessing the multifarious election-related services and information. As part of this vision, an SMS-based search facility and Voter Friendly Interactive Website has already been launched and successfully working.

(22) Conduct of Officials

The Commission expects all officials engaged in the conduct of elections 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.

The Commission has already given instructions that no election related official or Police officer of the rank of Inspector and above shall be allowed to continue in his home district. Besides, instructions have also been issued that election related officials including police officials of Inspector level and above, who have completed three years in a district during last four years, should be transferred out of that district. Police officers of the rank of Sub-Inspectors, who have completed three years in a Sub-Division/Assembly Constituency or are posted in their home sub division/assembly constituency, shall also be transferred out of that Sub-Division and the Assembly Constituency.

The Commission has also instructed the State Governments not to associate any officer with the electoral process against whom charges have been framed in a court of law in any case.

(23) Poll Day Monitoring System

A constant and stringent 24-hour monitoring of the critical events and activities of the poll day shall be done using the Poll Day Monitoring System. All the crucial events like reaching of Polling Parties, Votes Cast, Voters' Images etc shall be captured and monitored using this state-of-the-art IT application, which has the added advantage of being used offline also, so as to circumvent non- connectivity of network. All data captured offline is synchronized with the centralized server as soon as the person using the App comes in the coverage area. Through this App, we can find out Voter Turnout (VTR) gender-wise, age-wise and section-wise. Improvement of quality of image in the roll can also be done through this App as we get the recent colour photograph of the voter against old / bad quality photograph in the roll.

(24) New Initiatives

1. Use of VVPATs at Polling Stations:

VVPATs will be used along with EVMs in all 7479 Polling Stations of 68 Assembly Constituencies of poll going state of Himachal Pradesh to enhance the transparency and credibility of the elections. On a pilot basis, VVPAT from One (1) Polling Station in each Assembly Constituency will be randomly selected to count VVPAT paper slips for verification of the result obtained from the control unit.

2. Security Net :

To ensure peaceful, free and fair election it is necessary that an atmosphere free from intimidation & inducement to voters is ensured. To maintain Law & Order in an effective way and to take swift and time bound preventive action against intimidators such as Proclaimed Offenders/Bail Jumpers/History Sheetters/Antisocial elements an IT based system by name Security Net has been developed to monitor Preventive action at Police Station level. The Licensed Arms deposited, the illegal arms Liquor, drugs seized, NBW executed, cash, freebies seized and Nakas put to check any movement of antisocial elements, etc. would be monitored on continuous basis at Police Station level through Security Net.

3. RO Net:

To have efficient election management as per Commissions direction, and integrated IT solution which works on Web Portal, Mobile App and thorough SMS, has been developed to be implemented first time in entire State of Himachal Pradesh which would make the conduction of election efficient, transparent, smooth, free and fair. This innovation is based on the Pilot RO-Net which was implemented in a few Constituencies of Ludhiana District in Punjab during Jan-Feb 2017 Assembly Elections of Punjab.

4. All Women Managed Polling Stations:

All- women Managed Polling Stations' shall be **set up in two polling stations for each Assembly Constituency** where the entire polling staff, including the police and security personnel, shall be Women. Total 136 Women Managed Polling Stations will be setup for the entire state of Himachal Pradesh for the first time.

5. Booth Level Planning:

First time in the Country an innovative "bottom up" approach of booth level planning and management has been implemented in the State of Himachal Pradesh where in Booth Level plans for 7479 Polling Stations have been prepared containing all informations and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for response for smooth conduct of elections at each Polling Station. These booth level Plans have been used to prepare AC level, District level and State level Election Management Plans.

6. E-Atlas :

As a new innovation, GIS based planning, implementation and monitoring of various election related activities in real time is being implemented in the State of Himachal Pradesh. It would be useful to take immediate response for conduct of various activities related to election including natural disasters in any of the Polling Stations.

7. E-Payment Gateway for Goods and Services:

All Payments will be made through e-payment gateway for (i) Timely Payment for all the Civilian Officials/Police Officials deployed for “Election Duties” (ii) Timely Payment to all the Owners of the Vehicles which are Requisitioned for Election Purpose , (iii) Timely Payment for all the Vendors who provide Goods and Services for Election related Duties in all the Assembly Constituencies.

8. **Registration of Service Voters and ETPBS:**

Commission has implemented ETPBS (Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System) on pilot basis in 4 states of Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand and Manipur and in the entire state of Goa in the State Assembly Elections conducted during Feb-March, 2017 and would extend it in Himachal Pradesh election too.

9. **Brail EPIC and Brail Photo Voter Slips:**

To have inclusive elections, special provisions have been made for all differently abled electors. Brail EPIC and Brail Photo Voter Slips would be issued to all visually challenged electors. Queueless voting at all Polling Stations would be ensured for all differently abled electors.

(25) Schedules of Election

The Commission has prepared the Schedules for holding General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh after taking into consideration all relevant aspects like climatic conditions, academic calendar, major festivals, prevailing law and order situation in the State, availability of Central Police Forces, time needed for movement, 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 Governors of the State of Himachal Pradesh to issue notifications for the General Elections to their respective states under the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as per the **Schedule annexed**.

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 a smooth, free, fair, peaceful participative and festive elections.

[Click here to see Annexure](#)

[Election Commission of India](#)

New Delhi : 12th October, 2017

RM/ VM/RS

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