

# भारत निर्वाचन आयोग

## ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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No. ECI/PN/64/2020

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Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

### PRESS NOTE

#### **Subject: General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, 2020 -reg.**

The term of the Legislative Assembly of Bihar is due to expire on 29.11.2020. The term and strength of the assembly is indicated as below:

Name of State	Term of Assembly	No. of Assembly Seats
Bihar	30.11.2015 to 29.11.2020	243

The Election Commission of India (hereinafter ECI) is committed to hold free, fair and safe election to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar before the cessation of its term, in exercise of the authority and powers conferred upon under Article 324 read with Article 172 (1) of the Constitution of India and Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

#### **1. Assembly Constituencies-**

The total number of Assembly Constituencies in the State of Bihar 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
Bihar	243	38	2

#### **2. Broad Guidelines to be followed during entire election processes for all persons-**

- 1) Every person shall wear face mask during every election related activity.
- 2) At the entry of hall/ room/ premises used for election purposes:
  - (a) Thermal Scanning of all persons shall be carried out;
  - (b) Sanitizer shall be made available at all locations.

- 3) Social distancing shall be maintained as per the extant COVID-19 guidelines of the State Govt. and Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 4) As far as practicable, large halls should be identified and utilized to ensure social distancing norms.
- 5) Adequate number of vehicles shall be mobilized for movement of polling personnel, security personnel to ensure compliance of COVID-19 guidelines.

### **3. Highlights of Broad Guidelines to be followed during the Conduct of General Election during COVID-19-**

In view of spread of COVID-19, the Commission on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2020 has issued a broad guidelines, which is to be followed strictly during the conduct of election, which is annexed here with as **Annexure-2**.

1. The Commission has revised the norms of number of persons accompanying the candidate for submission of Nominations is restricted to 2 (two) instead of 5 (five) persons.
2. The number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to 2 (two) instead of 3 (three) vehicles.
3. It has also created facility for filing in the nomination form and the affidavit online and submission of same after taking print before the RO concerned.
4. For the first time, the candidates will be able to deposit security amount for contesting the elections online.
5. Keeping the containment guidelines in view, the Commission has limited the number of persons including candidate for door to door campaign to 5 (five).
6. The convoy of vehicles in road show should be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour instead of gap of 100 meters.
7. Public meeting and road shows shall be permissible with suitable instructions subject to containment instructions issued by the MHA/State.
8. Face Mask, Sanitizer, Thermal scanners, gloves, Face shield and PPE kits shall be used during the electoral process ensuring social distancing norms.
9. The Chief Electoral Officer of the State, has been directed to make a comprehensive State Election Plan following the guidelines relating to arrangement and preventive

measures, in consultation with Nodal Officer for COVID-19 in the state, to conduct General Elections, during the period of containment measures for COVID-19. Similarly, the District Election Officers shall make comprehensive District Election Plan relating to arrangement and preventive measures in consultation with Nodal Officer for COVID in their district to conduct election.

#### **4. 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, health and fidelity. The Commission had directed the State of Bihar election machinery to ensure a smooth, effective, inclusive and time-bound completion of Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls with reference to 01.01.2020 as the qualifying date, so as to ensure that all eligible but un-enrolled citizens in the State are duly registered in the Electoral Rolls. The final publication of electoral roll was done on 07.02.2020. Special efforts were made to identify the critical gaps in the electoral rolls and targeted SVEEP activities were carried out to address them.

Special efforts were made to enroll those eligible citizens (returnee migrants), who returned to the State during last few months. Chief Electoral Officer has reported that more than 2.3 lakh such eligible citizen got enrolled in this period in this category. Approximately, 14 lakhs such citizens were already found in the e-roll.

For the purpose of wider – publicity among citizens – media, political parties, contesting candidates and other stakeholders last date for filing of Form-6 each phase of elections, all Forms-6 received by that date, will be disposed of and eligible applicants added in the electoral rolls on the last date of making nominations.

As per the electoral roll data received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar w.r.t 01.01.2020 as the qualifying date, the number of electors in the State of Bihar is:

<b>State</b>	<b>No. of General electors</b>	<b>No. of Service Voters</b>	<b>Total No. of electors as per electoral rolls as on 23.09.2020</b>
<b>Bihar</b>	<b>7,27,66,986</b>	<b>1,60,410</b>	<b>7,29,27,396</b>

## **1) Photo Electoral Rolls and Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC):**

Photo Electoral Rolls and Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) will be used during the General Election and photo percentage in Photo Electoral Rolls of Bihar is as under:

<b>State</b>	<b>Use of Photo Electoral Rolls (%)</b>	<b>Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) Coverage (%)</b>
<b>Bihar</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **2) Photo Voter Slips (PVS)**

To facilitate the voters to know at which serial number of electoral roll of which particular polling station he/she is enrolled as a voter, the Commission has directed that official voter slip bearing the Photo of the elector (wherever present in the roll) will be distributed at least 5 days before the date of poll to all enrolled electors by the District Election Officer (DEO) and a very close and rigorous monitoring of the distribution process shall be done by the DEO and General Observer concerned.

## **3) Identification of Voters at Polling Stations –**

For identification of voters at Polling Station, the Voter shall present his EPIC or any of the following identification documents approved by the Commission along with the Photo Voter Slips:

- i. Passport
- ii. Driving License
- iii. Service Identity Cards with photograph issued to employees by
- iv. Passbooks with photograph issued by Bank/Post Office.
- v. PAN Card
- vi. Smart Card issued by RGI under NPR
- vii. MNREGA Job Card
- viii. Health Insurance Smart Card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour
- ix. Pension document with photograph

- x. Official identity cards issued to MPs/MLAs/MLCs and
- xi. Aadhar Card

#### **4) Braille Photo Voter Slips:**

To ensure ease of participation and active engagement of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the election process, the Commission has directed to issue Accessible Photo Voter Slips with Braille Features to Persons with Visual Impairment, over and above normal Photo Voter Slips to be issued.

#### **5) Voter Guide:**

In this election, a Voter Guide (in Hindi / English) shall be handed over to every elector's 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 Don'ts for voters at the polling station. This Voter Guide Brochure will be distributed along with the Photo Voter Slips by the BLOs.

### **5. Nomination Process-** Brief description about filing of nomination are as given below:

- I. Additional options to facilitate online mode in nomination are being provided:
  - 1) Nomination form will also be available online on the website of CEO/DEO. Any intending candidate may fill in it online and its print may be taken for submitting before the Returning Officer as specified in Form-1 (Rule-3 of Conduct of Election Rules 1961).
  - 2) Affidavit may also be filled in online on the website of CEO/DEO and its print can be taken and after notarization it may be submitted along with the nomination form before the Returning Officer.
  - 3) 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.
  - 4) Candidate may have the option to seek his/her elector certification for the purpose of nomination online.

**II. Further, Commission has directed the following:**

- 1) Number of persons to accompany candidate for submission of Nomination is restricted to two (2) instead of five (5). (This is in supersession of existing Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019)
- 2) Number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to two (2) instead of three (3). (This is in supersession of existing Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019)
- 3) Returning Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation following social distancing norms.
- 4) Returning Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates.
- 5) Large space for waiting for candidate(s) should be arranged.
- 6) 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.

**6. Polling Stations and Special Facilitation-**

**1) Maximum No. of electors in Polling Station**

There shall be maximum 1000 electors instead of 1500 electors in a polling station.  
(Commission's Instruction No.23/SEC/2020-ERS, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)

The number of Polling Stations in the State of Bihar is as follows:

No. of Polling Stations in 2015	No. of Polling Stations in 2020	% Increase in No. of Polling Stations
65,367	1,06,526	62.96%

**Average number of electors at a Polling Station has reduced to 684 in 2020 from 1026 in 2015.**

**2) Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at Polling Stations:**

The Commission has issued instructions to the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar to ensure that every Polling Station shall have good access road 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

appropriate gradient for the PwD electors and a standard voting compartment etc. This will be further supplemented with facilities like sanitisers, scanner, etc.

