



Manual on Polling Stations

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भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
Election Commission of India

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

"Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy"

**Manual on
Polling Stations**

(As on 1st January 2016)



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Election Commission of India
Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110 001

“Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy”

डा० नसीम जैदी
भारत के मुख्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त
DR. NASIM ZAIDI
Chief Election Commissioner of India



भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
Election Commission of India

Message from Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India



I am delighted that 'Manual on Polling Stations' is being published by Election Commission of India. This manual consists of all present existing instructions issued on every single aspect of Polling stations over the years. The Manual is a step further in Commission's commitment towards ensuring transparent electoral process in India.

Election Commission has introduced a system of standardized and uniform Document Control System so that all instructions on the subject are compiled into one manual and election machinery does not have to refer to various instructions issued from time to time and scattered all over the place. The Manual on Polling Stations is the first in the series of issuing standard documents on various subjects of the electoral process. The newly released Manual will henceforth be used by the election machinery.

This Manual has required huge endeavours on the part Election Commission Secretariat.

All of them deserve my compliment!

Nasim Zaidi
(Dr. Nasim Zaidi)

Foreword

‘Manual on Polling Stations’ has been brought out by the Election Commission of India in an attempt to present all existing instructions issued on all aspects related to Polling Stations from time to time. Polling Station is a basic unit of electoral system for conducting elections to the House of People and State Legislatures. Needless to say that successful management of an election solely depends on right setup of Polling Stations for that election.

The book is an endeavour to provide an updated, comprehensive yet concise document incorporating all existing guidelines on Polling Stations right from creation of a Polling Station to all activities in and around a Polling Station on the day of poll.

I hope that this compilation will be beneficial, helpful and handy for election managers, stakeholders and all such persons from public who may be interested in the subject.

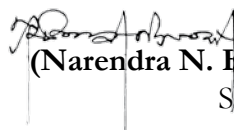

(Narendra N. Butolia)
Secretary

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CHAPTER - 1

GENERAL

1.1 Definitions of the terms used :-

- (1) **ASD Voters** – In order to prevent impersonation of Absentee, Shifted and Duplicate Voters, whose names continue to appear in the electoral rolls, list of such voters (ASD List) is prepared polling station wise and provided to the concerned Presiding Officer for proper identification on the day of poll. A voter who is in ASD List shall have to produce EPIC or any of the alternative photo document approved by the Election Commission at the time of casting his vote.
- (2) **Auxiliary Polling Station** – Where the maximum number of electors in a polling area exceed beyond the prescribed limit, auxiliary polling station(s) is provided bifurcating/trifurcating the existing polling station. Generally, such auxiliary polling station is situated in the same polling station location in which the main (original) polling station is earlier housed. The serial number of auxiliary polling station(s) is indicated by adding a suffix to the serial number of the main polling station, like ‘100’, ‘100A/1’, ‘100A/2’ and so on.
- (3) **Booth Level Agent** – In order to enhance the participation by recognized Political Parties in revision/preparation of electoral roll, a provision for appointment of Booth Level Agent to complement Booth Level Officer during roll revision, has been made on the pattern of appointment of Polling Agents/Counting agents during election. Normally, one Booth Level Agent is appointed for each part of electoral roll, though, one Booth Level Agent may be appointed for more than one part of electoral roll provided the polling stations for the corresponding parts of electoral roll are located within the same polling station location. Booth Level Agent must be a registered elector in the relevant part of electoral roll for which he/she is appointed as it is expected that the Booth Level Agent will scrutinize the entries in the draft roll of the area where he resides to identify entries of dead/shifted persons. No person in the service of Government/local authority/Public Sector Undertaking can act as Booth Level Agent. Appointment of a person as Booth Level Agent will

be valid for the period until and unless the nomination/authorization of such Booth Level Agent is expressly withdrawn by the said Political Party or such Booth Level Agent has ceased to be a registered elector of the constituency where he/she has been appointed as Booth Level Agent. On the strength of appointment letter issued by a recognized Political Party, the Booth Level Agent is entitled to receive a printed copy of relevant part of electoral roll from Booth Level Officer/Designated Officer/Electoral Registration Officer. The Election Commission has allowed Booth Level Agents to submit not more than 10 forms to Booth Level Officer in a day. If Booth Level Agent submits more than 30 forms during entire revision programme, Electoral Registration Officer/Assistant Electoral Registration Officer shall cross-verify all such forms. Booth Level Agent shall submit the forms with the list of forms and a declaration in prescribed format.

- (4) **Booth Level Officer** – Booth Level Officer is a local Government / Semi-Government official, familiar with the local electors and generally a voter in the same polling area, who assists in updating the roll using his local knowledge. He, under the overall supervision of Electoral Registration Officer, is responsible for field verification, collection of information / data regarding electors and preparation of roll of a part of electoral roll in respect of the concerned polling area. During election, Booth Level Officer shall issue Photo Voter Slips to the electors of his/her polling station area under his original signatures and distribute the same either to the registered voter or to an adult member of the voter's family, who is himself/herself a voter. On the day of poll, Booth Level Officer shall man facilitation desk outside his polling station where undistributed Photo Voter Slips along with alphabetical voter list shall be kept for distribution of the same. Booth Level Officer is not a full time officer but this is a duty which he performs in addition to his official duty.
- (5) **Chief Electoral Officer** - Chief Electoral Officer of a State/ Union Territory is authorized to supervise the work relating to preparation of electoral roll and conduct of all elections to Parliament and the Legislature of the State subject to the overall superintendence, direction and control of the Election Commission.

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- (6) **Communication Plan** – ‘Communication plan’ is prepared for effective election management, quick crisis resolution and smooth flow of information from polling station level to Constituency level, to District level and to State level, on the day of poll. Under the communication plan, the field level officers such as Presiding Officers / Polling Officials, Sector Officers / Zonal Magistrates etc. communicate with Returning Officers, District Election Officers and Chief Electoral Officers by telephone, mobile phone, SMS, or other modes of communication available in the area through pre-determined contact points.
- (7) **Critical Polling Station** – A critical polling station is that polling station, so identified by the Election Commission for making special security arrangements, during election on the basis of past history of incidents of violence, intimidation to voters of weaker sections, abnormally high voting in favor of a particular candidate etc. in the earlier elections. The Election Commission has directed that all such polling stations where percentage of votes polled during past General Election was more than 90% and where more than 75% of votes have been polled in favour of one candidate shall be identified as Critical Polling Stations.
- (8) **District Election Officer** – Election Commission designates the head of district administration, variously known as Collector, Deputy Commissioner or District Magistrate, as the District Election Officer of the district concerned. Subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the Chief Electoral Officer, the District Election Officer shall coordinate and supervise all work in the district or in the area within his jurisdiction in connection with the conduct of all elections to Parliament and the Legislature of the State. The District Election Officer is responsible for the provision of polling stations and the publication of the list of polling stations.
- (9) **Electoral Registration Officer** – For the purpose of preparation and revision of electoral rolls of a constituency, the Election Commission, in consultation with the Government of the State, designates / nominates an officer of the State Government concerned, as Electoral Registration Officer.

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- (10) **Electoral Roll** - Ordinarily known as 'voter list', electoral roll is a list of persons registered as electors residing in a constituency. For proper management, electoral roll of a constituency is divided into several parts which contain details of electors of the corresponding polling areas.
 - (11) **Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)** - EVM is the machine in which a voter records his vote at the polling station. An EVM consists of two Units – a Control Unit and a Balloting Unit – joined by a five-meter cable. The Control Unit is with the Presiding Officer or a Polling Officer and the Balloting Unit is placed inside the voting compartment. Instead of issuing a ballot paper, the Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit will press the Ballot Button. This will enable the voter to cast his vote by pressing the blue button on the balloting unit against the candidate and symbol of his choice.
 - (12) **Nazri Naksha** – Nazri Naksha is an ordinary sketch map of the polling area prepared by the Booth Level Officer demarcating the geographical boundaries of the polling area and depicting settlements (habitation area), streets, roads, lakes / rivers, important buildings like polling stations, post office, police station, health centres etc. Nazri Naksha is prepared to avoid overlapping specially in respect of newly developed colonies in the polling area.
 - (13) **Photo Voter Slips** – For convenience to voters on day of poll, pre-printed official voter slips containing photograph of voter and details available in the photo roll such as Number and Name of Constituency, Part No., Name, Gender, EPIC No., Relatives name, Serial No., Polling Station No. and Name and Date, Day and Time of poll are distributed to all enrolled voters by District Administration. Photo Voter Slips are duly authenticated by Electoral Registration Officer and distributed through Booth Level Officer as per the schedule for distribution prepared by the Returning Officer. The undistributed Photo Voter Slips shall be kept at facilitation desk outside polling station for distribution on the day of poll by Booth Level Officer. No photocopy of Photo Voter Slip is allowed for distribution purpose. Any unauthorized distribution/possession of Photo Voter Slip shall be considered as violation of provisions of Representation of People Act, 1951 and Indian Penal Code.

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- (14) **Polling Agent** – Law permits candidates to appoint their agents who are called as ‘polling agents’, for each of the polling stations to watch their interest and assisting the polling personnel to identify the electors at the time of poll in those polling stations. A Polling Agent should be elector from same polling station area or from a neighboring polling station area.
- (15) **Polling Area** –A polling area is a well defined and identifiable area demarcated with certain physical landmarks such as street, road, river, hills etc. All the electors residing in that particular polling area are enrolled in a separate part of electoral roll and vote at the polling station created for that polling area. Every constituency is divided among several polling areas.
- (16) **Polling Party / Polling Personnel** – During the poll, a polling station is manned by a team of 4-5 Government officials for conduct of polling at that particular polling station as per the programme announced by Election Commission. Every polling party is headed by a Presiding Officer. The appointment of Presiding Officer and Polling Officials is made by the District Election Officer. The officials shall be deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission for the period during which they are so employed and shall, during that period, be subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission.
- (17) **Polling Station** – Polling station is the room / hall fixed for holding poll where the electors of the concerned polling area cast their votes on the day of poll. It is also referred to as ‘polling booth’.
- (18) **Polling Station Location / Polling Centre** – Polling station location / polling centre is the building / premises in which 1 or more than 1 polling station are housed.
- (19) **Presiding Officer** – Presiding officer is a Government servant who heads the polling personnel deployed at a polling station. He is statutorily responsible for conduct of poll at that particular polling station.
- (20) **Returning Officer** – The Election Commission, in consultation with the Government of the State, designates / nominates an officer of the State Government concerned, as Returning Officer for an election to State Legislature or Parliament, for a constituency.

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- (21) **Sector Officer / Zonal Magistrate** – He is State Government official who serves as link between polling teams and Returning Officer / Asst. Returning Officer on the day of poll. He coordinates with Presiding Officer in any poll related crisis and furnishes quick reports regarding election and other law & order situation to Returning Officer. Sector Officers randomly check that distribution of Photo Voter Slips is being done as per the Commission's instructions. He also verifies from the Photo Voter Slip Registers that all slips have been distributed and that signatures/thumb impressions of acknowledgement have been obtained by concerned Booth Level Officers. Every Sector Officer / Zonal Magistrate has a clear demarcation of geographical area under his jurisdiction, which are normally 10-12 polling station areas.
- (22) **Voting Compartment** – A voter has to maintain secrecy while casting his vote at the polling station and for this purpose; the Ballot Unit of EVM is required to be kept in voting compartment. The voting compartment has three sides covered. The Ballot Unit is to be placed inside the voting compartment on a table. The Ballot Unit is to be placed in such a way that voter does not find any difficulty to record his vote and secrecy in the process is not violated.
- (23) **Vulnerability Mapping** – Vulnerability mapping is an exercise to identify the villages / habitats / segments of electorate belonging to minorities or weaker sections of the society like scheduled caste / scheduled tribe, who are vulnerable to any threat, undue influence, intimidation or interference with free exercise of their electoral right. The Election Commission has laid down clear guidelines to prevent intimidation to the voters of vulnerable sections.

1.2 Legal Provisions

- (i) Section 25 of Representation of People Act, 1951 provides for the provision of polling stations. The section is reproduced as below:-
- (ii) [Provision of polling stations for constituencies – The District Officer shall, with the previous approval of the Election Commission, provide a sufficient number of polling stations for every constituency the whole or greater part of which lies within his jurisdiction, and shall publish, in

such manner as the Election Commission may direct, a list showing the polling stations so provided and the polling areas or groups of voters for which they have respectively been provided.]

1.3 Authority to provide polling stations

As per Section 25 of Representation of People Act, 1951, District Election Officer is the authority to provide a polling station in every constituency in his district, however, the provision of polling station made by District Election Officer has to be approved by the Election Commission. A poll taken at any location without the prior approval of the Election Commission may vitiate the poll so taken at that place.

1.4 Electoral Roll parts and polling stations

An electoral roll is a list containing particulars of electors such as name, age, gender, name of relative, EPIC number etc. Electoral rolls are prepared and maintained assembly constituency – wise by Electoral Registration Officers under the provisions of Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. In accordance with sub rule (1) of rule 5 of Registration of Electors Rules, the electoral roll shall be divided into convenient ‘parts’. A ‘part’ of electoral roll corresponds to a geographically defined and identifiable polling area created within the boundaries of an assembly constituency by the concerned District Election Officer. The ‘part’ contains names of all the electors residing within that polling area and with an identified polling station (precinct) where arrangements are made for the electors of that ‘part’ to cast their votes on the day of polling. Earlier, groups of electors from different parts of roll were tagged on to one polling station and thus, a polling station had voters included in more than one part of the electoral roll. After 1980 general election to the Lok Sabha, the electoral rolls are being prepared polling station-wise for a well defined polling area and all the voters included in any one part of the electoral rolls are being assigned to one specific polling station. Even the serial numbers of the parts of the electoral roll and the serial number of the corresponding polling stations are identical numbers. For example, the electors covered by ‘Part No 1’ of the electoral roll are assigned to ‘Polling Station No. 1’ and ‘Part No 2’ to ‘Polling Station No 2’, and so on.

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CHAPTER - 2

NORMS FOR SETTING UP OF POLLING STATIONS

2.1 Demarcation of well defined polling areas

Polling stations are provided for clearly well demarcated polling areas, covering a specified locality in urban areas or a village in rural areas. Where a locality or village is quite big, it may be broken into parts for providing separate polling stations for the electors residing in those parts. Likewise, in the case of small localities or villages, two or more such localities or villages may be combined to provide a common polling station for them. By a clear description of the polling area, it should be feasible for an ordinary voter to know to which polling station he should go for recording his vote.

2.2 Location of polling stations

2.2.1 (i) **Generally within polling area** - As far as possible, the polling station should be set up within the polling area. However, there is no objection to a polling station being located in a building which is situated outside the polling area. If a suitable building is not available in the area, then it may be set up outside the polling area but as near to its own area as possible. In many cases, polling stations more than one has been set up in the same building. In a few cases in the State of Sikkim and Chhattisgarh, certain polling stations have been provided even outside the territorial limits of the assembly constituencies. This has been done keeping in view the convenience of electors and polling stations have been provided in bazaar areas visited frequently by them and where regular buildings are available for housing of polling stations.

(ii) Where the polling area for a polling station comprises a number of villages, the polling station or stations should ordinarily be located in the village, which has the largest number of voters. However, if another village is more central or has distinctly better facilities, it can be chosen for location of polling station in preference to the

village with the largest number of voters. All villages in one polling area should fall in one administrative unit like one police station, firka, patwari circle, etc. All polling areas within the constituency should be covered by the proposed polling stations. No area in the constituency should be left out.

