



# ECI Directs State CEOs for Making Fool Proof Security Arrangements for Counting of Votes on 11th March

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## **CEOs Told to Complete Preparations by Night of 7th March, 2017**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued directions to the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of the Five Poll bound States viz., Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Manipur, for making fool proof security arrangements for vote counting. These directions are in addition to those issued earlier in Commission's letters no. 51/8/VVPAT/2015-EMS dated 05.05.2015, 470/INST/2014-EPS, dated 30.04.2014, wherein the ECI issued detailed instructions regarding storage and safety arrangements of EVMs, appointment of counting staff/ counting agents and counting procedures.

The Commission had several rounds of Video conferences with the CEOs and ROs of all 5 States to take first hand inputs on the preparedness of the counting arrangements. Giving details of security mechanism set up, the Senior Election Commission officer said that the ECI is not leaving any stone unturned to fair and transparent counting arrangements at all the counting centres (157) viz., Punjab (53), Goa (2), Uttar Pradesh (75), Uttarakhand (15) and Manipur (12). ECI has taken feedback from all political parties and candidates, based on which these additional instructions have been issued with a view to further bolster security arrangements to tackle both general as well as situation specific exigencies and ensure a smooth counting process in a transparent manner.

ECI has instructed all the CEOs and DEOs to make the above arrangements and undertake counting process cautiously, step by step and without undue haste so as to make them fool proof, the EC officer added.

These instructions are as follows:

1. All the existing instructions of ECI on counting arrangement to be strictly followed by the DEOs and ROs in letter and spirit.
2. Proper barricading arrangements to be ensured inside each of the counting hall with weld wires mesh to segregate the counting agents from the counting personnel and EVMs etc. as per the Commission's instructions.
3. In each of the counting hall proper arrangement for Videography should be made to record the general happenings in the counting hall for effective monitoring of the counting process as per the Commission's instructions.
4. Effective barricading from the strong room door up to the counting hall door shall be made in such a way that EVMs of each constituency should go to its respective counting hall only and shall not criss-cross each other.
5. For ease of identification, Coloured badges may be given to the staff engaged for transporting the EVMs to a particular counting hall each of constituency.
6. As per the Commission's instructions, all counting arrangements must be completed by the night of 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. The Observers shall visit the counting halls on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 and shall send a report to the Commission on counting arrangements.
7. It should be ensured that security protocol of strong rooms, as given in the Commission's letter no. 51/8/VVPAT/2015-EMS dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015, in no way shall be breached while making the barricading arrangements and other preparatory work for the counting hall. If anywhere, counting hall is in the proximity of the Strong room or the passage to the counting hall is near the strong room, then proper strong barricading should be erected to ensure that the access to the inner perimeter of the strong room is completely blocked. In all such matters, the DEO shall personally oversee and approve all such arrangements and ensure that security of EVMs in no way be breached. Further, in all such places CCTV cameras may be placed, before undertaking the counting arrangements, from where all the happenings of the movement are recorded and shown on a separate TV placed next to the TV fixed already for round the clock viewing of strong room doors by the candidates.

8. On the date of counting, additional CCTV camera may be installed at such locations from where carrying of EVMs from the strong room to the counting hall can be recorded for effective monitoring.
9. The CEO shall personally monitor and ensure that all the counting arrangements are done as per the instructions of the Commission.
10. The entire plan would be shared with contesting candidates by each DEO. The actual work of preparing for the counting shall be started thereafter for which all the contesting candidates/representatives may be invited to be present, if they wish so.

The EC officer further said that these arrangements would ensure prevention of access to any anti-social element ,and that frisking will be done so that no one enter the area with arms & ammunitions. Further, no one would be able to enter the counting arena without getting frisked.

**RM/VM**

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