### **3) Polling Station Arrangements**

In view of COVID-19 situation, the Commission has issued detailed instructions for assured minimum facilities at each polling station, the following additional facilities/steps shall be taken:

- (1) Mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, preferably, a day before the poll.
- (2) Thermal Scanner at the entry point of every polling station location.
- (3) Thermal Checking of voters at entry point of polling station location/Polling station, either by polling staff or Para Medical staff or Asha worker.
- (4) If temperature is above the set norms of MoHFW at first reading, then it will be checked twice and if it remains, then the elector shall be provided with token/certificate and will be asked to come for voting at the last hour of poll. At the last hour of poll, such electors shall be facilitated voting, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures.
- (5) Help Desk for distribution of token to the voters of first come first basis so that they do not wait in the queue.
- (6) Marker to demonstrate social distancing for queue.
- (7) Earmarking circle for 15-20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) distance for voters standing in the queue depending on the availability of space. There shall be three queues each, for male, female, and PwD/ Senior citizen voters.
- (8) The services of BLOs, volunteers etc may be engaged to monitor and regulate social distancing norms strictly.
- (9) One shaded waiting areas with chairs, dari etc. will be provided, for male and female separately, within the polling station premises so that voters can participate in voting without safety concerns.
- (10) Wherever possible, Booth App shall be used at the polling station.
- (11) Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
- (12) Face Masks in reserves for those electors who are not carrying the mask will be kept.
- (13) Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations.

- (14) Sitting arrangement in polling station for the polling personnel and polling agents shall be made as per the norms of social distancing.
- (15) If polling agent or counting agent is having temperature above the prescribed limit, then their reliever shall be allowed by Presiding Officer, who will keep a record accordingly.
- (16) During the process of identification of voter, the voters will require to lower the facemask for identification, when required.
- (17) At any given time, only 1(one) voter shall be allowed to stand in front of each polling official maintaining norms of social distancing.
- (18) Hand gloves shall be provided to the voter, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.
- (19) Sanitizers shall be kept inside the booth at appropriate locations with clear direction for the use by voters.
- (20) COVID-19 patients who are quarantined will be allowed to cast their vote at the last hour of the poll day at their respective Polling Stations, under the supervision of health authorities, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures. Sector Magistrates shall coordinate this in their allocated polling stations. Record of such electors shall be maintained by the Presiding Officer.
- (21) Voters, who are residing in the area notified as containment zone, separate guidelines are being issued.
- (22) Proper mechanism of collection and disposal of waste / used gloves shall be put in place at each Polling Station.

#### **4) Facilitation for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Senior Citizens:**

In Bihar, all polling stations are located at ground floor and sturdy ramps of proper gradient are provided for the convenience of differently abled electors with wheelchairs. Further, in order to provide targeted and need-based facilitation to differently-abled voters, the Commission has directed that all Persons with Disabilities 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. 6,83,266 electors

belonging to PwD category have been identified in the State of Bihar till date. Identified PWD electors will be assisted by volunteers appointed by RO/DEO. Special facilitation will be made for PWD 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 station 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 special needs of the differently abled electors. The PwD electors can request for the wheelchair facility by using the PwD Mobile App available from the Google Play store.

The Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) that there should be proper transport facility for PwD electors in each and every polling station on the day of poll. Each and every PwD elector will be provided free pass on public transport on poll day.

## **5) Voter Facilitation Posters:**

In order to fulfil the statutory requirements under Rule 31 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and to provide accurate and relevant information for voter awareness and information at each polling station, the Commission has also directed that uniform and standardized Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP)(total of FOUR (4) Posters) shall be displayed on all Polling Stations for greater facilitation and awareness of the voters. The Commission has directed that these four VFPs shall be prominently displayed at each polling booth in the poll-going State. Additionally, Chief Electoral Officer will ensure display of COVID-19 related safety measures for the voters at each Polling Station for voters' awareness.

## **6) 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.

Alphabetic locator generated with ERO Net is placed at VAB to search the name easily and to know the serial number in the Electoral Roll.

## **7) Standardized Voting Compartment to ensure Secrecy of Voting:**

In order to maintain the secrecy of vote at the time of poll and to achieve uniformity in use of voting compartments, the Commission revised instructions on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2016 to increase the height of the Voting Compartments to 30 inches and also directed that the Voting Compartment should be placed on a table whose height shall be 30 inches. 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, ensure absolute secrecy of vote and eliminate aberrations and non-uniformity in the preparation of Voting Compartment inside the polling booths.

## **7. Distribution and Collection of Election Material-**

- 1) Large halls/spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material.
- 2) As far as practicable, it should be organized in decentralized manner.
- 3) Prior staggered time should be allocated to the polling teams for distribution/collection of election material.

## **8. Counting of votes-** The Commission has issued following guidelines in view of COVID-19-

- 1) Strong Room shall be sanitized before the storage of polled EVMs.
- 2) Social Distancing and other safety norms shall be followed for each activity.
- 3) Not more than 7 counting tables instead of 14 counting tables should be allowed in a counting hall. Hence, counting of votes of a constituency may be considered at 3-4 halls by appointing additional Assistant Returning Officers.  
(In supersession of instructions dated 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

- 4) Carrying cases of CUs/VVPATs should be sanitized before placing over counting tables.
- 5) Display of result from the Control Units may be displayed on a large screen to avoid accommodation of large number of counting agents.
- 6) The counting centres shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.
- 7) For counting of Postal Ballots, additional number of AROs may be required. If required, Postal Ballots may also be counted in a separate hall under the supervision of the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning officer.

## **9. Campaign by the political parties/contesting candidates-**

- 1) Door to Door Campaign-** Subject to any other restriction(s) including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 (five) persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, is allowed to do door to door campaigning.
- 2) Road Shows -** The convoy of vehicles should be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour instead of gap of 100 meters. (In supersession of Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019)
- 3) Election Meetings -** Public gatherings/ rallies may be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. District Election Officer should take following steps for this purpose:
  - (a) District Election Officer should, in advance, identify dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked Entry/Exit points.
  - (b) In all such identified grounds, the District Election Officer should, in advance, put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees.
  - (c) Nodal District Health Officer should be involved in the process to ensure that all COVID-19 related guidelines are adhered to by all concerned in the district.
  - (d) District Election Officer and District Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings.

- (e) DEO should depute Sector Health Regulators to oversee that COVID-19 instructions/guidelines are being followed during these meetings.
- (f) The political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities.
- (g) Allocation of public spaces must be done using Suvidha app in the manner already prescribed by Commission.
- (h) **Non-compliance of Instructions** – *Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceed against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable, as specified in Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2020 of Ministry of Home Affairs.* District Election Officer should bring this to the notice of all concerned.

## **10. New Initiatives for PwD Voters and Senior Citizens above 80 years in view of COVID-19:**

### **1) Postal Ballot-**

Option of Postal Ballot facility has been extended to the electors of following categories:

- (1) Electors, who are marked as Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- (2) Electors above the age of 80 years
- (3) Electors employed in notified Essential services
- (4) Electors who are COVID- 19 positive/suspect as certified by competent authority and are in quarantine (home/institutional)
- (5) By a notification dated 22.10.2019 of the Ministry of Law & Justice, the Conduct of Election Rules have been amended on the recommendation of the Commission to enable “absentee voters” to vote by postal ballot. Electors on duty in polling station as may be notified by the Commission under section 60 (c) of R.P. Act 1951, electors who are above 80 years of age and the electors marked as Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Roll will have the option to seek postal ballot paper for casting their vote.
- (6) All such voters in the above categories will have to apply for the Postal Ballot

within 5 days of notification for election in their Assembly Constituencies, if they wish to use the option of Postal Ballot for voting.

- (7) Commission has directed to the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar to take necessary steps for the dissemination of information and facilitation to the above categories of Voters.
- (8) This facility of Absentee Voter status was provided for the first time in the country to PwD and 80+ voters of total 7 Assembly Constituencies in Jharkhand
- (9) The Commission has now decided to extend this facility in all 243 Assembly Constituencies in the Bihar.