- 2.2.2 **Location in permanent building** - The Election Commission insists that polling stations should, as far as practicable, be permanently located so that the electors always know where they have to go for casting their votes for all elections and they are not confused by any frequent changes in the location of their polling stations.
- 2.2.3 **In Government buildings** - As far as possible, polling stations are located in government / semi-government buildings or institutions aided by the government, like, schools or colleges, as the furniture and equipment required would be available there and could be made use of without any extra cost to the State. Polling stations also can be setup in buildings belonging to local bodies such as community centres, village chaupals, etc.
- 2.2.4 **In private buildings** – only in rare cases - Only in rare cases, private buildings are used as polling stations but where this becomes unavoidable, written consent of the owner should be taken. In case the owner refuses to give written consent, the buildings should be requisitioned under Section 160 of Representation of People Act, 1951, if necessary. The private building so requisitioned should be at the disposal of the Returning Officer at least 24 hours before the commencement of the poll and for the period required for the poll. The building and the area around it up to a radius of 200 meters should be under the control of the Presiding Officer. No watch and ward or other personnel connected with the owner, whether armed or unarmed, should be allowed to remain either at the polling station or within a radius of 200 meters around it. The security arrangement at the polling station and within the above area on the poll day will be the responsibility entirely of the State Police under the control of the Presiding Officer. Further, after nominations are filed, it should be ensured that the owner of such private building is not a contesting candidate or a known sympathizer or worker of any of the candidates at the election.

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- 2.2.5 **Temporary structure** - Where no suitable government buildings are available in any polling area or nearby, temporary structures at designated locations may be erected to serve as polling stations. However, setting up of a polling station in a temporary structure should be avoided, in view of the expenditure for erecting it and further risk of fire, storm, etc.
- 2.2.6 No polling station should be located in police stations, hospitals, temples or places having religious significance.
- 2.2.7 There should be no political party office within 200 meter of a polling station.
- 2.2.8 As far as possible, Polling Stations should be at ground floor of the Polling Station building considering the old age and disabled electors. Also there should be a ramp for use of such electors.

2.3 Number of electors assigned to a polling station

- (i) The optimum number of polling stations to be set up in a Constituency should be determined by dividing the total number of voters in the constituency by 1000. This number will be average for both rural and urban constituencies. In order that a manageable number of electors are assigned to a polling station for smooth conduct of poll, the Election Commission has instructed that a polling station should be provided not more than 1200 electors in rural areas and 1400 electors in urban areas. With the constant increase in the electorate, the Election Commission has allowed 1500 electors in a polling station in some States.
- (ii) However, the Commission's stand is to provide a polling station for every village having more than 300 voters provided there is a suitable building for it.
- (iii) In sparsely populated or hilly areas, polling stations may be provided for a far lesser number of electors. In one case, a polling station was provided just for one elector at Kakkayam Dam Site in Perambra assembly constituency in Kerala during the general election in 2006, as the lone voter had refused to shift from his house unlike other villagers who were relocated to another site owing to construction activity of the dam. In another case, a polling station had been provided just for

one family consisting of six electors at Chako in Thirizino-Buragaon assembly constituency in Arunachal Pradesh. In yet another case, two polling stations had been provided for the electors of Anlay Phoo and neighbouring villages in Leh at the height of 5,000 metres in the Ladakh parliamentary constituency in Jammu and Kashmir.

- (iv) Polling stations may also be provided for a fewer number of electors in areas inhabited by weaker sections of society, so that no obstruction may be caused to them in the exercise of their franchise by elements opposed to their interests.

2.4 Maximum distance to reach polling station

Polling stations should be set up in such a manner that ordinarily, no voter is required to travel more than 2 kilometres for casting his vote. In sparsely populated hilly or forest area, this rule may have to be relaxed. In such cases, in order that voters may not have to walk unduly long distances, polling stations may be set up for a smaller number of voters than usual. Due consideration should be given to the topography and ease of travel.

2.5 Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at polling stations

- (i) The Election Commission has directed that voter friendly facilities and amenities should be provided at polling stations. Every District Election Officer has to provide the following Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at each polling station:-
 - a) Provision for ramp
 - b) Provision for drinking water
 - c) Adequate furniture
 - d) Proper lighting
 - e) Help Desk
 - f) Proper signage
 - g) Toilet

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- (ii) Besides, shades should be provided at the polling stations for protection from sun and rain for electors coming to poll.
 - (iii) As far as practicable, the polling station should have a minimum area of 20 sq. meters so that there is no congestion inside the polling station.
 - (iv) Halls/rooms should be well-lit and should normally have at least two doors, so that one can be used as the ‘entrance’ and the other as the ‘exit’ for the smooth and orderly conduct of poll.
 - (v) In urban areas, not more than four polling stations and, in rural areas, not more than two polling stations should be located in the same building as far as possible, in order to avoid overcrowding and to facilitate maintenance of law and order.
 - (vi) As far as possible, the polling stations should be set up in the ground floor of a building to be old age friendly and disabled friendly.
 - (vii) The Election Commission has further instructed all state governments that ramps should be provided in the buildings where polling stations are set up so as to facilitate the movement of persons suffering from physical disability. This instruction has been issued in the wake of the direction given by the Supreme Court in its interim order dated 19 April 2004 in Disability Rights Group v Chief Election Commissioner and Anor.
 - (viii) If the polling station is for both men and women, there should be separate queues for men and women. For every man entering the polling station, two women should be allowed. The old, infirm, pregnant women and differently abled persons should be allowed to enter the polling station without having to stand in the queue. When separate polling stations are provided for men and women of a particular polling area, these should as far as possible be located in the same building.

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CHAPTER - 3

PREPARATION OF LIST OF POLLING STATIONS

3.1 Setting up of new polling station

- (i) Under Section 25 of the Representation of People Act, 1951, the District Election Officer is required to provide sufficient number of polling stations for every constituency, the whole or greater part of which lies within his jurisdiction, with the previous approval of the Election Commission. It should not ordinarily be difficult to decide the district in which the greater part of a constituency lies. However, it may not be so easy to ascertain where a Parliamentary Constituency comprises, say, eight Assembly Constituencies and four of them lie in one district while the remaining four in another district. In such case the Chief Electoral Officer should decide the question with reference to the location of the headquarters of the Returning Officer of the constituency, the number of voters of that constituency in different parts in the different districts or of the population of those parts, and communicate the same to the District Election Officers of the districts concerned. The District Election Officer of the district in which according to the Chief Electoral Officer the greater part of the constituency lies, will then be responsible for the provision of polling stations for the entire Parliamentary Constituency.
- (ii) It is also possible that in the case of a Parliamentary Constituency most of the component Assembly Constituencies may fall in one district and a portion or portions may fall in another district or districts. In such cases, the polling stations provided by the District Election Officer of the other district or districts should be adopted in whole by the District Election Officer of the district in which the major part lies as the polling stations for the Parliamentary Constituency for which he is required to provide polling stations.
- (iii) While setting up a new polling station the District Election Officer should designate a senior officer to undertake the physical verification of the proposed polling station. The designated verification officer shall

do work of verification keeping in view the Commission's instructions regarding setting up of a polling station. He shall give due consideration to the existence of obstructions like hills, forests, rivers, jungles, etc. For instance no polling area should contain villages on either side of a big river; but where the village itself is divided by a river or stream it should not be split up for polling purpose unless there are special reasons.

- (iv) The actual site of each polling station should be chosen carefully keeping in view the requirement of materials, structures, fittings etc., necessary to set up a polling station complying with the requirements of law and practical convenience.
- (v) Some criteria for proposing new polling stations may be: -
- New polling station may be proposed if a village has more than 300 electors and a suitable Government building is available for the polling station.
 - If it is necessary to do so in view of vulnerability mapping.
 - If a new colony with a number of dwelling units has cropped up, then new polling station may be created.
 - Polling area assigned to a polling station should be compact.

3.2 Drawing draft list of polling stations

The District Election Officer shall draw the draft list of polling stations in the format prescribed by the Election Commission (Annexure I). The demarcation of polling area should be clearly done. The name of each village covered by the polling area and the number of voters in it should be shown in the respective columns against each polling station. The map of an Assembly Constituency showing polling stations should be prepared and converted into digital form, if possible. By a clear description of the polling area, it should be feasible for an ordinary voter to know as to which polling station he should go for recording his vote. In order to ensure that a uniform method is followed in the matter of filling up the columns of the format, the District Election Officer should keep the instructions in mind as per Annexure I.

3.3 Publication of draft list of polling stations

After the draft list has been prepared on the lines indicated above, the District Election Officer should publish the draft, in the language or languages of the electoral roll for the constituency, for general information, inviting objections and suggestions, if any, from public, by a specified date, allowing a period of not less than seven days from the date of publication of the draft. The notice regarding publication of the draft list of polling stations and places at which it can be inspected should also be given in the local newspapers and put on website of Chief Electoral Officers and written objections or suggestions be invited for consideration.

3.4 Consultation with Political Parties

- (i) While drawing up the list of polling stations for any constituency, local representatives of political parties, both recognised and unrecognised-registered, and intending candidates are consulted by the District Election Officer and he has to provide a certificate to the Election Commission of having made such consultation when he submits the draft list for its approval. The parties have again to be consulted, if any change in the list of polling stations approved by the Election Commission is considered necessary for any sufficient reasons, before seeking approval of the Election Commission to such change.
- (ii) Copies of the lists should be supplied to the local branches of all recognized political parties and to the sitting members of the House of the People and Assembly Constituencies concerned or to ex-members of the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly in case the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly stands dissolved.
- (iii) The District Election Officer should thereafter call the party representatives and legislators for a meeting and discuss the draft list and the suggestions received about the same. The minutes and proceedings of the meeting with political parties may also be furnished by District Election Officer. Any bonafide person intending to be a candidate who wishes to take part in the discussions at this meeting should also be allowed to do so.

3.5 Approval of Election Commission for draft list of polling stations

- (i) The District Election Officer should then take his decisions on suggestions / inputs received from political parties / participants, amend the draft where necessary and finalize the draft list of polling stations for the constituency. He should then forward it, along with map, scrutiny sheet and the certificate in the forms (prescribed in Annexures II and III) to the Election Commission, through the Chief Electoral Officer of the State. If the draft list is forwarded to the Election Commission in a language, other than English, it should be accompanied by a translation in English. There is no need to print or cyclostyle the approved list of polling stations in English. However, there would be no objection to this being done, if copies in English are required for official use or by the public.
- (ii) The Chief Electoral Officer, after scrutiny, will forward the list and other enclosures to the Election Commission for approval with his comments. The Election Commission will then consider and approve the proposed list of polling stations, with changes, as deemed necessary.
- (iii) The approval of the Election Commission will be communicated direct to the District Election Officer with a copy to the Chief Electoral Officer. After the approval of the Election Commission is received, the District Election Officer should once again check the list to see whether there are any errors and incorporate the changes, if any, suggested by the Election Commission in the list.

3.6 Final publication of list of the polling stations

- (i) The District Election Officer shall publish the list of polling stations approved by the Election Commission. Before final publication, the entries in columns 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 of Annexure I and the entries at the bottom of the list relating to the total number of voters, the total number of polling stations and the average number of voters per polling station, should be deleted from the list.
- (ii) The list of polling stations for an Assembly Constituency (Annexure IV) shall be published in the language or languages in which the electoral roll for that constituency is published.

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- (iii) After final publication, the District Election Officer will make a copy of the final list of polling stations available for inspection and display at his office and also at the office of Electoral Registration Officer of that constituency. The final list shall be put on the website of Chief Electoral Officer. The District Election Officer shall also, as far as practicable, make a copy of the relevant parts of the list together with the notice in the form appended, available for inspection at the office of the Collector/District Magistrate/Sub-divisional Magistrate / Revenue Divisional Officer / Judges and Munsif Courts / Prant Officer / Tahsildar / Amildar / Deputy Tahsildar / Sub-Registrar / Police Stations / Mauzadars or Sarpanches or Union / Panchayat Ghars / Union Boards / District Board / Municipal Committee / Notified Area Committee, and at such other places and in such other manner as he may consider necessary and suitable. On such publication, the list shall be the list of polling stations for that constituency.
 - (iv) The District Election Officer can correct only printing or clerical mistakes, if any, after such publication. It shall not be necessary for the Returning Officer for a Parliamentary Constituency to publish the list, a second time, except at his office, in a case where elections are being held simultaneously to the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly. He should, however, do so in the case of single election to the House of the People.

3.7 Supply of list of polling stations to Political Parties and contesting candidates

- (i) After final publication, as soon as case may be, a copy of such finally published list shall be supplied, free of cost, to every recognized political party to whom copies of draft lists were earlier supplied.
- (ii) Each contesting candidate at an election shall be supplied, free of cost, with three copies of the list of polling stations for that constituency, immediately after the last date for withdrawal of candidatures.
- (iii) Copies should also be made available for sale at the fixed price to all persons who demand copies.

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- (iv) The District Election Officer should also supply the required number of copies to the Superintendent/Sr. Superintendent/Commissioner of Police, as the case may be. Copies have to be supplied to the Returning Officer/ Assistant Returning Officer(s) for the Parliamentary /Assembly Constituency. One copy should be sent to Chief Electoral Officer.
 - (v) The list of polling stations should also be put on official website of the Chief Electoral Officer of the State at all stages from draft publication to final publication.

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CHAPTER – 4

RATIONALIZATION/MODIFICATION IN THE LIST OF EXISTING POLLING STATIONS

4.1 What is rationalization of polling stations?

The Election Commission has instructed that a polling station should be provided for not more than 1200 electors in rural areas and 1400 electors in urban areas. At present there are 9,40,469 polling stations in the country, however, with regular increase in electorate, this number is bound to exceed. In view of ever growing strength of electors and various other developments, such as, deterioration in condition of existing buildings, availability of suitable new buildings in the locality, status of basic minimum facilities in polling stations, change in geographical conditions, change in law and order situation etc., the existing polling stations are required to be reviewed from time-to-time. This exercise is called rationalization of polling stations.

4.2 Auxiliary polling stations

(i) Reasons for providing auxiliary polling stations –

Rationalization of polling station is conducted generally before every revision of electoral rolls. During an election year the exercise of rationalization is necessarily undertaken, but sometimes, due to the following reasons, auxiliary polling stations have to be provided by bifurcating / trifurcating the existing (original) polling station :-

- a) If after final publication of electoral roll, it comes to notice that the maximum number of electors in the polling area exceed beyond the prescribed limit and it is not possible to manage the electors in the existing polling station.
- b) If an election / bye election is announced by the Election Commission suddenly and the District Election Officer has no time to undertake the exercise of rationalization of polling station and the election is required to be conducted on the basis of the existing electoral roll.

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- (ii) Conditions under which auxiliary polling stations are allowed :-
- a) Auxiliary polling stations shall have the same serial number as that of the original (main) polling station, with a suffix “A”, “B”, etc.
 - b) As far as practicable, the auxiliary polling stations shall be located in the same building or premises as that of the original (main) polling station.
 - c) The auxiliary polling station may be located in a separate building only when unavoidable owing to non-availability of suitable rooms. But it shall be within the same area as that of the original (main) polling station.
 - d) Separate serial number shall not be given to an auxiliary polling station even if it is located in a separate building. It shall have the same serial number as that of the original (main) polling station with the suffix “A” or “B” in view of the fact that the original (main) polling station and its auxiliary polling station may be having the electors shown in the same part of the electoral roll.

4.3 Process of rationalization of polling stations

As explained above, rationalization of polling stations is a very important activity undertaken before the revision of electoral rolls. It is better to rationalize polling stations well before elections so that all stakeholders can be properly consulted and all polling stations physically verified before rationalization is finalized. During an election year the exercise of rationalization is undertaken as pre-revision activity before summary revision of electoral rolls. The Election Commission has issued instructions on this subject from time to time. The process to be followed in rationalization of polling stations is explained below: -

4.3.1 Physical verification

- (i) The rationalisation should be done after 100% physical verification of the polling station locations and the relevant parts of the electoral rolls. A senior officer designated by the District Election Officer shall do the work of physical verification. However, the overall responsibility

of the work of rationalisation of polling stations shall rest with the District Election Officer. For the purpose of uniformity, the District Election Officer may devise a Proforma that should cover the criteria determined by the Election Commission and such additional points that the District Election Officer might consider appropriate. A nodal officer should be appointed by the District Election Officer for verification and rationalization of the polling stations. The nodal officer / designated verification officer should sign the Proforma with date after physical verification of each polling station.

- (ii) Due consideration should be given to the existence of obstructions like hills, forests, rivers, jungles, etc. For instance no polling area should contain villages on either side of a big river; but where the village itself is divided by a river or stream it should not be split up for polling purpose unless there are special reasons.
- (iii) While undertaking 100% physical verification, all existing polling stations must be inspected to find out -
- Whether polling station area has been correctly and fully described in the existing polling station list.
 - Whether polling station is situated outside the polling area;
 - Whether voters have to cross river/canals/ravines etc. to reach the polling station;
 - Whether voters are required to cover distance of more than 2 KMs to reach polling station;
 - Whether the polling station location has more than 2 polling stations in rural areas or more than 4 polling stations in urban areas;
 - Whether the building is dilapidated or dangerous;
 - Whether the minimum area of polling station room is 20 sq meters and whether it is having two doors;
 - Whether polling station is on 1st floor or above;

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- Whether polling station is in private building.
 - Whether polling station is located in a police station/hospital/dharamshala/temple or a religious place;
 - Whether office of any political party is situated within 200 meters from polling station location;
 - Whether the building has an electric connection;
 - Whether ramps have been provided for physically challenged persons;
 - Whether toilet and drinking water facilities exist in the polling station premises;
 - Whether there is a shed to shelter the voters from sun and rain;
 - Whether the polling station has telephone connection. If yes what is the phone number;
 - Whether in localities predominately inhabited by minorities, weaker sections of society like scheduled caste/tribes, the polling stations are located in such a manner that such communities are prevented from reaching the polling station and casting their votes.

4.3.2 Criteria for setting up of a new polling station during rationalization

Following criteria may be kept in mind while preparing proposals for creation of new polling station after physical verification during rationalization of polling stations: -

- Optimum number of the electors that can be assigned to a polling station is 1200 in case of rural and 1400 in case of urban areas. However, depending upon various issues, the Chief Electoral Officers may by providing necessary justification request to the Election Commission to approve the lower or higher limit proposed by them.

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- All existing auxiliary polling stations should be converted into main polling stations by dividing the electoral part.
 - New polling station may be proposed if a village has more than 300 electors and a suitable Government building is available for the polling station.
 - If a new colony with a number of dwelling units has cropped up, then new polling station may be created.
 - Polling area assigned to a polling station should be compact.
 - New / separate polling station may be created in localities predominately inhabited by minorities / weaker sections of society like scheduled caste / scheduled tribes irrespective of number of electors. (The nodal officer should give a written report prepared on the basis of inputs obtained from NGOs / civil society organizations working for the welfare of such people).
 - The entire exercise has to be done within a fixed time frame in a professional manner without fear or favour, strictly in the light of statutory provisions and guidelines of Election Commission.
 - After the rationalization of polling stations is done in this manner last minute changes in the location of polling stations should not be necessary.
 - Safety of polling teams and police force sent to conduct elections should also be kept in mind while proposing polling stations in Maoist or terrorist affected areas. As far as possible in these areas, polling station should be made in places which have easy and safe access. It may also be useful if polling stations are provided in a cluster in such areas to maximize and synergise the available force.

4.3.3 Consultation with political parties

The proposals prepared after physical verification of existing polling stations, should be discussed with representatives of recognized political parties. In this respect all instructions issued by Election Commission

relating to consultation with political parties and preparation and publication of list of polling stations must be followed scrupulously. All complaints and suggestions received from political parties should be duly enquired into and disposed of with a suitable reply to them.

4.3.4 Control table updation

Polling station tables in “ECI Control Tables Database” must be updated on the website of the Election Commission, before sending the proposal for approval of rationalized polling stations list. A printout of the list of polling stations from the updated “ECI Control Tables Database” must be included in the proposal.

4.3.5 Sending Proposals for approval to the Election Commission

Following should be included in the proposals to be sent to the Election Commission for approval of rationalization of polling stations: -

- (i) Report of the District Election Officer on the process followed in rationalization of polling stations. The report should mention all proposals received from political parties and also whether the proposals were accepted or not. If the proposals of political parties are not accepted the report should mention reasons for not accepting them. The proposal should have copies of the minutes of meeting with political parties in which the subject of rationalization of polling stations was discussed. The proposal should specifically mention which proposals of political parties have not been accepted along with reasons.
- (ii) The report should have a special section on how it has been ensured that vulnerable sections of society have unhindered access to polling stations access of polling stations without threat or intimidation.
- (iii) The proposal should specifically mention that no polling station is in a dilapidated building, or in a religious place or within 200 meters of the office of a political party.
- (iv) The proposal should specifically mention that all infrastructure e.g. ramp, drinking water, toilet facility, shade and shelter etc. has been provided in the proposed polling stations.

4.4 Change in location of polling station after approval of the Election Commission

- (i) Every modification as a result of variation in the number of voters within the polling area allotted to a polling station, consequent on the revision of electoral rolls, should be reported to the Election Commission for information.
- (ii) Sometimes, changes in the location of polling stations arising out of shifting to new buildings or sites may become necessary, at the last moment after approval of the Election Commission. This may be due to natural calamity, or if the owner of the building or site originally approved for a polling station has since become a contesting candidate or has strong sympathies for such candidate or political party. All such changes should be reported to the Election Commission immediately for approval. Once the lists are approved, requests from political parties and individuals for shifting of the polling stations from one village to another or from one site to another should be considered, only in extremely exceptional cases where there are overriding considerations of public convenience for the change proposed. If the District Election Officer is satisfied, he should consult other political parties and contesting candidates and then only make his recommendations to the Election Commission in the matter. District Election Officer should, on no account, make any change in the location of polling stations already approved by the Election Commission, without its prior approval, as any change may ultimately result in the election being declared void. Where changes become inevitable and have to be made, such changes should be referred to the Election Commission for prior approval. The changes should be fully publicized and all contesting candidates and political parties, etc., informed in writing.

4.5 Change in nomenclature of the building of a polling station

After the approval of the list of polling stations for a constituency, if there is any change in the nomenclature of the building in which the polling station is proposed to be set up, for example, up gradation of a Primary School to a Middle School in which the polling station is situated and the like, but otherwise there is no change in the location of the polling station, cases of such change need not be referred to the Election Commission for its previous

approval. However, the Election Commission should be informed of such change. The political parties and the contesting candidates etc. should also be informed in writing about such change.

4.6 Preparation of list of polling stations for future general / by-election

Whenever any General Election or Bye-election is to be held in that constituency in future, the District Election Officer should examine whether any addition to or alteration in the list of polling stations already approved is necessary on account of the revision of the electoral rolls before that election. If at any such election, no change or modification in the approved list is considered necessary and the same is proposed to be adopted in toto for that election, no further approval of the Election Commission in regard to that list will be necessary and such list need not be referred to the Election Commission for its fresh approval before the election. The Election Commission must, however, be informed of this fact at least two weeks before the last date for withdrawal of candidatures. Where, however, the list of polling stations already approved by the Election Commission is proposed to be adopted with modifications, for the said election, the District Election Officer should call a meeting of the representatives of the local branches of the recognized political parties, and the legislators and after consulting send a fresh composite proposal to the Election Commission through Chief Electoral Officer.

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CHAPTER-5

VULNERABILITY MAPPING AND IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL POLLING STATIONS

5.1 Vulnerability mapping of areas of weaker sections

The Election Commission has come across many cases where polling station in a locality predominately inhabited by minorities or weaker sections of the society like scheduled caste / scheduled tribe are manipulated in such a way that they have to go to an area where they might be prevented from voting. To ensure full participation of such electors in the electoral process, the Election Commission has introduced the concept of vulnerability mapping. 'Vulnerability mapping' is an exercise to identify the villages / habitats / segments of electorate belonging to minorities or weaker sections of the society like scheduled caste / scheduled tribe, who are vulnerable to any threat, undue influence, intimidation or interference with free exercise of their electoral right. Welfare associations or voluntary organizations championing the cause of such weaker sections are associated in identifying such localities and locating the polling stations. Polling stations may be set up in localities/colonies inhabited by the weaker sections of the society, even though the number of voters may be less than 500.

5.1.1 Guidelines to prevent intimidation to the voters of vulnerable sections of electorate during elections

The Election Commission has laid down the following guidelines to prevent intimidation to the voters of vulnerable sections of electorate during elections -

- (i) District Election Officer shall take a polling station wise exercise to identify the villages/ hamlets/habitats and segments of electorate vulnerable to any threat, intimidation or interference with the free exercise of electoral right. For this purpose, he shall ask the Sector Officers of the respective polling stations to do this exercise by visiting the catchments area of the polling stations. The local Thana officer (SHO) and the local civil authorities such as BDO / Tehsildar

shall also be consulted and their inputs taken into account before finalizing the list.

- (ii) The Sector Officers should identify the source of such threat/intimidation and identify the names of persons who are likely to spearhead such offence of undue influence. While doing this exercise they shall take into account the past incidents and current apprehensions.
- (iii) The Sector Officers shall identify some point of contact within the habitat/ community vulnerable for such undue influence so that information related to such developments can be tracked constantly. The Returning Officer of the Assembly Constituency should compile all such polling station wise information and finalize the vulnerability mapping for the entire constituency.
- (iv) The District Election Officer and Superintendent of Police of district and Commissioner of Police Commissionerate shall initiate all preventive measures to ensure that such intimidation/obstruction do not really happen on the poll day. They shall initiate confidence-building measures to bolster the voters' confidence about the arrangements for free and fair poll. They shall undertake tours to such locations and meet the communities and explain the arrangements made for free and fair poll.
- (v) Before the election, the District Election Officer shall interact with the candidates and representatives of political parties to get regular feedback. The District Intelligence shall give regular feedback on the subject to the District Election Officer through Superintendent of Police.
- (vi) Upon the arrival of the observers, the District Election Officer shall hand over the details of the polling station wise vulnerability mapping for the relevant Assembly Constituency. The observer will also visit such locations and interact with the voters and constantly monitor the developments.
- (vii) The District Election Officer and Superintendent of Police of the District and Commissioner of Police should hold a joint review

on the subject and finalize a focused action plan to deal with the potential threats and intimidation points identified. The action plan may include, inter-alia, binding the identified trouble mongers under appropriate sections of the law, preventive detention if required, forcing their appearance in local police stations at reasonable intervals to ensure their good behaviour, placement of police pickets, regular confidence building visits etc. It has to be ensured that all such measures are undertaken in absolutely non-partisan manner without fear or favour towards any particular party.

- (viii) The zonal/ and sector arrangements to monitor the events on the poll day shall take such pre-identified vulnerable locations into account for effective tracking. If the normal sector route map does not cover the vulnerable locations, special arrangements shall be made for this purpose. The sector officers shall make regular visits to those villages and hamlets in advance, collect information and keep the senior officers informed.
- (ix) Where there is a cluster of such vulnerable pockets, the District Election Officer shall arrange for dedicated police teams/squads and station them at convenient locations in the vicinity, to be pressed into service for action on the day of poll without any loss of time. It should invariably form part of the district security plan.

5.1.2 Special arrangements for voters of vulnerable sections on the day of poll

- (i) On the day of poll, the sector officers shall pay special attention to verify whether voters from the vulnerable habitats/ communities are turning up for voting or not. In case, they find (it can be gauged from the marked copy of the electoral roll where voters who have voted are ticked) that some sections of voters are conspicuously absent, then they should inform the Returning Officer about this immediately. The Returning Officer and District Election Officer shall dispatch the dedicated squads specifically meant for this purpose, to ascertain, by a visit to the area/hamlet, that there is no hindrance – overt or covert – in the movement of that section of voters. They should closely monitor the developments and initiate effective interventions. After the closing hours on the poll day, the

sector officers shall submit a polling station wise special report in writing to the Returning Officers indicating as to whether voters from the vulnerable habitats were able to vote or not.

- (ii) At the time of dispatch of the polling parties at the dispatch centres, the Returning Officer should brief the Presiding Officer(s) concerned about the vulnerable locations within the polling station area. In the electoral roll, the Section within the Part should also be marked for proper monitoring. The presiding officers shall submit a report indicating abnormally low percentage of voter turnout, if any, within any section/sections, particularly, with reference to the vulnerable locations.
- (iii) During the poll, the observers and other senior officers while visiting the polling station shall pay a special attention to this problem and find out whether any undue influence, intimidation/obstruction is being caused.
- (iv) The police patrolling parties should keep track of the vulnerable locations and keep the control room informed. Wherever necessary, police pickets shall be established to ensure free access to all voters to cast their votes without fear.
- (v) The Commanders/Assistant Commanders of the Central Para Military Forces shall be given a list of such vulnerable locations. Wherever Central Para Military Forces arrives in advance for area domination, special attention shall be given for such locations. The Commanders/Assistant Commanders shall make it a point to visit such vulnerable pockets as a confidence building measure on the day of poll. In case they come across any obstruction they shall take note of that and immediately inform any of the electoral officials such as Returning Officer /District Election Officer/ SP / Commissioner of Police/Observer/Sector Officer and keep a note of the time of their intimation.
- (vi) If any complaint is received or information gathered from any sources about obstruction/threat to any voter/voters, the same

shall be enquired into by the local administration without any delay.

- (vii) The Returning Officers shall take the inputs on mass scale intimidation/threat/obstruction if any, into consideration while submitting their report after the poll.
- (viii) The observers shall give their full attention to this issue and verify at every stage (before poll/on poll day) and submit reports to the Election Commission from time to time. A special mention shall be made about this in their final report. Apart from this, they should make an intelligent reading of the of the register (Form 17A) and the marked copy of the electoral roll used in the polling stations at the time of Form 17A scrutiny, ordered if any, by the Election Commission after the poll.
- (ix) The Election Commission has directed that the accountability of various police and civil officials for vulnerability mapping and follow up at every stage shall be clearly defined with reference to each polling station/constituency. Severe disciplinary action will be initiated in case of dereliction of duty on the part of any police/civil officials in this regard

5.2 Identification of critical polling stations during elections

5.2.1 For making proper planning for law and order arrangements and deployment of security forces during elections, the Election Commission has been following conventional method of identifying normal, sensitive and hyper sensitive polling stations. While adopting this system, past events of violence work as major criteria. However, in the recent years, the Election Commission has improvised the system and now a new and comprehensive system of identifying critical polling stations and critical clusters has been put in place. This new system gives lots of importance for the factors associated with free and fair election process.

- (1) 5.2.2 What is a ‘critical polling station’ – A critical polling station is so identified by the Election Commission before an election on the basis of past history of incidents of violence, intimidation to voters

of weaker sections, abnormally high voting in favor of a particular candidate etc. in the earlier elections. The Commission has directed that all such polling stations where percentage of votes polled during past General Election was more than 90% and where more than 75% of votes have been polled in favour of one candidate shall be identified as Critical Polling Stations. The vulnerability mapping gives valid inputs for identification of critical polling stations and critical clusters. The critical polling stations are identified for taking additional measures in advance w.r.t. deployment of security forces and other field officials on the poll day.

5.2.3 Objective criteria to identify critical polling stations - Following objective criteria should be followed by the District Election Officer / Returning Officer for finalizing the list of critical polling stations in consultation with the Election Commission's Observers :-

- (i) An analysis of the polling station wise number of voters with Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) and without EPIC (non EPIC voters) shall be made. The polling stations shall be sorted in descending order in terms of number of non-EPIC voters in order to prioritize.
- (ii) The Election Commission has recently directed a survey of missing voters under two categories i.e. missing voters with family links and missing voters without family links. Out of these two categories, the existence of missing voters without family links offers a scope for misuse and malpractice. The number of voters coming under the second category shall be analyzed polling station wise and the polling station with large number of such voters shall be marked. For this purpose the total number of such missing voters without family linkage shall be divided by the total number of polling stations to work out the assembly constituency average. Analyzing the deviation above the average, will help to identify the polling stations with large number of such voters.
- (iii) The polling station wise election results of the past general elections shall be analyzed. All such polling stations where percentage of poll recorded is more than 90% and where more than 75% of votes

have been recorded in favour of one candidate shall be identified as critical polling station.