## **11. Polling stations managed by women-**

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 managed exclusively by women shall be set up in every Assembly Constituency in Bihar. In such stations all election staff, including police and security personnel, will be women.

## **12. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs):**

### **(1) Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs)**

The Commission has decided to use Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) along with Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at every polling station in the General Election to Legislative Assembly of Bihar to enhance the transparency and credibility of the election process as VVPAT allows the voter to verify his/her vote. The Commission has already made arrangements to ensure availability of adequate number of EVMs and VVPATs for the smooth conduct of elections.

<b>Deployment of EVMs and VVPATs for General Election to Legislative Assembly of Bihar</b>				
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Name of State</b>	<b>BUs</b>	<b>CUs</b>	<b>VVPATs</b>
1.	Bihar	1.89 lakh	1.41 lakh	1.73 lakh

## **(2) Randomization of EVMs and VVPATs**

EVMs/VVPATs are randomized twice using “EVM Management System (EMS)” while being allocated to an Assembly and then to a polling booth ruling out any fixed allocation. Lists of randomized EVMs/VVPATs are also shared with political parties/candidates. During the process of candidate setting on the EVMs, Ballot Paper is fixed on the Balloting Unit and the EVMs are prepared. The sequence of contesting candidates are placed alphabetically on the ballot paper, first for National and State Parties, followed by other State Registered Parties, followed by independents and NOTA. Thus, the sequence in which the candidates appear on the BU is contingent on the names of the candidates and their party affiliation and cannot be ascertained beforehand. It is therefore clear that serial number of any political party candidate is not fixed or pre-determined in all the constituencies of the State. Hence, till candidate setting, none, not even Returning Officer or District Election Officer or Chief Electoral Officer or the Commission could know which button on which Balloting Unit will be assigned to which candidate.

## **(3) Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs**

After finalization of list of the contesting candidates, commissioning (candidate setting) of EVMs and VVPATs is done in the presence of the contesting candidates/their representatives. After commissioning (candidate setting) of EVMs and VVPATs, in every EVM and VVPAT, mock poll with one vote to each candidate 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.

## **(4) Mock Poll on Poll Day**

- (i) On poll day, 90 minutes before start of the actual poll, a mock poll is

conducted by casting at least 50 votes 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.

- (ii) Immediately after mock poll, 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. The Presiding Officer also ensures that all mock poll slips shall be taken out from the VVPAT and kept in separate marked envelope before the start of Poll.
- (iii) After mock poll, EVMs and VVPATs are sealed in the presence of polling agents and signature of polling agents are obtained on seals.

#### **(5) Poll Day & Storage of polled EVMs and VVPATs at Strong Rooms**

- (i) On poll day a copy of the Form-17C 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 candidate.
- (ii) After completion of poll, 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.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) Candidates or their representatives can also camp in front of the strong room. These strong rooms are guarded 24x7 in multilayers, with CCTV facilities.

#### **(6) Counting of Votes at Counting Centres**

- (i) The polled EVMs are brought to the Counting Centres under security under CCTV coverage and in presence of candidates/their agents.
- (ii) On the day of counting, strong room opened in the presence of Candidates,

RO and Observer under videography.

- (iii) Round-wise CUs are brought to the counting tables from Strong Rooms under continuous CCTV Coverage.
- (iv) On the counting day, before retrieving the result from the Control Units, the seals are verified, and unique serial numbers of CU is tallied before counting agents deputed by the candidates.
- (v) On counting day, counting agents can verify the polled votes displayed on CU with that of Form-17C. Candidate-wise polled votes are recorded in part-II of Form-17 C and signature of counting agents are obtained thereof.
- (vi) EVMs & VVPATs are stored back in Strong Room in the presence of candidates/their representatives till the completion of the Election Petition period.

**(7) Mandatory Verification of VVPAT Paper Slip-**

In pursuance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's order dated 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2019, the Commission has also mandated that VVPAT slips count of Five (5) randomly selected Polling Stations in each Assembly Constituency of the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, by the Returning Officer, by Draw of Lot in presence of all candidates, shall be done for verification of the result obtained from the Control Unit. This mandatory verification of VVPAT slip count of five (5) polling stations in each Assembly Constituency shall be in addition to the provisions of Rule 56(D) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

**(8) None of the Above (NOTA) in EVMs and VVPATs:**

As usual, there will be 'None of the Above' option for the elections. On the BUs, below the name of the last candidate, there will 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. Similarly, on Posted Ballot Papers also 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 programmes to bring this option to the knowledge of voters and all other stakeholders.

### **13. 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.

In view of situation of COVID-19, Timing for 3rd randomization of polling staff be increased from 24 hrs to 72 hrs in order to avoid large gathering of polling staff at dispatch centres. As far as practicable, despatch and receipt of polling teams shall be organised in decentralised and staggered manner.

### **14. Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for Service Voter-**

During Special Summary Revision of last part of electoral rolls with reference to 01.01.2020 as the qualifying date, efforts have been taken by the Commission to maximize the enrollment of service voters with correct particulars.

Recently concluded General Election to Lok Sabha in May 2019, ETPBS was used in all States for all Parliamentary Constituencies and record turnout of about 61 percent was seen. The Commission has decided to use ETPBS for Service Voters in ensuing Assembly Election of Bihar.

### **15. Affidavits of Candidates-**

#### **(1) All Columns to be filled in:**

In pursuance of the judgment dated 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

**(2) Changes in the Format of Nomination Form and Affidavit in Form 26:**

Vide Notifications dated 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 and 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, Part IIIA of Nomination Forms 2A & 2B and Part II of Nomination Forms 2C, 2D & 2E have been amended. Affidavit in Form 26 has also been amended vide Notification dated 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 making provisions of (i) Mandatory disclosure of 'PAN' for candidates who have been allotted the number or to state clearly that 'No PAN allotted' for those candidates without a PAN; (ii) Details of total income as declared in the Income Tax return filed in the last 5 years to be declared for candidate, spouse and HUF; and dependents (iii) Details to be provided of Assets (Movable/immovable) held abroad including beneficial interest in any offshore entity/trust by self, spouse, HUF or Dependents. Copy of amended Nomination Forms and Affidavit are available on the Commission's website <https://eci.gov.in>> Menu > Candidate nomination & other Forms.

**(3) Eco-friendly elections-**

Commission has been asking all the political parties to use only environment-friendly material for campaign purposes since long. In this connection, on 26.02.2019, Commission again instructed that all political parties should take adequate steps and measures to not use single-use plastic as campaign materials (posters, banners etc.,) during the elections in the interest of human health and environment.

The Commission has issued advisories on several occasions urging political parties and candidates to avoid single-use plastic and non-biodegradable material in

their election campaign activities.

#### **(4) Advisory to Political Parties regarding silence period-**

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 10<sup>th</sup> 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. The Commission called 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 RP Act, 1951, and their leaders and cadres do not commit any act that may violate the spirit of Section 126.

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.

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.

#### **16. Candidates with Criminal Cases-**

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 in its website and also in newspapers and Television channel on three occasions.

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

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> publicity: Within first 4 days of withdrawal.
- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> publicity: Between next 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> days.
- c. 3<sup>rd</sup> publicity: From 9<sup>th</sup> day till the last day of campaign (the second day prior to date of poll)

*(Illustration: If the last date for withdrawal is 10<sup>th</sup> of the month and poll is on 24<sup>th</sup> of the Month, the first block for publishing of declaration shall be done between 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of the Month, second and third blocks shall be between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 (Lok Prahar Vs. Union of India & Others) and Writ Petition(Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.).

## **17. Political Parties setting up candidates with Criminal Cases-**

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.

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.

These details shall be published within 48 hours of the selection of the candidate or not less than two weeks before the first date for filing of nominations,

whichever is earlier. 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 compliances 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 instructions issued vide letter no. 3/4/2020/SDR/Vol.III dated 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 available on the Commission's website may kindly be seen.