- (iv) The polling stations where there were re-polls during the past elections owing to reported electoral malpractices and the polling stations that witnessed any sort of electoral violence shall also be identified.

5.2.4 Special measures to be taken in respect of critical polling stations

The Election Commission has directed that following measures shall be put in place in critical polling stations –

- (i) The Presiding Officer shall be specially briefed to ensure that the EPIC/approved identification document if any, are properly verified and reflected in the remarks column of voters register (Form 17 A).
- (ii) The presence of Central Para Military Forces (CPMF) may be ensured to safe guard the polling station.
- (iii) The list of such polling stations shall be given to the Commanding / Assistant Commanding Officers of Central Para Military Forces (CPMF) so that they can also keep an eye on such polling stations.
- (iv) A micro-observer may be deployed inside critical polling station. The list of such polling stations where micro-observers are to be deployed will be finally approved by the General observer of the Election Commission and kept confidential in a sealed envelope till the last moment of deployment.
- (v) Digital camera or video camera shall be positioned in the critical polling station.
- (vi) Arrangements for web-casting may be made in as many polling stations as possible.

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CHAPTER-6

PROVISION OF POLLING STATIONS FOR SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF VOTERS

To ensure that each and every elector get an opportunity to cast his vote in a free and fare atmosphere, the Election Commission has taken various steps such as identification of vulnerable groups of electors and making special arrangements for them to vote on the poll day. Sometimes, the Election Commission allows setting up of the separate / exclusive polling station for these special categories of voters.

6.1 Polling station for voters of vulnerable sections

- (i) The Election Commission has come across many cases where polling station in a minority locality was changed in such a way that minority / weaker section people have to go to an area where they might be prevented from voting. This should not be permitted. The Chief Electoral Officer of the state should take special care of this when elections are around the corner. The Election Commission has directed to identify the localities predominantly inhabited by weaker sections and locate polling stations in these localities irrespective of the number of electors. Welfare associations or voluntary organizations championing the cause of such weaker sections should also be associated in identifying such localities and locating the polling stations.
- (ii) Polling stations should be set up in localities/colonies inhabited by the weaker sections of the society, even though the number of voters may be less than 500.

6.2 Polling station for voters suffering from leprosy

If a leprosy sanatorium is located within the constituency, then a separate polling station may be set up for the inmates alone. The officers, medical and others, working in the sanatorium may be appointed as Presiding and Polling Officers of the polling station.

6.3 Separate polling stations for men and women

- (i) Generally, common polling stations are provided both for men and

women electors. However, in certain areas, women folk feel inhibited in mingling with male members because of some local custom or social practice and in that case separate polling station for men and women can be provided after getting approval of the Election Commission. Earlier, separate polling stations were provided in some areas in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu exclusively for women electors. Sometimes, in big villages, if two polling stations are to be provided for the village, one may be provided for male electors and the other for female electors. In polling stations provided exclusively for women electors, polling personnel also normally belong to the same sex. When separate polling stations are provided for men and women of a particular polling area, these should as far as possible be located in the same building.

- (ii) If the polling station is for both men and women, there should be separate queues for men and women. For every man entering the polling station, two women should be allowed. The old, infirm, pregnant women and differently abled persons should be allowed to enter the polling station without having to stand in the queue.

6.4 Special arrangements for ‘pardanashin’ women at polling stations

If sufficiently large number of ‘pardanashin’ (burqa-clad) women electors are assigned to a polling station, the presiding officer should make special arrangements for their identification and application of indelible ink on the left forefinger by a lady polling officer in a separate enclosure having due regard to privacy, dignity and decency. For such special enclosure, the presiding officer may use locally available but absolutely inexpensive devices and using local ingenuity, such as use of charpoy or cloth such as bed spreads.

6.5 Special arrangements for old / infirm persons/ pregnant women at the polling stations

- (i) The Election Commission has directed that proper facilities should be provided in the buildings where polling stations are set up so as to facilitate the movement of old / infirm electors.
- (ii) Keeping in view the convenience of differently abled and old age electors, the polling stations, as far as possible, should be set up in the ground floor of a building.

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- (iii) The old, infirm, pregnant women and differently abled persons should be allowed to enter the polling station without having to stand in the queue.

6.6 Mobile polling station

Demands are often made that in sparsely populated areas, more polling stations should be provided so that the electors may not have to trudge long distances to reach their polling stations. As this is not always possible, a via media is sometimes adopted by providing a mobile polling station for a group of villages. The polling party moves from village to village in a vehicle on the day of poll according to a pre-notified time-table and then halts at the last destination till the scheduled closing hour, where all those who could not vote during the visit of the mobile party to their villages can come and vote. But such provision is rarely made. During the last general election to the Rajasthan legislative assembly, six such mobile polling stations were provided in Jaisalmer assembly constituency. Likewise, a few mobile polling stations were provided in the Sunderbans area of West Bengal also at the last general elections to the House of the People to cover certain isolated islands. Motor boats were used for mobilisation of polling parties in these areas.

6.7 Temporary polling stations

The Election Commission has directed that polling station shall be set up in a permanent structure within the boundaries of polling area and will not be changed frequently, however, sometimes due to some emergent situations such as natural calamity or law and order problems, the Election Commission as makeshift arrangement, approves temporary polling stations in or out of the polling area, far from the site of already approved polling station.

- (i) Temporarily relocated polling stations - During the last general elections, the Election Commission has given approval to such temporarily relocated polling stations in the naxal affected areas of Chhattisgarh. In such cases, after conclusion of nomination process during elections, the District Election Officer review law & order condition in the areas in consultation with Superintendent of Police w.r.t. the past history of election related violence. If he feels necessary, he prepares the proposals

for relocation of polling stations in such areas. The proposals, before sending to the Election Commission for its approval, are further discussed with police authorities, the Election Commission's Observers, contesting candidates and representatives of recognized political parties.

- (ii) Temporary / Alternative polling stations - The Election Commission has approved alternative polling stations during the last general election in Jammu & Kashmir under the contingency plan submitted by the District Election Officers for shifting of polling stations located near International Border and Line of Control. Under the contingency plan, the District Election Officer concerned proposes alternative polling stations in addition to the existing polling stations in the polling areas located near International Border. In case the population of the said polling areas is evacuated due to cease fire violations across the border, the polling is arranged in these alternative polling stations. Otherwise, in the normal conditions, the polling is conducted in the existing polling stations. The alternative polling stations are suggested near to the temporary shelter homes / relief camps proposed to be constructed for the evacuated population during cross border firing.
- (iii) Criteria for setting of temporary polling stations –
 - a) Temporary polling stations are proposed as substitutes to the existing polling stations, already approved by the Election Commission and situated in hilly, geographically inaccessible interiors and areas affected with Maoist / terrorist activities.
 - b) These polling stations are for the last minute arrangement of polling in the affected areas for which prior planning is to be made and suitable alternative buildings are required to be identified.
 - c) The proposals are prepared on the basis of police reports and past history of violence in the affected areas.
 - d) District Election Officer should keep security of polling teams and police force deployed to conduct elections in mind while preparing the proposals. As far as possible in these areas, polling station

should be made in places which have easy and safe access. It may also be useful if polling stations are provided in a cluster in such areas to maximize and synergise the available force.

- e) It should be ensured that wide publicity to the relocation of polling station is given through local print / visual media and the concerned contesting candidates / representatives of recognized political parties are informed in writing well in time.

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CHAPTER - 7

FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED AT POLLING STATION TO ELECTORS WITH DISABILITY

7.1 Facilities to the differently abled electors -

- (A) In light of directions of Supreme Court in its Order dated 05.10.2007 in WP (Civil) No. 187 of 2004 – Disabled Rights Group Vs. The Chief Election Commissioner and Anr., the Election Commission has directed that the differently abled electors shall be provided the following facilities at the polling stations :-
- (i) The polling personnel must ensure that differently abled electors are given priority for entering the polling stations, without having to wait in the queue for other electors and all necessary assistance as may be required, is provided to them at the polling station.
 - (ii) Full facility should be provided for such electors to take their wheel-chairs inside the polling station. Where the polling stations are located in public buildings, permanent ramps should be provided to meet the requirement of the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation) Act, 1995. In the polling stations where permanent ramps have not been provided, temporary ramps should be provided for the purpose.
 - (iii) The polling personnel should be sensitized about the special needs of the differently abled electors, for courteous behaviour towards them and for providing necessary support to them at the polling station.
 - (iv) Electors with speech and hearing impairment should also be given special care as is done in the case of other differently abled persons.
 - (v) Besides, for convenience of differently abled and old age electors the polling stations should be setup in the ground floor of the building.

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- (B) For facilitation of electors with disability, the Commission has further instructed that following arrangements should be made at the Polling Stations:-
- (i) Use of signages :- Clear signages should be put for identification of Polling Stations, assistance counter, toilet etc. The signages should be in International Symbol of access in blue and white colour in English and State official language. The letters should be of standard size and at appropriate height to be easily visible by the persons with disability from a distance. The material used for signage should be non-reflective, non-glary and non-glossy.
 - (ii) Provision for specially designated parking space close to the main accessible entrance for persons with disability.
 - (iii) Provision for adequate space in polling booth for electors with wheelchair, crutch etc. to move and pass easily.
 - (iv) Sufficient publicity should be given well in advance about availability of facilities for electors with disability to encourage them for visiting Polling Station and exercising their franchise.
 - (v) The Election Commission's Observers should also satisfy themselves about availability of above facilities at the Polling Stations.

7.2 Provisions for recording of votes of blind or infirm voters -

- (i) Rule 49N of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 provides for special provision for recording of votes of blind or infirm electors. The Rule provides that if the Presiding Officer is satisfied that owing to blindness or other physical infirmities an elector is unable to recognise the symbol on the balloting unit of the electronic voting machine or unable to record his vote by pressing the appropriate button thereon without assistance, the Presiding Officer shall permit the elector to take with him a companion of not less than eighteen years of age to the voting compartment for recording the vote on his behalf and in accordance with his wishes.

Provided that no person shall be permitted to act as the companion of more than one elector at any polling station on the same day.

Provided further that before any person is permitted to act as the companion of an elector on any day that person shall be required to declare that he will keep secret the vote recorded by him on behalf of the elector and that he has not already acted as the companion of any other elector at any other polling station on that day.

- (ii) The declaration from the companion of such blind or infirm elector shall be obtained in the Form prescribed by the Election Commission (Annexure V).
- (iii) The Presiding Officer shall also keep a record of all such cases in Form 14A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. This record of blind and infirm voters in Form 14A will be kept in a packet superscribed as “NON-STATUTORY COVERS” and deposited at the collection centre after close of the poll.
- (iv) The Presiding Officer shall also ensure that none of his polling staff acts as a companion to the blind / infirm elector to record vote on his behalf.

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CHAPTER - 8

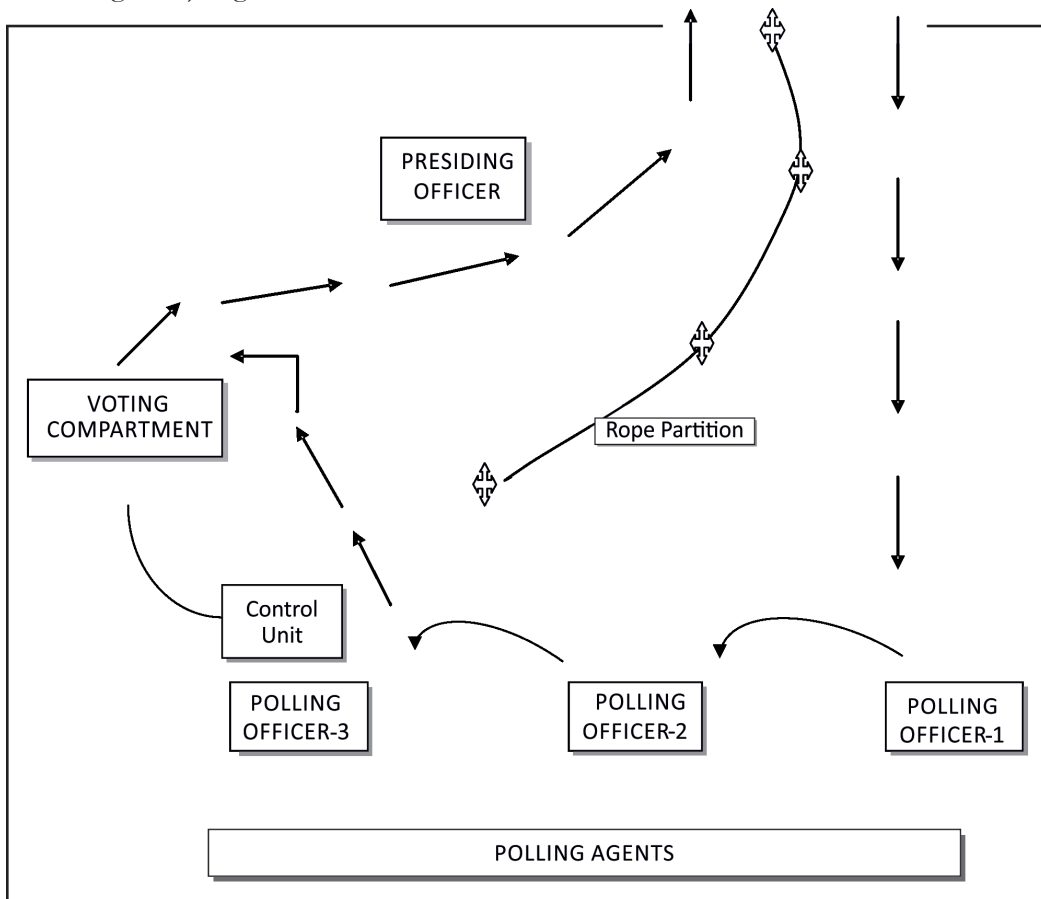
LAYOUT OF POLLING STATION

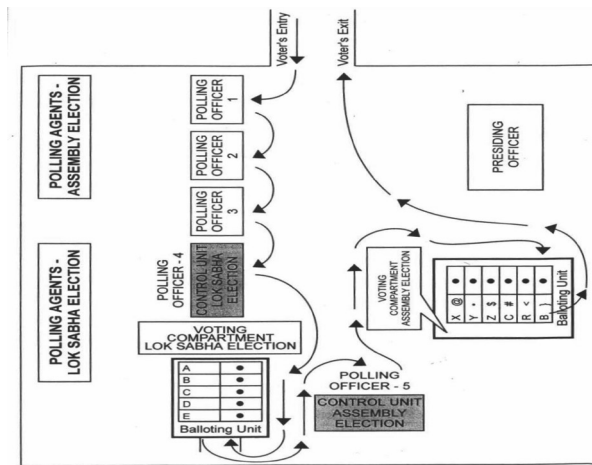
8.1 Layout of a polling station

(i) Set up of polling station for single election :- Polling station for a single election should be setup as per the diagram of model polling station given below.

(ii) Set up of polling station for simultaneous elections –

A layout plan of the polling station where two sets of EVMs are to be used for taking simultaneous poll (i.e. for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections together) is given below:-





In the diagrams above, being indicative, only one door has been shown. Ideally, there should be separate entrance and exit for voters in a polling station whether set up for one election or simultaneous election. Even if, there is only one door to the room housing the polling station, separate entrance and exit can be provided with the help of bamboos and ropes in the middle of the doorway.

Minor modifications in the actual set up of the polling station, if considered necessary, can be made, however, it should be ensured that –

- a) There is enough space for the voters to wait outside the polling station.
- b) There is separate waiting space for men and women as far as practicable.
- c) There is separate entrance and exit for voters. Even if, there is only one door to the room housing the polling station, separate entrance and exit can be provided with the help of bamboos and ropes in the middle of the doorway.
- d) Make sure that the inside of the voting compartment is sufficiently lighted. If necessary, arrange for a suitable light to be provided for each compartment.
- e) There is easy flow of voters from the time they enter the polling station

till the time they leave it and there is no criss-cross movement within the polling station.

8.2 Voting Compartment

- (i) Voters have to vote in secrecy and for this purpose, the ballot units are required to be kept in voting compartments. Voting compartment has three sides covered. The ballot unit is to be placed inside the voting compartment on a table. The ballot unit is to be placed in such a way that voters do not find any difficulty in recording their voters. The voting compartment should be located at sufficient distance from the table where the control unit shall be kept and operated. The interconnecting cable between the ballot unit and the control unit has a length of approximately five metres and is permanently attached to the ballot unit. The cable should be so routed that it does not obstruct the movement of voters inside the polling station and they have not to tread or trip over it, but the entire length of the cable should be visible and under no circumstances be concealed under the cloth or under the table. It has to come out from the back portion of the voting compartment through an aperture cut out at the bottom of back portion of the voting compartment. This aperture should be wide enough so that the portion of the ballot unit, through which the cable comes out is visible from outside. This is necessary to keep a watch that no voter tries to tamper with or damage the cable while inside the voting compartment. However, this aperture in the voting compartment should also not be so wide as to violate the secrecy of voting. While placing the EVM in the voting compartment, it must be ensured without fail that secrecy of voting is not violated. For this purpose, it must be ensured that it is not near the window or the door of the polling station. It must be ensured that the voting compartment has been made only of cardboard / flex board that are opaque and reusable. This shall be in three folds, each fold having minimum dimension of 23"X23". However, where the voting compartments are in conformity with the Election Commission's earlier instructions, i.e. each fold having dimension of 21"X21", these need not be changed. If more than one ballot unit is used for poll, the width of the voting compartment may be increased as per requirement. The voting compartment should be placed away from the window/door.

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- (ii) In the polling station set up for simultaneous elections, there shall be two separate voting compartments – one for keeping the Ballot unit of the Lok Sabha election and the other to keep the Ballot unit of the Vidhan Sabha election. A notice with bold letters with the words ‘VOTING COMPARTMENT – LOK SABHA ELECTION’ and ‘VOTING COMPARTMENT – VIDHAN SABHA ELECTION’ shall be pasted on each of the voting compartments.

8.3 Sitting arrangement of the polling officials

The seating arrangement of the Polling Officials should be made as per the diagrams shown above. However, it should be ensured that their sitting arrangement is made in such a manner that they should not be in position to see the voter while actually recording his vote by pressing a particular button of the ballot unit.

8.4 Sitting arrangement of polling agents

- (i) The polling agents are seated in such a way that they can see face of an elector as and when he enters the polling station and is identified by the first Polling Officer so that they can challenge the identity of the elector, if need be. They should also be able to see the entire operation at the Presiding Officer’s table/the table of third Polling Officer, where the control unit is kept and also see the movement of the elector from the Presiding Officer’s table/the table of third Polling Officer, as the case may be, to the voting compartment and his exit from the polling station after recording his vote. But they should not in any event be seated in a place where they have the chance of seeing the ballot unit and the voter while actually recording his vote by pressing a particular button of the ballot unit.
- (ii) For this purpose it will be preferable if seats of the polling agents be given closely behind the first Polling Officer (in-charge of marked copy of the electoral roll). Wherever this is not practicable because of the situation of the door for entrance, they may be given seat just opposite the polling officers. In case of a polling station, which has very small and insufficient space or where the respective constituency is having abnormally large number of contesting candidates warranting

the presence of a large number of polling agents, in such cases where polling agents cannot be accommodated, Observer(s) shall be consulted for appropriate advice and consent of the Observer(s) shall be obtained.

- (iii) According to the latest instructions of the Commission, the seating order at the polling station for the polling agents of candidates shall be guided by the following categories of priorities, namely:-
- a) Candidates of recognised National Parties;
 - b) Candidates of recognised State Parties;
 - c) Candidates of recognised State Parties of other states who have been permitted to use their reserved symbols in the constituency;
 - d) Candidates of Registered Unrecognised Parties; and
 - e) Independent Candidates

8.5 Concept of 'model polling station'

- (i) The Election Commission with a view to add further value to the polling station system and to make the entire experience of voting pleasant and enriching one for the voter, has introduced concept of model polling station. One important defining fact for such a value addition would be the actual experience of the voter at the polling station on the day of voting – both in terms of the ease and comfort of voting, and also strengthening his association with the entire process. With this aim in mind, certain model polling stations were set up in Delhi during last elections to Delhi Legislative Assembly on pilot basis.
- (ii) In a model polling station, voter experience enhancement is envisioned across three broad parameters :-
- (A) The physical structure of building and facilities –**
- a) Good condition building with fresh wall painting
 - b) Easy access to the building
 - c) Good quality furniture for polling personnel and polling agents
 - d) Voting compartments of fibre glass

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- e) Display boards / signages, e.g. name of polling station / AC, Election Commission logo, National Voters Day (NVD) pledge, signages like ‘exit’, ‘entry’, basic facilities etc.
 - f) Provision of basic minimum facilities such as electricity (generator/ petromax as standby arrangement), separate toilets, drinking water, shades, ramps and wheel chairs for voters with disability
 - g) Voter assistance booth manned by Booth Level Officer (BLO) with a copy of electoral roll in alphabetical order and undistributed voter’s slip
 - h) Other facilities such as red carpet welcome of the voters and flowers being distributed to them.

(B) Improved queue management-

- a) Use of queue managers or rope separators
- b) Assistance of volunteers, distribution of tokens, serving drinking water to voters in queue.
- c) Priority voting for blind / infirm / old voters, pregnant women / lactating mothers etc.
- d) Sitting arrangements for voters in queue

(C) The behaviour of the polling staff / volunteers

- a) Uniform dress for polling staff
- b) Dos and Don’ts for voters
- c) Arrangement of medical / First Aid facilities
- d) A Feedback Form from the voters.

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CHAPTER - 9

DEPLOYMENT OF STAFF OF POLLING STATIONS ON POLL DAY

The polling officials who man the polling station on the day of poll to conduct polling are appointed by District Election Officers. Polling officials comprise Presiding Officer and Polling Officers. Their appointment is done by randomization software prepared by the Election Commission. For purpose of assistance of polling teams and coordination between polling staff and Returning Officer, a large number of field level officials are provided.

9.1 Polling officials at single election to house of people / legislative assembly –

At a single election to the House of the People/Legislative Assembly, a polling party consists of one Presiding Officer and three Polling Officers.

- (i) First Polling Officer - The First Polling Officer will be in charge of the marked copy of electoral roll and responsible for identification of electors. On entering the Polling Station, the elector will proceed direct to the First Polling Officer. That Polling Officer will satisfy himself about the identity of the elector.
- (ii) Second Polling Officer - The Second Polling Officer will be in charge of indelible ink. After the elector has been identified by the First Polling Officer, the Second Polling Officer will inspect the elector's left hand forefinger to see that it does not bear any sign or trace of indelible ink and then put a mark with the indelible ink on the voter's left hand forefinger. The indelible ink will be applied on voter's left hand forefinger as a line from the top end of the nail to the bottom of the first joint of the left forefinger. The Second Polling Officer will also be in-charge of the register of voters (in Form 17A). He will be responsible for maintaining in that register the proper account of electors whose identity has been established and who vote at the polling station. He will obtain the signature or thumb impression of each elector in that register before the elector is allowed to vote. The Second Polling Officer will also issue a

voter's slip to each elector after he has entered his (elector's) particulars in the register of voters. It should be ensured that sufficient time has elapsed after the indelible ink mark was put so that the mark dries up by the time he leaves the polling station. For this purpose, only after the mark of indelible ink is applied, signature/thumb impression may be obtained in the register of voters. It should be ensured that the indelible ink mark has dried up before the voter leaves the polling station.

- (iii) Third Polling Officer - The Third Polling Officer will be in-charge of the control unit of the voting machine. He will be seated on the same table where the Second Polling Officer sits. The Third Polling Officer will check mark of indelible ink and allow the elector to proceed to the voting compartment only on the basis of the voter's slip issued by the second Polling Officer and strictly in accordance with the serial number indicated in that slip. He will activate the Ballot Unit(s) kept in the voting compartment by pressing the 'Ballot' button on the control unit. Before allowing the elector to proceed to the voting compartment, he will also check and ensure that the elector's left hand forefinger still bears a clear indelible ink mark. (If the indelible ink mark is found removed, the mark may again be made on the forefinger).
- (iv) Polling party in the polling station with small number of electors - Where the number of electors assigned to a polling station is small, the duties of the third Polling Officer can be performed by the Presiding Officer himself, thus making a further economy in the formation of Polling Parties. In the event of shortage of polling staff in any particular District/constituency, then in such places, the Polling party may consist of a presiding Officer and two polling officers as against the three polling officers which is the standard form. In that case, the duty of the First Polling Officer will also include the application of indelible ink on the finger of the voter, after identification of the voter. The Second Polling officer will be the custodian of the 'CU' also in such cases, in addition to his normal duties of making the entries in Form 17 A (register of Voters) and taking the signature/Thumb impression of electors therein. It is clarified that in such cases where only two polling officers are used, it is not necessary to prepare the voters slip serial numbers. Instead, the second polling officer will activate the 'CU' and then send the voters inside the voting compartment exactly in the same sequence in which

they sign in the Register of Voters (Form 17A). There will be no need to prepare the voters slip at the polling station in such cases. Further in the cases where number of polling officers are restricted to two, the contesting candidate should be informed in writing in advance about this. The duties to be performed by the two polling officers should be explained to the candidates.

9.2 Polling officials at simultaneous elections – At simultaneous elections the polling party consists of one Presiding Officer and five Polling Officers.

- (i) First Polling Officer - He will be identifying the electors and will be in-charge of marked copy of the electoral roll.
- (ii) Second Polling Officer - He will be in-charge of the indelible ink and voters register.
- (iii) Third Polling Officer - He will be in-charge of the voter's slip.
- (iv) Fourth Polling Officer - He will be in-charge of the control unit for Lok Sabha election.
- (v) Fifth Polling Officer - He will be in-charge of the control unit for State assembly election.
- (vi) Important Duties of 4th and 5th Polling Officers - It may appear that the 4th and 5th Polling Officers have been given a very easy job. On the contrary, the success of simultaneous election depends on their alertness. Their job is not only to simply press the 'Ballot' button to activate the voting machine, but they have also to ensure that each elector votes in his/her turn exactly in the same serial order as has been given in the voters slip. They have also to keep a constant watch to ensure that when they direct any elector to go and vote, the elector goes into the correct voting compartment and votes accordingly. Due to ignorance or otherwise, if any elector seems to be not sure as to where to go and what to do after he has been allowed to vote, it is the duty of these two Polling Officers to ensure that the elector follows the correct procedure. Specially, during the first hour of poll, when there is usually a lot of rush, they must keep their cool and see that the voting proceeds smoothly.

Whenever there is a respite and in any case after every one hour of poll, they should also tally the total votes polled with the total number of voters as shown in the voters register and as displayed in the two control units.

9.3 Presiding Officer is over all in-charge of the polling station. His duties are, in brief, to –

- (i) Place the Ballot Units and printer with drop box in their respective voting compartments. In no case the Ballot Unit or the Control Unit or printer with drop box be placed on the floor. It must be kept on a table;
- (ii) Connect the Ballot Units and printer with drop box with their respective control units;
- (iii) Switch on the power;
- (iv) Demonstrate before the hour fixed for actual commencement of the poll to the candidates/agents present that the voting machines are clear and do not contain any votes;
- (v) Conduct mock poll to ensure and demonstrate to the polling agents that the EVM is in perfect working condition;
- (vi) Clear the mock poll result;
- (vii) Prepare the certificate of mock poll;
- (viii) He should be clear that according to the Election Commission's instructions, if there is no mock poll at a polling station, there shall be no poll at that polling station
- (ix) Ensure that on the green paper seal fixed in the CONTROL UNIT FOR LOK SABHA ELECTION only the candidates for the Lok Sabha election or their polling agents, who are present at the polling station at that time, affix their signatures, and similarly, on the green paper seal fixed in the CONTROL UNIT FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTION, the candidates for assembly election or their polling agents alone affix their signatures;

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- (x) See that voting compartments have been properly arranged with appropriate posters pasted outside to indicate clearly the election pertaining to which the Ballot Unit and printer with drop box is kept inside;
 - (xi) Ensure that the cables to connect the Ballot Units and printer with drop box with their respective control units are placed in such a way that the cable is visible to everyone while also ensuring that the voters are not required to cross over them during their movements inside the polling station. It should also be ensured that the cable does not hang loose under the voting compartment;
 - (xii) Ensure that all the members of the polling party are in position well before the commencement of the poll and all materials and records are kept handy and ready to commence poll at the appointed hour;
 - (xiii) Prevent any member of the polling party or any polling agent from wandering here or there inside the polling station and to keep them seated in their allocated seats;
 - (xiv) Commence the actual poll at the stroke of the hour fixed for commencement of poll;
 - (xv) Keep, during the progress of poll, a close watch on the movements of the voters and to be alert and watchful so that no voter goes away without voting;
 - (xvi) Ensure that during the first hour of the poll when polling is generally brisk, no member of the polling party shows any slackness in the duties allocated to him;
 - (xvii) Check the total votes cast periodically on both the control units and also to ensure that voters have voted in according to their serial numbers given on the voter's slip;
 - (xviii) Ensure that in simultaneous election, copies of Form 17C for parliamentary election are supplied to polling agents of the candidates in parliamentary constituency only and copies of Form 17C for the

assembly election are given only to the agents of candidates of assembly constituency.

- (xix) At regular intervals check the ballot unit to ensure that the voter has not tampered with it in any manner. The voter already in queue at the time fixed for close of poll will be allowed to vote.
- (xx) Identification of ASD Voters - The Presiding Officer shall personally verify the identification document (EPIC or any one of the alternative photo documents, permitted by the Election Commission) and proper details shall be registered in the Voter's Register (Form 17A). Thumb impression of ASD Voters shall also be obtained (even in the case of an elector who is literate and can sign) in addition to signature against the column of 'signature/thumb impression' of Voter's Register. At the end of poll, Presiding Officer shall give a certificate (to be kept with Voter's Register for scrutiny) that so many ASD Voters have been allowed to vote after scrutiny. Wherever possible, ASD Voters shall be photographed and record of the same kept.

9.4 Field Officers

Sector Officer / Zonal Magistrate

- (i) The Election Commission of India has introduced the system of appointment of Sector Officers for every 10-12 polling stations for election management. In some States, under Sector Officers, Zonal Magistrates are appointed. These are State Government officials who serve as link between Presiding Officer and Returning Officer on the day of poll.
- (ii) Monitoring of distribution of Photo Voter Slips –
 - a. Sector Officers should randomly check that distribution of Photo Voter Slips is being done as per the instructions of the Election Commission and if any deviation is found it should be corrected immediately. Sector Officers should also verify from the photo Voter Slip registers that all slips have been distributed as per the schedule prepared by Returning Officer and that signatures/thumb impression of acknowledgement have been obtained on the register.