## **18. Optional Postal Ballot facility for Absentee voters-**

Rule 27A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 has been amended vide Notifications dated 22.10.2019 and 19.06.2020. By the said two amendments "Absentee voters" have become entitled to vote by postal ballot. "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, senior citizens, persons with disability and COVID 19 suspect or affected persons certified by the competent authority. For the purposes of General Election in Bihar and bye-elections, Senior Citizens means electors of more than 80 years of age. Also, for General Election of Bihar, electors employed in notified essential services will have the option to vote at the Postal Ballot Centres, notified by the concerned Returning Officers.

## **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 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.

An innovative "bottom up" approach of booth level planning and management has been implemented in the Bihar where in Booth Level plans for Polling Stations have been prepared containing all information 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.

## **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 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 Bihar to coordinate with the officers of Telecommunication Department in the State headquarters, BSNL/MTNL authorities, the representatives of other leading service providers in the State so that network status in the State 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.

## **21. Model Code of Conduct-**

The 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 Bihar with regard to all candidates, political parties and the government of the said State. The Model Code of Conduct shall also be applicable to the Union Government in so far as announcements/policy decisions pertaining to/for the Bihar.

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 State has 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.

## **22. 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.

## **23. Measures to Prevent Public Nuisance-**

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 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.

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.

## **24. 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/her 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 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 the Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies and other vulnerable areas and critical polling stations as per the assessment of ground realities by the CEO of Bihar, 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 centres and for other purposes, as required.

The CEO will ensure a day-to-day monitoring of the activities and deployment of the CAPFs/SAP in the Bihar 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 election. The Commission will be constantly monitoring the ground situation closely and will take appropriate measures to ensure peaceful, free and fair polls in the State.

## **25. 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 Bihar 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 conducting route marches and undertaking other necessary confidence building measures

under the supervision of the Central Observers.

## **26. 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 State Police, Investigation Directorate of Income Tax Deptt., Enforcement Directorate, Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND), DRI, RPF, Commercial Tax Department and Narcotics Control Bureau. State Excise Department has been asked to monitor production, distribution, sale and storage of liquor and inducements in the form of free goods during the election process. The functioning and operations of the Flying Squads/Mobile Teams shall be closely monitored using GPS Tracking & the use of c-VIGIL App. 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 Investigation Directorate of Income Tax Dept. has been asked to activate Air Intelligence Units in the airports of the State and also to gather intelligence and take necessary action to check movement of large sums of money in Bihar.

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

### **(1) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for seizure and release of cash:**

For the purpose of maintaining purity of elections, 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. In order to avoid inconvenience to the public and also for redressal of their grievances, if any, the Commission has issued instruction no. 76/Instructions/EEPS/2015/ Vol-II dated 29.05.2015 stating 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 (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.

**(2) 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.

**(3) Account Reconciliation Meeting:** In order to reduce litigation 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.

**(4) Accounting for 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 mentioned in their Abstract Statement of election expenses 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 their Statement of Election Expenses to be submitted by them to ECI (recognized political party)/ CEO (unrecognized political party) within 75 days of completion of Assembly Election.

**(5) 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 in Abstract Statement of Election Expenses have been amended and incorporated accordingly in the Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure

Monitoring.

**(6) 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 final accounts to the Commission/CEO within 75 days of the completion of such election. Such accounts will be uploaded on the website of the Commission for public viewing. For the sake of transparency and reconciliation of accounts of political parties and candidates, the political parties have to file a part Election Expenditure statement in addition to the final statement of election expenditure in respect of lump-sum payments made by the party to the candidate within 30 days after declaration of results of election to Legislative Assemblies in prescribed format.

**27. Effective use of Media-**

**(1) 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 to the CEO **of poll going State Bihar** to take the following measures for positive and progressive engagement and interaction with the media:

- i) Regular interaction with the media during the elections and maintaining an effective and positive line of communication with media at all times.
- ii) Effective steps to sensitize the media about the Election Code.
- iii) Authority letters will be issued to all accredited media for the polling day and day of counting.

The 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.

Media is also expected to follow all the extant guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)

regarding COVID-19 containment measures during all their election related coverage. Besides, the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2020 with regards to conduct of elections during COVID-19, shall also be applied while giving access to the media persons for the coverage of election process during polling and counting of votes etc.

**(2) 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 advertisement 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.

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

**(3) Use of Social Media in election:**

The Commission has clear guidelines with regards to use of social media by political parties and candidates in elections. Followings are the key points of these guidelines –

- i) Legal provisions relating to election campaigning shall also apply to social media in the same manner as they apply to any other media.
- ii) Candidates are required to furnish details of their social media account (if any) at the time of filing of nominations.
- iii) Since Social Media is also electronic media by definition, all political advertisement on Social Media will also require pre-certification from Media Certification & Monitoring Committees (MCMC).
- iv) Candidates and political parties shall include all expenditure on campaigning, including expenditure on advertisement on social media in their election expenditure account. This among other things shall include payments made

to internet companies and websites for carrying advertisements and also campaign related operational expenditure on making creative development of content, salaries and wages paid to the team of workers employed to maintain their social media account.

- v) All the provisions of Model Code of Conduct shall also apply to the content being posted on social media by candidates and political parties.

#### **(4) Monitoring of Electronic and Social Media:**

- (i) Voluntary Code of Ethics for Social Media:

On the lines of “Voluntary Code of Ethics” implemented during the Lok Sabha election 2019, IAMAI on behalf of its member social media platforms has agreed to observe “Voluntary Code of Ethics”.

- (ii) Monitoring on Electronic Media:

All the election management related news on all the major national and regional news channels during elections 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 CEOs concerned. Office of CEO will ascertain status on each and every item and file ATR/Status Report.

### **28. Training of Election Officials-**

A 15 days physical training programme at IIIDEM, New Delhi, for 15 newly appointed Sub Election Officers belonging to Bihar Election Services, was organized from 7<sup>th</sup> - 21st January, 2020 with one day local study tour. The program covered topics for the entire election spectrum.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, physical trainings for Election officials and State Level Master Trainer (SLMTs) for Bihar was not feasible to be organized at IIIDEM. IIIDEM therefore organized the training for all Bihar election officers including Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, from the month of June, 2020 through Video Conferencing.

CEO/DEO have been organising scheduled training for all layers of election officers on ground with the involvement of Master Trainers.

## **29. Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)-**

The Commission works on the premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind' in its endeavour to realize universal adult suffrage. As per extant directions of the Commission, State SVEEP Plan has been developed, approved and the implementation is being closely monitored.

The objective of SVEEP for the upcoming Bihar Legislative Assembly Election, 2020 in the State is to ensure the safe and enhanced participation of voters amidst the pandemic of COVID-19. The main pillars of SVEEP activities are COVID-19 Safety Awareness, increase in Voter registration and turnout, qualitative free participation, EVM-VVPAT awareness, sensitization of election staff, general public, political parties and the family members of PwDs electors for their participation, disseminating reliable and timely information.

In view of persistent situation of the pandemic, special outreach activities are being carried out to publicize the safety measures to be undertaken during elections. Mass gatherings and in-person contact are being avoided. Contactless and digital mediums for all outreach activities i.e Television, Social Media etc are being preferred. Specialized awareness campaigns for contactless awareness and demonstration of EVM-VVPAT *are being undertaken* in order to curtail the spread.

Voter Facilitation Centres are active in the State to facilitate voters. Voter Helpline – 1950 is active across the State to cater the voter's queries and in addition, "Voter Helpline App" has also been launched. SMS facility has been made available on 1950 to enable electors verify their names on the Electoral Roll (Voter List).

Steps have been taken up to ensure wide dissemination of COVID-19 safety measures, election related information & to ensure adequate facilitation and safety measures for enhancing participation of people in polling. Reminder services on poll days have been planned.

'Lowest turnout' Polling Stations have been identified, reasons for the low turnout analyzed and targeted interventions based on the findings for enhanced IMF

(Information, Motivation and Facilitation) have been rolled out to meet the objective of 'No voter to be Left Behind'.

## **30. Deployment of Central Observers-**

### **(1) General Observers**

The Commission will deploy General Observers in adequate number to ensure smooth conduct of election. The Observers will be asked to keep a close watch on every stage of the electoral process to ensure free and fair election.

### **(2) Police Observers.**

The Commission would deploy IPS officers as Police Observers at District/AC level, depending upon the need, sensitivity and assessment of ground situation of the District/AC, wherever required. 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.

### **(3) Special Observers.**

In exercise of the plenary powers conferred on it by Article 324 of the Constitution of India, the Commission deploys Special Observers who belong to All India Services and various Central Services. The over-arching spirit of deploying Special Observers is to objectively assess the poll preparedness, identify the critical gaps and guide the DEO/RO to ensure free and fair elections. By dint of their seniority, long experience in the administrative services, in-depth administrative experience, acumen and understanding Special Observers guide, advice and facilitate the efforts and initiatives of the DEO/RO in making necessary poll arrangements and conducting the election in a free, fair, transparent, peaceful and participatory manner.

### **(4) 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 on the ECI website (<https://eci.gov.in/>).

#### **(5) 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.

### **31. Use of ICT and Mobile Applications-**

The Commission has enhanced usage of Information and Communication Technology, ECI to usher in greater citizen participation and transparency. Use of digital technology will be enhanced and encouraged to deal with COVID- 19 pandemic. Following is a brief outline of the ICT applications to be used:

#### **1) Candidate Online Nomination:**

To facilitate filling of nominations, the Election Commission is introducing an online portal for filling the nomination & affidavit. The Candidate can visit <https://suvidha.eci.gov.in/> to create his/her account , file nomination , deposit the security money , 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 notarised and submit the application along with relevant documents to the Returning Officer in person. The application so printed from

Online Portal will contain an encrypted QR code. Upon presentation of the application in front of the Returning Officer, details are verified by RO using a specially designed QR code reader. As the software connects with the electoral database directly, upon filling EPIC Number, the system auto-fetches the details of candidates and proposers and pre-fills the details. Candidate also gets various alerts and notifications through the Portal and also through the SMS.

The Online Nomination Facility is an optional facility and the regular offline submission as prescribed under the law shall continue too.

**Candidate Permissions module:** Permission module allows the candidates, political parties or any representatives of the candidate to apply online for the permission 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 and also by using the **Suvidha Candidate App**.

In view of COVID-19, the Commission has directed that allocation of public spaces for meetings, rallies must be done using Suvidha app in as far as practicable.

The application will be available during elections for Candidates / Political Parties / Agents to download and use to track the nomination and permission status from the Google Play store:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=suvidha.eci.gov.in.candidateapp>

**Candidate Affidavit Portal:** The Complete list of Contesting Candidates with their profile, nomination status and the affidavits will be available for public view through Candidate Affidavit Portal: <https://affidavit.eci.gov.in/>

## **2) Single Form for Electoral Services (Voter Portal):**

To ease the process of form submission, Election Commission of India is launching a new 'Voter Portal' (<https://voterportal.eci.gov.in/>) to provide a seamless interface for registration, alteration in entries, deletion, change of address etc. Upon logging into the portal, the citizen is now presented with an interactive interface suggesting selection of choice based upon his previous selection.

The DIGI LOCKER has also been integrated with Voter Portal, so any issued document eligible as part of electoral form submission can directly be uploaded while submitting the form. The Voter Portal is integrated with the National Grievances Services Portal, by which all complaints can be submitted and viewed along with the forms.

The Voter Portal also integrates election related information relevant to the Voter. From his portal dashboard, a voter can see the election schedule, details of his Chief Electoral officer, District Election Officer, and Booth Level Officers., candidates who are contesting election in his constituency, their nomination status in real-time and their affidavits (assets, liabilities and criminal records). Thus a citizen can make informed choices.

On the day of the poll, the voter by entering the EPIC number will be able to see the number of people queued up in his/ her polling station, wherever Booth App is being used . Considering the COVID norms of social distancing, a voter can plan his visit to the polling station.

Voter Portal will also available in the Mobile app 'Voter Helpline App' from Google Play store and Apple App Store.

The application is available on both the Google Play Store:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eci.citizen&hl=en\\_IN](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eci.citizen&hl=en_IN) and App Store: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/voter-helpline/id1456535004>

### **3) Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for Service Voter:**

Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) will be transmitted through Electronic Means to the service voters. It enables the voters to cast their vote on an electronically received postal ballot from their preferred location, which is outside their originally assigned voting constituency. This system provides an easier option of facilitating voting by the electors as the time constraint for dispatch of postal ballot has been addressed using this system.

#### **4) cVIGIL Application for filing Model Code of Conduct Violation cases by citizen:**

cVIGIL provides time-stamped evidentiary proof of the Model Code of Conduct / Expenditure Violation by empowering every citizen to click a photo or video using his or her 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 users status reports within 100 minutes.

The Application is available on both the Google Play Store and App Store. URL for Android: [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=in.nic.eci.cvigil&hl=en\\_IN](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=in.nic.eci.cvigil&hl=en_IN) and IOS (App Store): <https://apps.apple.com/in/app/cvigil/id1455719541>

#### **5) Persons with Disability Application (PwD):**

PwD app is meant for Person with Disabilities. The PwD elector can make requests for marking them as PWD, request for new registration, request for migration, request for correction in EPIC details, request for wheelchair. It utilises the Accessibility features of mobile phones for voters with blindness and hearing disabilities. The Application is available on the Google Play Store and can be downloaded using the given link:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=pwd.eci.com.pwdapp&hl=en\\_IN](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=pwd.eci.com.pwdapp&hl=en_IN)  
and App Store: <https://apps.apple.com/in/app/pwd-app/id1497864568>

#### **6) Booth App:**

Booth App facilitates faster identification of voters using encrypted QR code, printed on photo voter slips, from the digital marked copy of the electors. This helps in reducing queue load, helps in faster polling and allows error-free recording of two hourly poll turnout with minimal intervention.

Now, in view of COVID-19 situation wherever possible, Booth App shall be used at the polling station. For information related to Booth App the website of the booth app is available i.e. <https://boothapp.eci.gov.in>.

## **7) Voter Turnout App:**

Voter Turnout App will be used to display real-time estimated provisional voter turnout details of each Assembly Constituency/ Parliamentary Constituency entered by Returning officer. The application can also be used by the media to capture live estimated voter turnout data. All phases of the elections will be displayed through this app in real-time. The application is available on the Google Play store [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=in.gov.eci.polturnout&hl=en\\_IN](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=in.gov.eci.polturnout&hl=en_IN)

## **8) ENCORE Counting:**

The ENCORE counting application <https://encore.eci.gov.in/> is an end-to-end application for returning officers to digitize the votes polled, tabulate the round-wise data and then take out various statutory reports of counting.

## **9) Results Website and Results Trends TV:**

The timely publication of the round-wise information is vital for establishing a single source of authentic 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 results are shown with the Infographics and displayed with auto-scroll panels through large display screens outside the counting hall or any public place.

**10) Expenditure monitoring:** It is part of ENCORE <https://encore.eci.gov.in/> for monitoring of day to day election expenditure incurred by the candidates, of each constituency. The account of election expenditure is required to be submitted within 30 days from the date of the declaration of the result, monitoring has to be done on a regular basis during the campaign period.

## **11) EVM Management System (EMS):**

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. This whole process will 'be done in the presence of Political Parties' representatives. The EVM Management System adds to the

transparency and ensures that there is no manual intervention at any level from the manufacturer to the polling stations.

### **32. 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.

### **33. Schedules of General Election**

The Commission has prepared the Schedules for holding General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar 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.

*In view of COVID-19, the Commission has decided to extend the poll timing by 1 hour in all ACs except in LWE areas.*

The Commission after considering all relevant aspects has decided to recommend to the Governor of the State of Bihar to issue notifications for the General Election under the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as per the **Annexure-1**.