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- b. The schedule of distribution of Photo Voter Slips shall be shared with political parties, contesting candidates and Booth Level Agents of all recognized political parties, under acknowledgement. The Booth Level Agents/contesting candidate's agents may accompany Booth Level Officers during distribution of Photo Voter Slips and their signatures should be obtained on the register as a token of having seen the distribution process.
 - c. They assist Returning Officer to monitor the distribution of Photo Voter Slips and ensure that all Photo Voter Slips are totally distributed and duly accounted for.
 - d. No bulk distribution of Photo Voter Slips shall be allowed by Booth Level Officer or any other person.
 - e. The Election Commission has also issued instructions to setup a mechanism at the level of each Sector Officer and the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officer to receive complaints about improper distribution of Photo Voter Slips. All such complaints should be expeditiously inquired into and immediate corrective actions should be taken.
 - f. Distribution of Photo Voter Slips should be completed at least 5 clear days before the date of poll.
 - g. The undistributed Photo Voter Slip shall be kept at facilitation/help desk outside each Polling Station, manned by Booth Level Officer, on the day of poll.
 - h. It should be ensured that no photocopies of Photo Voter Slips shall be made for distribution purposes and Sector Officers shall carry out random checks and ensure distribution of the Photo Voter Slips in an effective manner and to address complaints received, if any, from any quarter about the conduct of the Booth Level Officers in impartial and fair distribution of these Slips.
 - i. Any unauthorized distribution/possession of Photo Voter Slips (election material) shall be considered as violation of the relevant provisions of the Representation of People Act, 1951 and the

Indian Penal Code and is punishable with imprisonment or fine or both. Instructions to this effect shall be printed on the reverse of the Photo Voter Slips, along with other instructions like, not to bring any camera (still/video/digital) or mobile phone inside the Polling Stations.

- (iii) Coordination with Presiding Officers - They coordinate with Presiding Officer in any poll related crisis and furnishes quick reports regarding election and other law & order situation to Returning Officer. Their contact number will be provided with Presiding Officer by the Returning Officer at the time of distribution of polling materials, so that he can contact them in case of an emergency. In case of a malfunctioning of EVM, Sector Officers arrange their replacement at the earliest.
- (iv) On the day of poll, the Sector Officers shall pay special attention to verify whether voters from the vulnerable habitats / communities are turning up for voting or not. In case, they find (it can be gauged from the marked copy of the electoral roll where voters who have voted are ticked) that some sections of voters are conspicuously absent, then they should inform the Returning Officer about this immediately.

9.5 Observers

- (i) The Election Commission is now generally appointing its observers at elections. Election Commission appoints observers for different type of duties. While general observers observe general law and order situation, enforcement of model code of conduct and compliance of the Election Commission's directives, the expenditure observers are to see whether the expenditure made by the candidates is within the prescribed limit or not. In some areas police observers are also appointed.
- (ii) The observers are statutory authorities appointed by the Election Commission under Section 20 B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- (iii) The Observers should use the services of the Micro-observers and Sector Officers to carry out random checks and ensure distribution of

the Photo Voter Slips in an effective manner and to address complaints received, if any, from any quarter about the conduct of the Booth Level Officers in impartial and fair distribution of Photo Voter Slips.

- (iv) During the day of poll, an observer visits polling stations in the area assigned to him. The polling officials are expected to show him due courtesy and regard when he visits the polling station and should furnish him with such information as he may require from them for the purpose of his report to the Election Commission. The Presiding Officer should also make available to the Observer additional information, which he may be having with him over and above routine information. The Presiding Officer is also expected to make available to the Observer the list of Absentee, Shifted and Duplicate voter (ASD list) at the polling station. The Observers are briefed and directed that they are only to observe the poll being taken at the polling station, but will not give the polling officials any direction. If, however, he makes any suggestion with a view to providing more convenience to electors or making the poll process at the polling station smoother, the Presiding Officer should give due consideration to such suggestion. At the same time, in case, the Presiding Officer is facing any particular problem or feeling any difficulty at his polling station, he is at liberty to bring it to the notice of the observer as he might be of help to the Presiding Officer in solving that problem or removing that difficulty by bringing the matter to the notice of the Returning Officer or any other concerned authorities for necessary remedial action. The Observers will be wearing badges issued by the Election Commission on their person and will also be carrying appointment letters and authority letters issued by the Commission. The observers should be requested to sign the 'Visit Sheet', which shall be given to the Presiding Officer stapled along with the Presiding Officer's Diary. The Presiding Officer shall deposit the same after the end of the poll along with the Presiding Officer's Diary.

9.6 Associated officials

9.6.1 Micro Observers

- (i) As it is sometimes not possible for the general observer to visit each and every polling station in the constituency allotted to him or to be present

at a polling station for full time, the Election Commission has consciously decided recently to manage the elections at the polling stations with the help of micro- management by deploying micro-observers wherever necessary to strengthen the system of observation. The Election Commission has introduced the system of Micro Observers and also use of digital /video cameras at some pre-selected critical polling stations.

- (ii) Micro Observer (MO) is a special job profile created under the guidelines of Election Commission. The responsibilities and tasks assigned to micro-observer revolve around reporting deviations in the polling process from the assigned polling station to the General Observer of the constituency. Micro-observers are appointed in the sensitive polling areas identified in vulnerability mapping. These micro-observers would directly be working under the control and supervision of the general observer.
- (iii) Micro Observer is allowed to carry mobile phone in silent mode so that in case of any need he / she can coordinate with control room.
- (iv) Micro Observers are expected to reach the polling station one hour before the commencement of the poll, i.e., at 7 O'clock in the morning and remain deployed at the polling station throughout the day. He has to assess the preparedness for the poll and during the poll day he would regularly note down the important points on the preprinted Performa, but in no case the micro-observer will act as Presiding Officer or the Polling Officer or give any directions to them. His task is to observe that election process is being carried out in a free and fair manner and there is no vitiation of any kind. In multi-polling station buildings / locations, the micro observer shall be responsible for all the polling stations at that location. There is no need to post separate micro-observer in polling stations at one location. The micro-observer shall divide his time between polling stations and will visit all the polling stations within the same campus at frequent intervals. He shall make it known to the polling agents at each polling station that he is available in case they want to bring anything to his notice. General Observers will be in close touch with the DEOs for their requirements of micro-observers relating to

their constituencies. Each micro-observer shall have a photo-pass and identity card issued by the District Election Officer to ensure his access to the polling stations.

- (v) Key Responsibilities of Micro-Observers: -
- a) To be conversant with the laws and rules related to election conduct on the poll day.
 - b) To observe whether the identification document particulars were being filled up meticulously in Register of Voters (Form 17-A) by polling officer.
 - c) To be present/ visit the given polling booth throughout the day and observe all the processes of the election as per the guidelines of the Election Commission.
 - d) To observe whether the Presiding Officer or Polling Officer was going towards voting compartment or giving any undue instructions to the voters
 - e) To check whether the scrutiny of voters in the Absentee, Shifted and Duplicate list (ASD List) was done meticulously by the Presiding Officers in accordance with guidelines of the Election Commission.
 - f) To report to Observer about activities of poll day for each polling booth under his jurisdiction.
 - g) To check whether sealing of voting machine was done according to the Election Commission's instructions.
 - h) To keep a track of complaints by polling agent/s, election agent/s or any political party and also understand the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
 - i) After the poll, the Micro-Observer should report to General Observer at the collection centres and handover the envelope containing the report.
 - j) To observe whether sufficient polling material has been provided

to the Presiding Officer and Polling party. To bring to the notice of General Observer whenever he feels that the poll is being vitiated for any reason, with help of available communication channel either phone, wireless or any other means.

- (vi) Key tasks of Micro-Observers :-
- a) Assess the preparedness of the election process on the day of poll like presence of polling party, mock polls, facilities at polling booth, security arrangements, etc. to attend the training for Micro observer compulsorily.
 - b) To avail his/her photo pass, Identity card and appointment letter from DEO.
 - c) To understand the instructions given by General Observer. On instructions of General Observer, to carry out random checks and ensure distribution of the Photo Voter Slips in an effective manner and to address complaints received, if any, from any quarter about the conduct of the Booth Level Officers in impartial and fair distribution of Photo Voter Slips.
 - d) To take the communication plan from Returning Officer.
 - e) To reach the polling station at least one hour before the polls or previous day if required as per situation.
 - f) To be present at the time of mock polls.
 - g) To keep a track of the data of ballot unit whether properly deleted after the mock polls.
 - h) To keep an eye on the presence of polling agent and political parties during mock poll.
 - i) To check whether more than one polling agent from same political party was present inside polling station.
 - j) To note down the time of mock poll.

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- k) To observe whether the entry pass system for Agents is been followed or not.
 - l) To observe whether the voters were identified by verifying EPIC or other valid documents before permitting to vote.
 - m) To observe whether the polling booth is been visited by Sector Officer or not.
 - n) To observe whether Central Para Military Forces Jawan is deployed at the polling station.
 - o) To observe whether the hourly total is compared to EVM total and Electoral Roll (17 A).
 - p) To observe the time of Commencement of polls as well as time of closing of polls at the polling station.
 - q) To check whether polling agents were allowed to note down the serial numbers of ballot unit and control unit and green paper seal.
 - r) To check whether the list of votes issued with Postal Ballot was available with the Presiding Officer & Polling Agents.
 - s) To observe whether the entry pass system was enforced properly in the polling booth/s.
 - t) To observe whether any unauthorized person was inside the polling station at any point of time.
 - u) To observe whether marking of indelible ink on left forefinger of voter was done properly.
 - v) To note down whether copies of accounts of votes recorded in Form-17C have been given to the polling agents.
 - w) To observe whether voting compartment was properly placed to ensure secrecy of voting.
 - x) To check whether events are recorded and when they occur in the Presiding Officer's Diary

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- y) To be in constant touch with the General Observer and report him from time-to-time.

9.6.2 Booth Level Officer at Help Desk

It should be ensured that the Booth Level Officer appointed for 'Help Desk' duty at each polling station by the District Election Officer is provided with sufficient separate seating arrangements outside of polling station, however, in the premises of polling station location, at a place convenient for the voters and so as to provide necessary assistance to them. It is recommended to arrange his seat with a signboard and very close to the main entrance of the polling station location as far as possible so as to catch the attention of the electors on their arrival at the polling station location. The Booth Level Officer shall keep undistributed Photo Voter Slips along with an alphabetical Voter's list at the helpdesk for distribution on the day of poll. He shall keep a record of distribution (signature/thumb impression of the voter) on the list itself and finally deposit the list and Photo Voter Slips, undistributed if any, to the Electoral Registration Officer at the end of the poll.

9.6.3 Voter Assistance Booth personnel

For each premise/building location where 3 or more polling stations are located, Voter Assistance Booth will function. A team of officials will be appointed by the Returning Officer for each Voter Assistance Booth. Appointment to be made for poll day only. Objective is to facilitate the voter to locate his/her polling station number & serial number of voter in the electoral roll. For this Part wise electoral roll is generated in alphabetical order. Alphabetical arrangement of names within a part is not further divided section wise. The alphabetical list should preferably be printed in English. For single/double polling stations buildings, no separate team or Voter Assistance Booth is required. In such cases the alphabetical roll locator will be provided to the Presiding Officer for easy identification of electors in the polling station (in addition to the marked copy). Necessary arrangement is to be made for sitting of the Voter Assistance Booth personnel. Signage indicating "VOTER ASSISTANCE BOOTH" to be put up in such a manner that the same is conspicuous to voters as they approach the premise/building. Voter Assistance Booth

personnel will locate the booth no. and serial no. of every elector seeking such information.

9.6.4 Videographer / Digital photographer

(i) Digital Photography was initiated on the suggestion of the Supreme Court (judgment dated 11.1.20115 in Civil Appeal no 9228 of 2003-Janak Bingham vs Das Rai & others) but no compromise on secrecy of voting should be allowed. The Election Commission has specifically directed that a digital camera person has to capture the following:

- All electors coming to cast votes not having EPIC /other ELECTION COMMISSION approved photo identity card – to be captured as same sequence as they are entered in Form 17 A, photographs are to be taken immediately after entry.

Other critical events like:

- Mock poll and sealing of EVM before start of poll
- Positioning of voting compartment (minimum 3 photos covering the background also)
- Presence of CPMF / State Police personnel deployed in the polling station
- Presence of polling agents
- Photos of electors in case of Challenged / Tendered Votes/Missing voter as per ASD list;
- Voters waiting outside at the close of scheduled hours of poll and last voter in the queue
- Visits of sector officers , observers and other electoral functionaries
At the end of poll he will issue a certificate that: “ I have captured photographs of all electors who voted at polling station number ---
----- on date-----and total number of photographs
in the camera are-----.

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- (ii) The Election Commission has also issued instructions for videography of critical events of the election process and also at hypersensitive and sensitive polling stations to the extent possible. In deference to the suggestion of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission has now instructed that videography of the poll proceedings may be carried out inside the polling station also in consultation with the Observer. However, proper care shall be taken to ensure that while doing the videography, the same does not violate the secrecy of vote, i.e., it should be ensured that a voter recording vote should not be videographed. No photography/videography shall, however, be allowed by the media persons or by any other unauthorized persons inside the polling station, to maintain general order and secrecy of vote. Similarly, there is no objection to any photographer taking photographs of a crowd of electors lining up outside the polling station subject to the maintenance of peace and order. He should not, however, in any circumstances be allowed to take photographs inside the polling station of the actual process of a person casting his/her vote or the voting compartment. At the same time, nobody will be allowed to take a photograph of an elector recording his/her vote on the Ballot Unit of the voting machine in any circumstances.

9.6.5 Village officer

A village officer or other officer or a woman attendant, who has been employed by Presiding Officer for helping him in the identification of electors or to assist him otherwise in taking the poll, should normally, be seated outside the entrance of the polling station. He/she should be admitted into the polling station only when he/she is required for identification of a particular elector or for assisting you for a particular purpose in connection with the taking of the poll. No one inside the polling station should be allowed to influence or try to influence the electors by words or gestures to vote in a particular way.

9.7 Security personnel at polling stations

During elections, the Election Commission deploys personnel of State Police and Central Para Military Forces (CPMF) at polling stations for the smooth conduct of elections. The Local State Police (including all its variants) and CPMF stand deputed to the Election Commission at the time of election and

they come under its superintendence and control for all purposes. The Election Commission conducts election with the help of all these organs.

In pursuance to the directions given by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order no.9228 of 2003 (Janak Singh Vs. Ram Das Rai and others) dated 11.01.2005, the Election Commission has directed that in the polling stations with CPMF coverage, one CPMF Jawan from the CPMF party posted at the polling station will be stationed at the entrance of the polling station so that he can keep a watch on the proceedings that are going on inside the polling station, particularly, to ensure that no unauthorized person enters inside the polling station. It should be ensured that the CPMF personnel is not located inside the polling station. It is clarified that the CPMF Jawans shall be posted at the entrance of only those polling stations, where CPMF is deployed. It is further clarified that the CPMF Jawan posted at the entrance of the polling station shall not verify the identity of electors coming into the polling stations to cast their votes as such verification is the duty of the polling personnel.

9.8 Coordination between Presiding Officer and security personnel

Section 131 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 provides that in case any person behaves disorderly manner at polling station on the day of poll, the Presiding Officer can have him arrested then and there by a police officer and have him prosecuted. Since, CPMF is deployed at polling station in capacity of police for security purpose, CPMF personnel along with the State police be treated as police in common, and for any unlawful activity at the polling station, the Presiding Officer is at liberty to utilize the services of CPMF deployed in the polling station to stop any malpractice(s) in the polling station. If the Central Para Military Forces Jawan posted at the entrance of the polling station discovers violation of the election process as above or observes something unusual going on inside the polling station, he shall not interfere in the poll process but report the same to the officer in-charge of the CPMF party at polling station or to the General Observer. The officer in-charge of CPMF party will in turn bring it to the notice of the Returning Officer and also to the General Observer immediately in writing for further necessary action. Returning Officer/Observer will report cases from where adverse reports are received from the CPMF parties for further instructions of the Commission. In the buildings which have more than one polling station and where only half a section of the CPMF personnel is deployed, the CPMF Jawan selected

for duty at the entrance of the polling station may be asked to oscillate from one polling station to other. The Election Commission directed that for better co-ordination between the Presiding Officer and the CPMF, a pre-poll meeting should be organized by Presiding Officer where he may brief all the responsibilities in case of any untoward incident which might take place during poll process.