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 General Assembly Election, 2020 in Bihar.

-Sd/-  
**(Y. STANDHOPE)**  
**SENIOR PRINCIPAL SECRETARY**

**SCHEDULE****A: Schedule for General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar:**

Poll Events	Phase-I (71 ACs)	Phase-II (94 ACs)	Phase-III (78 ACs)
<b>Date of Issue of Notification</b>	01.10.2020 (Thursday)	09.10.2020 (Friday)	13.10.2020 (Tuesday)
<b>Last date of making nomination</b>	08.10.2020 (Thursday)	16.10.2020 (Friday)	20.10.2020 (Tuesday)
<b>Date of Scrutiny</b>	09.10.2020 (Friday)	17.10.2020 (Saturday)	21.10.2020 (Wednesday)
<b>Last date of withdrawal</b>	12.10.2020 (Monday)	19.10.2020 (Monday)	23.10.2020 (Friday)
<b>Date of Poll</b>	28.10.2020 (Wednesday)	03.11.2020 (Tuesday)	07.11.2020 (Saturday)
<b>Date of Counting</b>	10.11.2020 (Tuesday)	10.11.2020 (Tuesday)	10.11.2020 (Tuesday)
<b>Date of completion</b>	12.11.2020 (Thursday)	12.11.2020 (Thursday)	12.11.2020 (Thursday)

**\*Details of ACs going to poll during the phases enclosed.**

**List of Seventy One (71) Assembly Constituencies going to polls in Phase-I as per Annexure-1:**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>No. &amp; Name of the Assembly Constituency</b>
1.	155- Kahalgaon
2.	157- Sultanganj
3.	159- Amarpur
4.	160- Dhoraiya (SC)
5.	161- Banka
6.	162- Katoria (ST)
7.	163- Belhar
8.	164- Tarapur
9.	165- Munger
10.	166- Jamalpur
11.	167- Suryagarha
12.	168- Lakhisarai
13.	169- Sheikhpura
14.	170- Barbigha
15.	178- Mokama
16.	179- Barh
17.	189- Masaurhi (SC)
18.	190- Paliganj
19.	191- Bikram
20.	192- Sandesh
21.	193- Barhara
22.	194- Arrah
23.	195- Agiaon (SC)
24.	196- Tarari
25.	197- Jagdishpur
26.	198- Shahpur

27.	199-	Brahampur
28.	200-	Buxar
29.	201-	Dumraon
30.	202-	Rajpur (SC)
31.	203-	Ramgarh
32.	204-	Mohania (SC)
33.	205-	Bhabua
34.	206-	Chainpur
35.	207-	Chenari (SC)
36.	208-	Sasaram
37.	209-	Kargahar
38.	210-	Dinara
39.	211-	Nokha
40.	212-	Dehri
41.	213-	Karakat
42.	214-	Arwal
43.	215-	Kurtha
44.	216-	Jehanabad
45.	217-	Ghosi
46.	218-	Makhdumpur (SC)
47.	219-	Goh
48.	220-	Obra
49.	221-	Nabinagar
50.	222-	Kutumba (SC)
51.	223-	Aurangabad
52.	224-	Rafiganj
53.	225-	Gurua
54.	226-	Sherghati
55.	227-	Imamganj (SC)
56.	228-	Barachatti (SC)

57.	229- Bodh Gaya (SC)
58.	230- Gaya Town
59.	231- Tikari
60.	232- Belaganj
61.	233- Atri
62.	234- Wazirganj
63.	235- Rajauli (SC)
64.	236- Hisua
65.	237- Nawada
66.	238- Gobindpur
67.	239- Warsaliganj
68.	240- Sikandra (SC)
69.	241- Jamui
70.	242- Jhajha
71.	243- Chakai

**List of Ninety Four (94) Assembly Constituencies going to polls in Phase-II as per Annexure-1:**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>No. &amp; Name of the Assembly Constituency</b>
1.	6- Nautan
2.	7- Chanpatia
3.	8- Bettiah
4.	13- Harsidhi (SC)
5.	14- Govindganj
6.	15- Kesaria
7.	16- Kalyanpur
8.	17- Pipra
9.	18- Madhuban
10.	22- Sheohar
11.	28- Sitamarhi
12.	29- Runnisaidpur
13.	30- Belsand
14.	36- Madhubani
15.	37- Rajnagar (SC)
16.	38- Jhanjharpur
17.	39- Phulparas
18.	78- Kusheshwar Asthan (SC)
19.	79- Gaura Bauram
20.	80- Benipur
21.	81- Alinagar
22.	82- Darbhanga Rural
23.	90- Minapur
24.	95- Kanti
25.	96- Baruraj
26.	97- Paroo

27.	98-	Sahebganj
28.	99-	Baikunthpur
29.	100-	Barauli
30.	101-	Gopalganj
31.	102-	Kuchaikote
32.	103-	Bhore (SC)
33.	104-	Hathua
34.	105-	Siwan
35.	106-	Ziradei
36.	107-	Darauli (SC)
37.	108-	Raghunathpur
38.	109-	Daraunda
39.	110-	Barharia
40.	111-	Goriakothi
41.	112-	Maharajganj
42.	113-	Ekma
43.	114-	Manjhi
44.	115-	Baniapur
45.	116-	Taraiya
46.	117-	Marhaura
47.	118-	Chapra
48.	119-	Garkha (SC)
49.	120-	Amnour
50.	121-	Parsa
51.	122-	Sonepur
52.	123-	Hajipur
53.	124-	Lalganj
54.	125-	Vaishali
55.	127-	Raja Pakar (SC)
56.	128-	Raghopur

57.	129-	Mahnar
58.	134-	Ujiarpur
59.	137-	Mohiuddinnagar
60.	138-	Bibhutipur
61.	139-	Rosera (SC)
62.	140-	Hasanpur
63.	141-	Cheria-Bariarpur
64.	142-	Bachhwara
65.	143-	Teghra
66.	144-	Matihani
67.	145-	Sahebpur Kamal
68.	146-	Begusarai
69.	147-	Bakhri (SC)
70.	148-	Alauli (SC)
71.	149-	Khagaria
72.	150-	Beldaur
73.	151-	Parbatta
74.	152-	Bihpur
75.	153-	Gopalpur
76.	154-	Pirpainti (SC)
77.	156-	Bhagalpur
78.	158-	Nathnagar
79.	171-	Asthawan
80.	172-	Biharsharif
81.	173-	Rajgir (SC)
82.	174-	Islampur
83.	175-	Hilsa
84.	176-	Nalanda
85.	177-	Harnaut
86.	180-	Bakhtiarpur

87.	181- Digha
88.	182- Bankipur
89.	183- Kumhrar
90.	184- Patna Sahib
91.	185- Fatuha
92.	186- Danapur
93.	187- Maner
94.	188- Phulwari (SC)

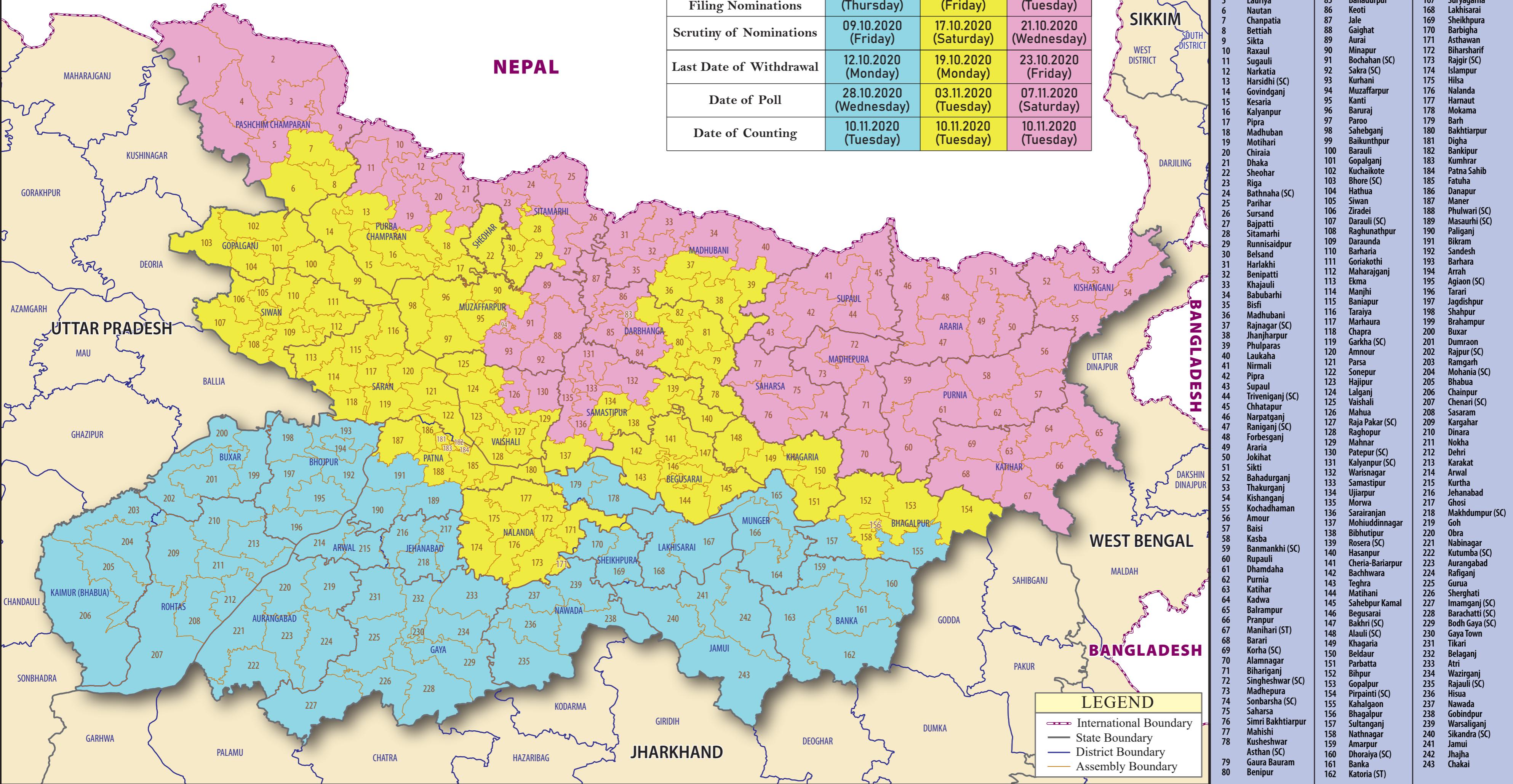
**List of Seventy Eight (78) Assembly Constituencies going to polls in Phase-III as per Annexure-1:**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>No. &amp; Name of the Assembly Constituency</b>
1.	1- Valmiki Nagar
2.	2- Ramnagar (SC)
3.	3- Narkatiaganj
4.	4- Bagaha
5.	5- Lauriya
6.	9- Sikta
7.	10- Raxaul
8.	11- Sugauli
9.	12- Narkatia
10.	19- Motihari
11.	20- Chiraia
12.	21- Dhaka
13.	23- Riga
14.	24- Bathnaha (SC)
15.	25- Parihar
16.	26- Sursand
17.	27- Bajpatti
18.	31- Harlakhi
19.	32- Benipatti
20.	33- Khajauli
21.	34- Babubarhi
22.	35- Bisfi
23.	40- Laukaha
24.	41- Nirmali
25.	42- Pipra
26.	43- Supaul

27.	44- Triveniganj (SC)
28.	45- Chhatapur
29.	46- Narpatganj
30.	47- Raniganj (SC)
31.	48- Forbesganj
32.	49- Araria
33.	50- Jokihat
34.	51- Sikti
35.	52- Bahadurganj
36.	53- Thakurganj
37.	54- Kishanganj
38.	55- Kochadhaman
39.	56- Amour
40.	57- Baisi
41.	58- Kasba
42.	59- Banmankhi (SC)
43.	60- Rupauli
44.	61- Dhamdaha
45.	62- Purnia
46.	63- Katihar
47.	64- Kadwa
48.	65- Balrampur
49.	66- Pranpur
50.	67- Manihari (ST)
51.	68- Barari
52.	69- Korha (SC)
53.	70- Alamnagar
54.	71- Bihariganj
55.	72- Singheshwar (SC)
56.	73- Madhepura

57.	74- Sonbarsha (SC)
58.	75- Saharsa
59.	76- Simri Bakhtiarpur
60.	77- Mahishi
61.	83- Darbhanga
62.	84- Hayaghat
63.	85- Bahadurpur
64.	86- Keoti
65.	87- Jale
66.	88- Gaighat
67.	89- Aurai
68.	91- Bochahan (SC)
69.	92- Sakra (SC)
70.	93- Kurhani
71.	94- Muzaffarpur
72.	126- Mahua
73.	130- Patepur (SC)
74.	131- Kalyanpur (SC)
75.	132- Warisnagar
76.	133- Samastipur
77.	135- Morwa
78.	136- Sarairanjan

# Bihar Legislative Assembly General Elections-2020



**Broad Guidelines for Conduct of General Elections/Bye-elections during COVID-19**

After onset of COVID-19 pandemic in India, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) have been issuing guidelines from time to time. In their latest circular dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2020, Ministry of Home Affairs has issued comprehensive guidelines/directives to be followed countrywide. Similarly, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has also issued SOP on disinfection, sanitization, and prevention for containing COVID-19.

The Commission on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2020, sought views/suggestions of National/State Political Parties till 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2020, which on request, Commission further extended the period till 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. The Commission has considered the views/suggestions received from various Political Parties and Chief Electoral Officers of States/UTs on election campaign and public meetings.

Keeping in view the above, following broad guidelines have been framed with respect to key activities of the conduct of elections, considering the upcoming General Elections and bye-elections in various States/UTs during the period of COVID-19:

Sl.No.	
1.	<p><b><u>General Guidelines to be followed during entire election processes for all persons</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Every person shall wear face mask during every election related activity.</li><li>2) At the entry of hall/ room/ premises used for election purposes:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) Thermal Scanning of all persons shall be carried out;</li><li>(b) Sanitizer, soap and water shall be made available.</li></ol></li><li>3) Social distancing shall be maintained as per the extant COVID-19 guidelines of the State Govt. and Ministry of Home Affairs.</li><li>4) As far as practicable, large halls should be identified and utilized to ensure social distancing norms.</li></ol>

	5) Adequate number of vehicles shall be mobilized for movement of polling personnel, security personnel to ensure compliance of COVID-19 guidelines.
2.	<p><b><u>Nodal Health Officer</u></b></p> <p>Nodal Health Officer shall be designated for the State, the District and the Assembly Constituency to oversee COVID-19 related arrangements and, preventive measures during entire electoral process.</p>
3.	<p><b><u>EVMs/VVPATs</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) First &amp; Second randomization and preparation of EVMs/VVPATs shall be done in large halls.</li> <li>2) Sanitizers shall be provided in sufficient quantity for use during the process.</li> <li>3) Gloves shall be made available to each official handling EVM/VVPAT.</li> </ol>
4.	<p><b><u>Training and capacity Building</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) As far as practicable, training of election officials will be organized in decentralized manner at large halls.</li> <li>2) Training for election officials may be organized through online mode.</li> <li>3) All PPTs, training materials, relevant documents, topic wise video clips, question papers for self-assessment may be uploaded in app/ portal so that any election official can access it as per requirement.</li> <li>4) Sufficient number of Polling/Counting/Poll related staffs shall also be kept in reserve by DEO/RO, to replace in case any polling personnel displays COVID-19 symptoms.</li> </ol>
5.	<p><b><u>Nomination Process</u></b></p> <p>I. Following additional options to facilitate online mode are hereby provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Nomination form will also be available online on the website of CEO/DEO. An intending candidate may fill in it online and its print may be taken for submitting before the Returning Officer as specified in Form-1 (Rule-3 of Conduct of Election Rules 1961).</li> <li>2) Affidavit may also be filled in online on the website of CEO/DEO and its print can be taken and after notarization it may be submitted along with the nomination form before the Returning Officer.</li> </ol>