9.9 Roles and responsibilities of CPMF and State Police

According to the Election Commission's instructions, the CPMF Jawans should not be positioned inside the polling station. The Election Commission further elaborated its directions with reference to the role of CPMF and State Police in the conduct of polls as under:-

- (i) Role of CPMF –
 - a) Wherever the CPMF arrives in advance for area domination, it shall take out flag marches, point patrolling and other confidence building activities.
 - b) On the poll-eve (day prior to the poll) the CPMF shall take position in and control of the respective polling stations.
 - c) On the day of the poll, the CPMF shall be primarily responsible for protecting the polling stations and regulating the entry inside the polling stations. One jawan of the CPMF party shall be deployed at the door of the polling station (either in static or oscillating mode) in order to observe the proceedings that are going on inside the polling station, as per the directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Besides, the Coy. Commanders of CPMF will also move in their respective polling station areas as an area domination force and confidence building measure in the catchment area of polling stations.
 - d) In case CPMF has not reached to the polling station covered by CPMF due to any reason, the poll shall not commence.
 - e) After the poll is completed, the polled EVMs and the Presiding Officers shall be escorted by a contingent of CPMF to the Reception Center. Details in this regard shall be worked out by the DEO and SP in consultation with Observer in advance.

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- f) The CPMF shall also be responsible for guarding the Strong Room where the polled EVMs are stored and kept till the day of counting.
- (ii) Role of Local State Police –
- a) State Police shall remain responsible for maintenance of the general law and order in the catchment area of the polling stations, as well as the inside and outside of the polling premises (as different from polling stations).
- b) In the polling stations covered by CPMF, whenever, the Local State Police gets deployed inside the polling premises, they shall station themselves at a reasonable distance from the polling station and the queue of electors.
- c) It is advised that one or two unarmed Local State Police persons/ Home Guards be posted at each polling premises so that if required, reinforcement could be called for.
- d) In any case, Local State Police shall not replace the CPMF at the polling stations and no senior officer of the local state police, with or without contingent shall position himself at the polling station and exercise any supervision and control over the CPMF at the polling station.
- e) The Local State Police, however, in exceptional circumstances can get deployed at polling stations, only if enough CPMF is not available, and that too under specific instructions of the Election Commission through its Observer.
- f) Responsibility of maintenance of law and order shall rest solely with the local State Police. The Election Commission has instructed that hamlets/ habitations within a polling station area that are vulnerable to threat, intimidation and undue influence shall be identified and all necessary confidence building and preventive measures shall be taken in advance. The Local State Police shall attach utmost importance to this task and shall also ensure that there is no hindrance to voters of such pockets in exercising their franchise on the day of poll.

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CHAPTER- 10

POLLING DAY ARRANGEMENTS AT POLLING STATIONS

On the day of poll, the Presiding Officer is the overall in-charge of the poll process being conducted at the polling station. He is also responsible for maintaining order in the polling station and outside the polling station and for ensuring the compliance of the Commission's instructions.

10.1 General instructions for Presiding Officer/ polling officials for maintenance of decorum and dignity

- (i) **Impartiality on part of polling personnel is must** - Presiding Officer has to treat all parties and candidates equally and the Election Commission every disputed point fairly and justly. His tact, firmness and impartiality are the most important safeguards against any breach of peace. Needless to say, neither the Presiding Officer nor any other officer at the polling station should do any act, which could be interpreted as furthering the prospects of any candidate at the election. Further, Presiding Officer and other officers at the polling station should maintain decorum and dignity as is expected of an officer on duty. Neither Presiding Officer nor any other officer at the polling station indulge in any undue activities unbecoming of an officer on duty, such as shaking hands or getting himself photographed with him/her, when a celebrity or VIP visits the polling station for casting his/her vote, even though showing normal courtesy to each and every elector is part of duty.
- (ii) **Disorderly conduct in or near the polling station** - Presiding Officer has to enforce the provisions contained in Section 131 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. If any person behaves in a disorderly manner in or outside the polling station, the Presiding Officer can have him arrested then and there by a police officer and have him prosecuted. The police have the power to take such steps, and use such force, as may be reasonably necessary for preventing such behaviour. These powers should, however, be resorted to only when persuasion and warning have proved ineffective.

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- (iii) **Removal of trouble makers** - Any person who misbehaves himself or fails to obey lawful directions of Presiding Officer during the poll, may be removed from the polling station on his orders by any police officer or other persons authorized by Presiding Officer.
 - (iv) **Removal of voting machine from polling station to be an offence** - Any person, who at any election fraudulently or unauthorisedly takes or attempts to take a voting machine out of a polling station or willfully aids or abets the doing of any such act, commits a cognizable offence punishable with imprisonment upto one year or with fine upto five hundred rupees or with both.
 - (v) **Prohibition of going armed to or near a polling station** - As per the provisions of Section 134B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, no person (other than the Returning Officer, the Presiding Officer, any police officer and any other person appointed to maintain peace and order at a polling station who is on duty at the polling station) can, on a polling day, go armed with arms, as defined in the Arms Act, 1959, of any kind within the neighborhood of a polling station. If any person contravenes these provisions, he is liable to imprisonment for a term, which may extend to two years or with fine, or with both. The offence is cognizable.
 - (vi) **Display of notice** – The Presiding Officer will display prominently outside each polling station -
 - a) a notice specifying the polling area and the particulars of electors to be served by the polling station; and
 - b) a copy of the list of contesting candidates in Form 7-A and wherever practicable the facsimile of the symbol of each candidate. The language of the notice should be the same as for the list of contesting candidates and the order of the names should also be the same as in the list of contesting candidate.
 - (vii) **Arrangements in case of multiple polling stations at a polling station location** - If more polling stations than one are located in the same building, Presiding Officer should satisfy himself that necessary

arrangements have been made for segregating the voters and making them wait in different parts of the space in front of each polling station without causing confusion.

- (viii) **Arrangements in case of polling station in private buildings** - If the polling station is located in a private building/private institution, the building and the area around it up to a radius of one hundred metres should be under control of Presiding Officer. No person (chowkidar/guard or anybody else) connected with the owner, whether armed or unarmed, should be allowed to remain either at the polling station or within a radius of two hundred metres around it. The security arrangements at the polling station and within the above area will be entirely the responsibility of the police under the control of Presiding Officer. It should be ensured that the owner of such private building is not a contesting candidate or a known sympathizer or worker of any of the candidates at the election.
- (ix) No photos of leaders or symbols of any political party or slogans having a bearing on elections should be exhibited and if they are already there, Presiding Officer should take steps to remove them and keep them away, till the poll is over.
- (x) **Smoking prohibited inside polling station** - No smoking is allowed inside the polling station. Presiding Officer must, therefore, ensure that nobody smokes inside the polling station. If any of the polling agents desires to smoke, he may be asked to go out of the polling station without causing any dislocation to the polling.
- (xi) No cooking or lighting of fire for any purpose should be allowed inside the polling station during the day of the poll.
- (xii) Wearing of badges, etc., No person should be allowed within the polling station or within 100 metres thereof to wear caps, shawl, badges, emblems, etc., bearing the names of political party, candidates or political leaders and/or their slogans / symbols or pictorial representation thereof, as it may amount to campaigning for a contesting candidate. However, a plain

cap without any symbol / slogan is not prohibited. The polling agents may display on their person a badge showing the name of the candidate whose agents they are for the purpose of their immediate identification.

- (xiii) Prohibition of use of camera/cellular (mobile)/cordless/wireless phone sets, etc., in the polling station - As per the standing instructions of the Election Commission, no cellular (mobile)/cordless/wireless phone sets, in any case are allowed inside the polling stations and also in the 100 meters perimeter of the polling stations described as the “polling station neighborhood”. Similarly, bringing any camera (still/video/digital) inside the Polling Station is also prohibited. The Election Commission has issued directions to print instructions to this effect on the reverse of the Photo Voter Slips to be distributed to the voters by Booth Level Officers, along with other instructions, not to bring any camera (still/video/digital) or mobile phone inside the Polling Station.
- (xiv) The Telephone numbers of Returning Officers / Assistant Returning Officers / Key Police Officers / Sector Officers / Control Room shall be displayed at the polling station so that if polling agents have any complaint they can establish contact to register it for immediate intervention.

10.2 Arrangements inside polling station

- (i) Regulation of entry into the polling station :-

The following persons can be admitted into the Polling Station:-

- a) Electors registered in the concerned part of the electoral roll
- b) Polling Officers;
- c) Each candidate, his election agent and one duly appointed polling agent of each candidate at a time;
- d) Media persons authorized by the Commission; (The Returning Officers have been asked to issue identity cards to the contesting candidates bearing their photographs. In case a necessity arises, Presiding Officer may ask for its production when they visit the polling station. Similarly, the election agents of the candidates can be asked to produce the duplicate copy of their appointment

letter, which is attested by the Returning Officer and also bears the photograph of the election agent.)

- e) Public servants on duty in connection with election;
 - f) Observers appointed by the Commission;
 - g) Micro observers, Videographers/ photographers/ staff for webcasting in the case of a critical/sensitive Polling Station;
 - h) A child in arms accompanying an elector;
 - i) A person accompanying a blind or an infirm voter who cannot move without help; and
 - j) Such other persons as you may from time to time admit for the purpose of identifying voters or otherwise assisting you in taking the poll.
- (ii) Entry of persons should be strictly regulated as detailed above, otherwise, the smooth and orderly conduct of poll may be vitiated. Presiding Officer should allow only three or four electors to enter the polling station at a time. If he has a reasonable doubt about the presence of any person, about whose credentials he has a reasonable suspicion, in the polling booth, he can have him searched, if necessary, even though the person concerned may be in possession of a valid authority letter to enter the polling booth. In the performance of his duties, Presiding Officer is only bound by the instructions of the Election Commission. He is not to take orders from or show any favour to his official superiors or political leaders including Ministers. Even in the matter of requests for entry into the polling booth from these, Presiding Officer should allow them only if they are in possession of a valid authority letter issued by the Election Commission.

10.3 Guidelines governing entry of ‘public servants on duty in connection with election’ inside polling stations

- (i) Presiding Officer should note that the term “Public servant on duty in connection with election” does not normally include police officers. Such officers, whether in uniform or in plain clothes, should not, as a general

rule, be allowed to enter inside the polling booth. Presiding Officer may, however, call them in occasionally for the maintenance of law and order or some similar purpose, whenever the necessity arises. Their presence in the polling booth without any compelling reason has on occasions given rise to complaints by some candidates or parties who have alleged that their agents had been overawed by unnecessary show of force. Similarly, security personnel, if any, accompanying an elector or candidate or his election agent or polling agent should also not be allowed to enter the polling station except the security personnel for the Z+protectee, that too only a single plain clothed security personnel with concealed arms.

- (ii) Presiding Officer should also note that the above expression, “Public servant on duty in connection with election” does not also include the Ministers, State Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the Union and the States. The Ministers, State Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the Union and the States, who have been given security cover at the State expense are not allowed to function as polling agents, as they can neither be allowed to enter the polling station along with their security personnel nor their lives can be put to risk by allowing them to enter the polling station without any security cover. As per standing instructions, the Security personnel accompanying Ministers or political functionaries, who enter the polling station in their capacity as candidates for elections, shall not be allowed entry inside the polling station. They can wait standing at the door of the polling station, but shall not, in any circumstances do any act amounting to interfere in the conduct of poll.
- (iii) Visits of Observers/Sector Officers/Zonal Magistrates etc.:- The Presiding Officer shall request the Election Commission’s Observers, Sector Officers, Zonal Magistrates or any other officers deployed on polling duty visiting the Polling Station to sign in the visit sheet. After completion of poll process, he shall submit it along with Presiding Officer’s diary to the Returning Officer.

10.4 Arrangements around polling station

- (i) **Ban on canvassing** - Canvassing within one hundred meters of the polling station is an offence under the election law. Any person, who does

so, can be arrested without warrant by the police and may be prosecuted under section 130 of the Representation of the people Act. 1951.

- (ii) **Candidate's election booth** - Contesting candidates are allowed to set up election booths near the polling station, but beyond 200 meters from the polling station, to help the electors locate their names in the electoral roll. The candidates are allowed to provide one table and two chairs with small tents not measuring, more than 10x10 feet, for the use of their agents and workers for the distribution of unofficial identity slips to voters beyond a distance of 200 meters from the polling station. No crowd is allowed to collect around such tables. If any instance of violation of the above instructions of the Election Commission is brought to notice of Presiding Officer, he should report the matter to the Sector Magistrate or other officials responsible for maintenance of law and order around the polling station for necessary remedial action by them.
- (iii) **Use of megaphone or loudspeaker** - If the use of a megaphone or loudspeaker interferes with the work of the polling station, Presiding Officer should take steps to stop such use. For this no limit of distance has been prescribed and it is left to him to decide whether it is near enough and loud enough to disturb the proceedings at the polling station.
- (iv) **Illegal hiring of vehicles** - Illegal hiring of vehicles for the conveyance of voters If Presiding Officer receives a complaint about illegal conveyance of electors to the polling station from their homes and back, he should tell the complainant that he may take action to prosecute the offender under Section 133 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 or use the fact as a ground for filing an election petition against the offending candidate in due course. The Presiding Officer will forward any complaint filed before him with such remarks which he can make from his own observation and personal knowledge to the Sub-divisional or other magistrate who has jurisdiction to deal with such cases. He can also bring this to the notice of the Zonal/ Sector Magistrate when he visits the booth. Presiding Officer also follow the instructions/directives issued by the Election Commission regulating the plying of vehicles on the day of poll.

10.5 Guidelines relating to polling agents

- (i) Appointment of polling agents
 - a) The polling agents, who are appointed by contesting candidates, shall be ordinarily resident and electors in the same polling booth or in the alternate from the neighbour polling station falling in the same constituency. Such polling agents must have Electors' Photo Identity Cards or any other recognized identification device issued by the Govt or any Govt agency which bears his/her identity.
 - b) In case elector, who has been proposed to be appointed as polling agent by the contesting candidate, does not have his Electors' Photo Identity Card, the Returning Officer shall make necessary arrangements for issue of Electors' Photo Identity Card to such elector on written request from the concerned contesting candidate or his election agent.
 - c) The Presiding Officer must ensure that all the polling agents display their Electors' Photo Identity Cards prominently on their persons on the day of poll for easy and quick identification.
 - d) Every polling agent must produce before Presiding Officer the appointment letter in Form 10 by which the candidate or his election agent has appointed him. Presiding Officer will check that the appointment is for his polling station. After it is confirmed that polling agent has been appointed for his polling station, the polling agent should complete the document and sign the declaration therein in his presence and then deliver it to him before he can be admitted into the polling station.
 - e) Presiding Officer will preserve all such appointment letters and at the end of the poll send them in a cover to the Returning Officer along with other documents.
 - f) In case of any doubt about the genuineness of the appointment letter in the said Form 10 of any polling agent presented before Presiding Officer, he should compare the specimen signature of the candidate/his election agent with their specimen signatures as provided by the Returning Officer.

(ii) Attendance of polling agents

- a) The polling agents of the candidates should be asked to reach the polling station at least one hour before commencement of poll, so that they are present when he is going through the preliminaries. If any part of these preliminaries has already been gone through and missed by any latecomer, the proceedings need not be commenced de novo (from the very beginning) to accommodate any latecomer. The law does not specify any time limit for the appointment of polling agents and even if a polling agent turns up late at a polling station, he should be allowed to participate in the further proceedings at the polling station.
- b) The polling agents may be allowed to go out of the polling stations even after 3.00 p.m. to attend to nature's calls, etc. and come back inside the polling station. However, it may be ensured that only one polling agent of a candidate or his substitute can be present inside the polling station at a time.

(iii) Passes for polling agents

Each candidate can appoint one polling agent and two relief polling agents at each polling station. However, only one polling agent of a candidate should be allowed inside the polling station at any given point of time. The Presiding Officer will give every polling agent, who is admitted into the polling station, a permit or entry pass on the authority of which he can come in and go out of the polling station as may be necessary.