	<p>3) Candidate may deposit security money through <b>online mode</b> at the designated platform. However, a candidate will continue to have the option of deposit in cash in the treasury.</p> <p>4) Candidate may have the option to seek his/her elector certification for the purpose of nomination online.</p> <p><b>II. Further, Commission has directed:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Number of persons to accompany candidate for submission of Nomination is restricted to two (2). (This is in supersession of existing <b>Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019</b>)</li> <li>2) Number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to two (2). (This is in supersession of existing <b>Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019</b>)</li> <li>3) Returning Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation following social distancing norms.</li> <li>4) Returning Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates.</li> <li>5) Large space for waiting for candidate(s) should be arranged.</li> <li>6) 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.</li> </ol>
6.	<p><b><u>Election Material</u></b></p> <p>Election Material Kit will be prepared in a spacious and sufficiently large hall following all safety, sanitation and social distancing measures.</p>
7.	<p><b><u>Distribution and Collection of Election Material</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Large halls/spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material.</li> <li>2) As far as practicable, it should be organized in decentralized manner.</li> <li>3) Prior staggered time should be allocated to the polling teams for distribution/collection of election material.</li> </ol>

8.	<p><b><u>Timing of 3<sup>rd</sup> randomization:</u></b></p> <p>Timing for 3rd randomization of polling staff be increased from 24 hrs to 72 hrs in order to avoid large gathering of polling staff at dispatch centres.</p> <p>(This is in supersession of ECI No. 464/Inst/2008/EPS dated 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2008)</p>
9.	<p><b><u>No. of electors in Polling Station</u></b></p> <p>There shall be maximum 1000 electors instead of 1500 electors in a polling station.</p> <p><b>(Commission's Instruction No.23/SEC/2020-ERS, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2020)</b></p>
10.	<p><b><u>Polling Station Arrangements</u></b></p> <p>Commission has issued detailed instructions for assured minimum facilities at each polling station. Now, in view of COVID-19 situation, following additional facilities/steps should be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, preferably, a day before the poll.</li> <li>2) Thermal Scanner at the entry point of every polling station location.</li> <li>3) Thermal Checking of voters at entry point of polling station location/Polling station, either by polling staff or Para Medical staff or Asha worker.</li> <li>4) <b>If temperature is above the set norms of MoHFW at first reading, then it will be checked twice and if it remains, then the elector shall be provided with token/certificate and will be asked to come for voting at the last hour of poll. At the last hour of poll, such electors shall be facilitated voting, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures.</b></li> <li>5) Help Desk for distribution of token to the voters of first come first basis so that they do not wait in the queue.</li> <li>6) Marker to demonstrate social distancing for queue.</li> <li>7) Earmarking circle for 15-20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) distance for voters standing in the queue depending on the availability of space. There shall be three queues each, for male, female, and PwD/ Senior citizen voters.</li> <li>8) The services of BLOs, volunteers etc may be engaged to monitor and regulate social distancing norms strictly.</li> </ul>

- 9) One shaded waiting areas with chairs, dari etc. will be provided, for male and female separately, within the polling station premises so that voters can participate in voting without safety concerns.
- 10) Wherever possible, Booth App shall be used at the polling station.
- 11) Soap and Water shall be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
- 12) Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
- 13) Face Masks in reserves for those electors who are not carrying the mask will be kept.
- 14) Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations.
- 15) Sitting arrangement in polling station for the polling personnel and polling agents shall be made as per the norms of social distancing.
- 16) If polling agent or counting agent is having temperature above the prescribed limit, then their reliever shall be allowed by Presiding Officer, who will keep a record accordingly.
- 17) During the process of identification of voter, the voters will require to lower the facemask for identification, when required.
- 18) At any given time, only 1(one) voter shall be allowed to stand in front of each polling official maintaining social distance.
- 19) Hand gloves shall be provided to the voter, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.
- 20) Sanitizers shall be kept inside the booth at appropriate locations with clear direction for the use by voters.
- 21) COVID-19 patients who are quarantined will be allowed to cast their vote **at the last hour of the poll day** at their respective Polling Stations, under the supervision of health authorities, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures. Sector Magistrates shall coordinate this in their allocated polling stations.
- 22) In case of those voters who are residing in the area notified as containment zone, guidelines shall be issued separately.

11.	<p><b><u>Kit for Polling Officer</u></b></p> <p>The following items shall be provided to every polling official and security personnel (Other than those where PPEs are needed) in addition to other prescribed items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Mask</li> <li>2) Sanitizer</li> <li>3) Face-Shield</li> <li>4) Gloves</li> </ol>
12.	<p><b><u>Postal Ballot</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Option of Postal Ballot facility has been extended to the electors of following categories:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Electors, who are marked as Persons with Disabilities (PWD)</li> <li>b. Electors above the age of 80 years</li> <li>c. Electors employed in notified Essential services</li> <li>d. Electors who are COVID- 19 positive/suspect and in quarantine (home/institutional)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Guidelines for each of these categories are being issued separately.</li> </ol>
13.	<p><b><u>Campaign by the political parties/contesting candidates</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Door to Door Campaign</b>- Subject to any other restriction(s) including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 (five) persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, is allowed to do door to door campaigning.</li> <li>2) <b>Road Shows</b> - The convoy of vehicles should be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour instead of gap of 100 meters. <b>(In supersession of Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019)</b></li> <li>3) <b>Election Meetings</b> - Public gatherings/ rallies may be conducted <b>subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines</b>. District Election Officer should take following steps for this purpose:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) District Election Officer should, in advance, identify dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked Entry/Exit points.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>(b) In all such identified grounds, the District Election Officer should, in advance, put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees.</p> <p>(c) Nodal District Health Officer should be involved in the process to ensure that all COVID-19 related guidelines are adhered to by all concerned in the district.</p> <p>(d) District Election Officer and District Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings.</p> <p>(e) DEO should depute Sector Health Regulators to oversee that COVID-19 instructions/guidelines are being followed during these meetings.</p> <p>(f) The political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities.</p> <p>(g) <b>Non-compliance of Instructions</b> – <i>Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceed against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable, as specified in Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2020 of Ministry of Home Affairs.</i> District Election Officer should bring this to the notice of all concerned.</p> <p><b>4) Allocation of public spaces must be done using Suvidha app in the manner already prescribed by Commission.</b></p>
<b>14.</b>	<p><b><u>Strong-room Arrangement</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Strong Room should be sanitized before the storage of polled EVMs.</li> <li>2) Social Distancing and other safety norms shall be followed for each activity.</li> </ol>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b><u>Counting of votes</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Not more than 7 counting tables should be allowed in a counting hall. Hence, counting of votes of a constituency may be considered at 3-4 halls by appointing additional Assistant Returning Officers. (In supersession of <b>instructions dated 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2014</b>)</li> <li>2) Carrying cases of CUs/VVPATs should be sanitized before placing over counting tables.</li> </ol>

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|  | <p>3) Display of result from the Control Units may be displayed on a large screen to avoid accommodation of large number of counting agents.</p> <p>4) The counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.</p> <p>5) For counting of Postal Ballots, additional number of AROs may be required. If required, Postal Ballots may also be counted in a separate hall under the supervision of the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning officer.</p> |
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**Based on these broad guidelines, a detailed COVID-19 related comprehensive plan will be prepared at the State level, taking local conditions into account. In case of General Elections, three-layer plan will be prepared in consultation with the concerned Nodal Health Officers: of AC, District, and State levels. In case of bye-elections, the plans will be prepared at the District and AC levels in consultation with respective Nodal Health Officers of district and AC. In case more than one district is involved, such plans will be prepared by the Returning Officer of the Constituency in coordination with the concerned DEOs.**