(iv) Polling agents / relieving agents movement sheet

The Election Commission has directed that each polling station should be provided with a 'polling agents / relieving agents movement sheet' in which each and every polling agent shall be required to sign, indicating the time of arrival / departure at / from the polling station. The Observers/ Sector Officers visiting the polling station on the poll day shall also ensure that the aforesaid sheet is being properly maintained.

(v) Do's and Don'ts for polling agents

It should be ensured that the polling agents do not take the copy of the electoral roll outside the polling station. Further, during the last one

hour of the poll, no polling agent shall be allowed to go outside or leave the polling station. As per the standing instructions of the Election Commission, polling agents shall not be allowed to take cellular phones, cordless phones, wireless sets etc., in any case inside the polling stations. Under no circumstances the agent can be allowed to send slips outside indicating the sl. no. of the voters have voted or not voted.

- (vi) Disposal of complaints from polling agents

Any complaint received from polling agents at any level shall be inquired immediately. The Returning Officer / Observer shall also scrutinize the documents related to such polling stations carefully and record their views specifically.

10.6 Security arrangements at polling station

(Please refer to paragraphs 9.7 to 9.9 , Chapter 9)

10.7 Other arrangements at polling station

- (i) Help desk in polling station location

(Please refer to paragraph 9.6.2 , Chapter 9)

- (ii) Voter Assistance Booth

(Please refer to paragraph 9.6.3 , chapter 9)

- (iv) Videography / Digital photography

(Please refer to paragraph 9.6.4 , chapter 9)

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CHAPTER- 11

OPERATION OF COMMUNICATION PLAN AT POLLING STATION LEVEL

11.1 Communication Plan

- (i) The Election Commission, in order to establish an efficient management and feedback system on the poll-day from polling station level to Election Commission, prepares a Communication Plan. The Communication Plan as evolved has now been validated into a national concept by the Election Commission with an intention to speedily track information on the poll-day and to make the management of election information-centric. A well developed Communication Plan is expected to have even higher utility in situations of limited availability of security forces.
- (ii) The Communication Plan has to be specially prepared for the day of the poll, when starting with mock poll certificate by 8.30 a.m. various reports have to be provided to the Election Commission and the Chief Electoral Officer through the day. Moreover, the Communication Plan shall also be useful in situations of contingent / immediate requirements, law and order control etc. The Communication Plan shall be provided to the Election Commission Observers immediately on their arrival in the constituencies by the concerned District Election Officers.
- (iii) For development of 'Communication Plan' a software has been made available on Election Commission website. In light of the feedbacks received from the states, and in order relating to ensure quick data collection and entry for generation of the Communication Plan, the Commission has circulated revised procedures for development of the Communication Plan.
- (iv) Each Chief Electoral Officer shall nominate a State-level Nodal Officer for the State Communication Plan, and each District Election

Officer shall nominate a District-level Nodal Officer for the District Communication Plan. The State-level Nodal Officers shall coordinate with their district counterparts and ensure timely progress. The State-level Nodal Officers shall give feedback to the National-level Nodal Officer for Communication Planning of the Election Commission.

- (v) For Communication Plan, details of the means of communication at the Polling Station level like mobile phone, internet, wireless, landline telephone or telephone details of the nearest police station / post office are collected. Mobile numbers / contact numbers of Observers, Sector Officers / Zonal Magistrates/ Presiding Officers are also collected. Besides this, names of suitable, reliable persons and their telephone / mobile numbers in relation to every polling station have been asked for. In the absence of any other means of contact, two runners are indicated to exchange message between the polling station and the closest telephone / wireless establishment.

11.2 Webcasting

- (i) The Election Commission has also directed to record polling process at a polling station through live webcasting. Webcasting is generally done in the violence prone polling stations to keep a check on untoward activities, such as booth capturing, impersonation etc. and help bringing about complete transparency in the voting process. It can also be used for awareness to the users as well. For webcasting power supply and internet connectivity is required at the polling station.
- (ii) During webcasting in polling stations the camera should be placed in such a manner that it captures clear visibility of the following:
 - a) Voters in queue
 - b) Identification of voter process by Polling Officer.
 - c) Application of indelible ink on finger.
 - d) Initialization of Control Unit by Presiding Officer after satisfactory identification of voter.

-
- e) Voters visit to Ballot Unit for casting vote wherein camera should not cover face of Ballot Unit so that voter secrecy is preserved under all conditions.
 - (iii) There should also be a bold display that “Web Camera” is in use at polling station.
 - (iv) Further, it must be ensured that in the above frame work used for web casting advertisements of any kind is not displayed.

11.3 Monitoring of polling station on poll day

- (i) On the day of poll, the Election Commission obtains reports regarding the following important activities from Returning Officer :-
 - a) Arrival of polling party to the polling station
 - b) Completion of conduct of mock poll
 - c) Starting of poll
 - d) 5 two hourly voter turn-out reports
 - e) Final report on closure of poll
- (ii) By IT application on SMS based poll monitoring these reports are customized for Sector Officers / Presiding Officer to submit / view in real time using mobile phones through Mobile Web Interface techniques. Higher Mobile penetration compared to Internet penetration on PC benefits managing time schedules and help compiling them online for helping decision makers to take decisions early and in time. It also helps in populating decisions taken to larger number of concerned officials working in field providing a mechanism of smart governance of elections. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer collects details along with mobile numbers of all Presiding Officers and Sector Officers in the portal on CEO's website. Through the registered mobile numbers, the officers send the periodic reports on the above already identified important activities on the given time through SMS

to the portal. A smart report engine is built for dynamic compilation of details for prior day and poll day. If the updates do not reach within a specific period of time, then alerts are sent to the higher authorities escalating the fact of delayed reporting for timely actions those need to be taken. The system is more or less automated and refined to handle large volumes of SMS. The Returning Officer, District Election Officer and Chief Electoral Officer can anytime access the full dataset and customized reports for their consumption and for taking necessary action.



ANNEXURE I

(CHAPTER -3, PARA 3.2)

LIST OF POLLING STATIONS

For..... (Assembly Constituency comprised within the) Parliamentary Constituency.

SN of Polling Station	Locality	Building in which it will be located	Area of the Polling Station	Whether there is a separate entrance and exit if not reasons	Polling* Areas	Whether for all voters or men only or women only	Total Number of Voters assigned	Maximum distance that a voter will have to travel to reach the station	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Total number of voters
3. Total number of polling stations proposed
4. Average number of voters per polling station

Date..... District Election Officer/Returning Officer

* Here give names of villages, wards, streets, localities, and house numbers and part NO. of the electoral roll assigned. In case part is split up into two polling stations, then the serial numbers (not the house numbers) of the voters assigned should also be mentioned.

* Will not apply in the case of Union Territories (1) Andaman and Nicobar Islands, (2) Chandigarh, (3) Dadra and Nagar Haveli, (4) Lakshadweep and (5) Daman and Diu.

Instructions for filling up the columns of the format

-
1. (i) Column 1 - The serial numbers of the polling stations should commence from the north-western corner of the constituency and proceed in a zigzag manner to south-eastern corner of the constituency. The serial number of a polling station and part number of the electoral roll covering the polling area assigned to that polling station should be the same.
 - (i) Column 2 - The 'locality' is the name of the area in which the polling station is located. In the case of temporary structures, the description of the exact site chosen for the location of the temporary structure should be clearly indicated.
 - (ii) Column 3 - The name of the building should be clearly described in full. The use of abbreviations should be avoided. In cases where more than one polling station is located in the same building (polling station location) it should be clearly indicated by mentioning "North Wing", "South wing". etc.
 - (iii) Column 4 - The area of the polling station should be indicated in square meters. If a polling station has an area of less than 20 square meters, the reason for the same should be furnished in 'Remarks' column of the proforma against the appropriate entry.
 - (iv) Column 5 - If there is a separate entrance and a separate exit, 'Yes' may be written in this column, otherwise, reasons for not being able to locate the polling station in a room/hall with separate entrance and exit, may be given.
 - (v) Column 6 - The names of villages, blocks, wards, streets, localities, house numbers and part number of the electoral roll should be given.
 - (vi) Column 7 - It should be indicated whether the polling station is for all voters or exclusively for men or women.
 - (vii) Column 8 - This column should contain information of the total number of voters assigned to the polling station according to the relevant part of final electoral roll of the constituency.

-
- (viii) Column 9 - This column should indicate the distance to be travelled, if the maximum limit of 2 kilometres is exceeded.
 - (ix) Column 10 - Where it is not practicable to conform to the Commission's directions with regard to the location or area of a polling station, broad reasons may be given in this column, for the consideration of the Commission, besides any other remarks which the District Election Officer/ Returning Officer may like to make.
2. At the end of the each list, total number of electors in the constituency, the total number of polling stations proposed and the average number of voters per polling station should invariably be shown.
 3. The draft list should be accompanied by a map to scale showing:-
 - (i) All the villages or wards / localities in towns, with the number of voters in each such village or locality on the map itself and where this is not convenient or practicable, in a statement annexed to the map;
 - (ii) The places selected for location of the polling stations;
 - (iii) The area served by each polling station indicated by serial numbers in a systematic manner, preferably, beginning from the north-western corner of the constituency proceeding in zigzag manner and ending at the south-eastern corner. (Such serial numbers should be the same as the part numbers of the electoral roll, which cover the respective polling areas assigned to those polling stations.)
 4. Use of abbreviations in the draft list should be avoided, as far as possible, and where these are used, the same should be explained clearly. If any local terms are used to describe buildings, etc. in the draft list, these should also be explained.

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(CHAPTER 3, PARA 3.5)

**SCRUTINY SHEET FOR LIST OF
POLLING STATIONS**

.....Assembly Constituency of

.....State /UT

1. Date of Poll
2. Total number of voters in the Constituency
- (a) Men
- (b) Women.....
- (c) Service Voters
- Total
3. Number of polling stations required on the basis of an average of 1000 voters per polling station.
4. Total number of polling stations actually provided.
5. Average number of voters per polling station
6. Number of polling stations to each of which more than 1200 voters have been assigned, indicating the highest number of voters assigned to a polling station.
7. The lowest number of voters assigned to a polling station.
8. Whether the number of voters in respect of each component village or other unit of the polling area has been shown in the list/map.
9. No. of polling stations for which the maximum distance that a voter will have to travel is more than 2 kilometres.

-
10. Whether all the polling areas have been clearly demarcated:
 11. Whether serial number of polling stations has been done in a systematic manner. :
 12. (a) Whether there are any areas predominantly inhabited by electors belonging to SC/ST and other weaker sections of the society
(b) If so, the number of polling stations set up separately for them and the total number of electors assigned to each of them
 13. Whether any polling station has been proposed to be located in any:-
 - (a) Private building
 - (b) Temporary structure, and if so, whether the exact site chosen for the location of the polling
 14. Stations has been clearly indicated in the list
 15. No. of polling stations which have less than 20 sq. m. area.
 16. Whether it has been certified that the private buildings do not belong to any of the Candidates, his active workers or known sympathizers.
 17. Details of Polling stations where more than 4 polling stations in urban areas and more than 2 polling stations in rural areas have been located in the same building
 18. Whether it has been certified that all the polling areas within the constituency are covered by the proposed polling stations.
 19. (a) Serial Nos. of separate polling stations provided for women voters.
(b) In case of (a) above, whether polling stations for men and women voters of a particular area have been located in the same building
 20. Serial number of polling stations, which have not been situated in the villages having the largest number of voters

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21. Serial number of polling stations which have not been located in any of the villages attached to it
 22. Whether the list has been informally published and discussed with the political parties, etc.
 23. When the electoral roll of the Constituency was last intensively revised and whether there is any proposal of such revision again during the year
 24. Any other remarks

District Election Officer

Note : Please specify the serial numbers in addition to total number of polling stations against items 6, 7, 12(b), 13, 14, 16, 18, 19 and 20.

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(CHAPTER 3, PARA 3.5)

**CERTIFICATE TO BE FURNISHED ALONG WITH
LIST OF POLLING STATIONS**

- (i) That the draft, list was duly published, objections and suggestions were invited, and discussed with the party representatives and legislators on the lines indicated in the Commission's Directions;
- (ii) That all the polling areas within the constituency have been covered in the list;
- (iii) That no building, public or private, which is a temple, church, mosque, Gurudwara or has any religious significance or in respect of which any section of the public may have any legitimate objection or enter, has been proposed as a polling station;
- (iv) That no police station, hospital or dispensary is proposed as a polling station;
- (v) That separate polling stations have been set up in areas electors of which are predominantly SC/ST and other weaker sections of the society and that no such area has been either left out or linked with areas where electors predominantly belong to forward communities.
- (vi) Where the usual limit of 1500 voters per polling station or the limit of two kilometres beyond which a voter should not ordinarily be required to walk has not been maintained, no better arrangement is practicable;
- (vii) That no private building in the list of polling stations belongs to any political party or is known to belong to any prominent or active member of any of the political parties; and
- (viii) In cases where private buildings have been selected as polling stations, the written consent of the owner for the purpose has been obtained.

Place
Date

Signature of the District Election Officer/
Returning Officer

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[CHAPTER 3, PARA 3.6 (ii)]

**NOTICE OF PUBLICATIONS OF LIST OF
POLLING STATIONS**

In pursuance of the provisions of section 25 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, I District Election Officer of District in the State /UT of / Returning Officer hereby provide for Parliamentary/Assembly Constituency with the previous approval of the Election Commission, the polling stations specified in the appended list for the polling areas or groups of voters noted against each.

District Election Officer/Returning Officer

Date----- Constituency

List of polling stations for [Assembly Constituency comprised within the] -----Parliamentary constituency.

Serial No.	Locality of Polling Station	Building in which it will be located	Polling Area	Whether for all voters or men only or women only
1	2	3	4	5

District Election Officer / Returning Officer

Date.....

Place.....

Note : Will not apply in the case of Union Territories of (1) Andaman and Nicobar Islands, (2) Chandigarh, (3) Dadra and Nagar Haveli, (4) Lakshadweep and (5) Daman and Diu.

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[CHAPTER 7 , Para 7.2 (ii)]

**DECLARATION BY THE COMPANAION OF BLIND
OR INFIRM ELECTOR**

.....Assembly
Constituency (comprised within..... Parliamentary
Constituency)

Sl.No. and Name of Polling Station

I, son ofaged..... resident of*
..... hereby declare that

- (a) I have not acted as companion of any other elector at any polling station today,
the
- (b) I will keep secret the vote recorded by me on behalf of

Signature of Companion

* Full address to be given.

...

SELECTED REFERENCES

- A. ELECTION COMMISSION vide Lr. No. 64/2012/ERS dated 17 June 2013.
- B. ELECTION COMMISSION instruction Lr. No. 39/KT/2013(MIS)850, dated 31 May 2013.
- C. Election Commission's circular No. 509/110/2004/JS-I dated 20 October 2005.

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IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS

- I. WP(C) No. 187 of 2004 “Disability Rights Group Vs. Chief Election Commissioner and Anor”.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- I. Authority to provide Polling Station
- II. Norms for Provision of Polling Station
- III. Number of Electors Assigned to a Polling Station
- IV. Demarcation of Polling Area
- V. Auxiliary Polling Stations
- VI. Maximum distance to reach Polling Stations
- VII. Location of Polling Stations
- VIII. Location of Polling Stations outside the extent of Constituency
- IX. Consultation with Political Parties
- X. Polling Stations to be located permanently
- XI. Mobile Polling Stations
- XII. Free supply of copies of Lists of Polling Stations to candidates
- XIII. Provision of facilities at Polling Stations

...

" The district election officer shall, with the previous approval of the Election Commission, provide a sufficient number of polling stations for every constituency the whole or greater part of which lies within his jurisdiction, and shall publish, in such manner as the Election Commission may direct, a list showing the polling stations so provided and the polling areas or group of voters for which they have respectively been provided."

(Section 25 of the Representation of People Act, 1951)

*This Manual is intended for the use of Election officials,
political parties and general public*

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