

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, TELANGANA
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION (ELECTIONS) DEPARTMENT
5th Floor, North Block, Budha Bhavan, Secunderabad, Hyderabad -03.

Memo.No. 2221/Elecs.D/A1/2021-12

Dated: 28.09.2021

Sub: Elections – Bye-Elections to TSLA, 2021 from 31-Huzurabad AC - Broad Guidelines for conduct of General/Bye-elections during COVID-19 – Communicated – Regarding.

- Ref: 1. ECI/PN/83/2021, dated: 28.09.2021.
2. ECI/PN/50/2020, dated: 21.08.2020
3. ECI No. 4/2020/SDR/Vol.I, dated: 09.10.2020
4. ECI No. 4/2021/SDR/Vol.I, dated: 09.04.2021
5. ECI No. 464/WB-LA/2021, dated: 16.04.2021
6. ECI No. 437/WB-LA/2021, dated: 21.04.2021
7. ECI No. 464/WB-LA/2021, dated: 22.04.2021
8. ECI No. 464/ WB-LA/2021, dated: 23.04.2021
9. ECI No. 464/INST/2021/EPS, dated: 28.04.2021
10. ECI Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A).., dated 28.08.2021

-:oOo:-

Copies of the references cited, relating to Broad Guidelines for conduct of General/Bye-elections during COVID-19 issued by Election Commission of India are sent herewith for strict implementation. The same is also available on ECI Website.

Dr.SHASHANK GOEL,
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER &
E.O. SPL. CHEF SECRETARY TO GOVT.

To

The Director General of Police, Telangana (w.es.)

The Collectors & District Election Officers. Karimnagar and Hanumakonda Districts (w.es)

The Returning Officer, 31-Huzurabad Assembly Constituency (w.es.)

The Addl. DGP (L & O), Telangana (w.es.)

The Commissioners of Police (CP), Karimnagar and Hanumakonda (w.es.)

Copy to:

Secretary, HM&FW Department, Govt. of Telangana (w.es)

Sri Sudhakar, SLA (for Placing on CEO, Telangana Web Site).

// FORWARDED: BY ORDER//


SECTION OFFICER


(1) 29

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Ashoka Road, Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi-110001

No: ECI/PN/50/2020

Dated 21st August, 2020

PRESS NOTE

ECI
covering letter

Election Commission of India approved the broad guidelines for conduct of general/bye elections during COVID-19 period. These are available at <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/12167-guidelines-for-conduct-of-general-electionbye-election-during-covid-19/>

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

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

Salient features of the guidelines include the following:

The Commission has revised the norms of number of persons accompanying the candidate and number of vehicles at the time of nomination. It has also created optional facility to fill the nomination form and the affidavit online and submission of the same, after taking print, before the RO concerned. For the first time, the candidates will have the option to deposit security amount for contesting the elections online. Keeping the containment guidelines in view, the Commission has limited the number of persons including candidate for door to door campaign to five.

Public meeting and road shows shall be permissible with suitable instructions subject to containment instructions issued by the MHA/State. Face Mask, Sanitizer, Thermal scanners, gloves, face shield and PPE kits shall be used during the electoral process ensuring social distancing norms. Hand gloves shall be provided to all the electors for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.

The Chief Electoral Officers of concerned States/UTs, shall make comprehensive State/District & AC election plans regarding arrangement and preventive measures following these guidelines taking local conditions into account. These plans will be prepared in consultation with Nodal Officer for COVID-19 in their respective States/UTs.


(PAWAN DIWAN)
UNDER SECRETARY

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

No.4/2020/SDR/VOL-I

Dated: 9th October, 2020

To,

The President/General Secretary of
the recognized National/State Political Parties

Subject: Campaign during the period of pandemic COVID-19-reg.

Sir/Madam,

Election Commission of India has announced the schedule for conduct of the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Bihar on 25.09.2020 (Press Note No. ECI/PN/64/2020) and of the Bye-Elections of various State on 29.09.2020 and 05.10.2020.

2. It would be recalled that on 21.08.2020, Election Commission issued broad guidelines setting the paradigm for the conduct of elections during the period of COVID-19 after taking inputs from political parties and Chief Electoral Officers of the States/UTs. These guidelines were widely circulated and are available at <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/12167-broad-guidelines-for-conduct-of-general-electionbye-election-during-covid-19/>.

3. Further, Election Commission on 7.10.2020, after wide ranging consultations in Bihar during its visit from 29.09.2020 to 01.10.2020 with National/State Political Parties, Senior Officers of the State, CEO, DEOs, SPs, etc. and deliberations in Delhi with a view to ensuring the conduct of **free, fair, peaceful, transparent, ethical and safe** elections during COVID-19, Commission has **revised the norms concerning Star Campaigners for all ongoing and future elections during the period of pandemic COVID-19** in the following

manner **with immediate effect**: (<https://eci.gov.in/files/file/12343-revised-guidelines-of-star-campaigners-for-elections-held-during-the-period-of-pandemic-regarding/>)

- 1) The **maximum limit** on the number of star campaigners for recognized National/State political parties **shall be 30 in place of 40** and for unrecognized registered political parties it **shall be 15 in place of 20** during the period of pandemic.
- 2) Accordingly, **the period of submission** of the list of star campaigners is extended **from 7 days to 10 days from the date of notification**. Political parties, which have already submitted a list of star campaigners shall resubmit a revised list within the stipulated period.
- 3) Request for permission for the campaigning by star campaigners shall be submitted to the district election authorities **at least 48 hours** before the start of campaign so that all necessary safety measures are put in place by all concerned stakeholders well in time.


4. COVID-19 pandemic has affected the electoral process world over. In these challenging times, COVID-19 related guidelines issued by MHA, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and State/UT Governments from time to time have prescribed detailed preventive measures including wearing of masks, use of sanitizers, observance of social distancing at all stages wherever public interface in physical form is involved. Observance of these preventive measures is a duty cast upon all the stakeholders in the larger interest of public health. This would require advance planning, prior permission from the district authorities, massive awareness activities, and ensuring strict discipline by all concerned. As representatives of public, this onerous responsibility rests with the political parties to ensure that they not only cooperate with the district machineries in following the due norms of

public health safety as prescribed, but also instill a sense of discipline for civic behavior in their cadre while doing ground management during campaign times. It is requested that you may like to issue advisory to all your field representatives to demonstrate utmost vigil and care to abide by all the extant instructions in larger interest of public health and avoid any penal action for breaching the provisions.

5. District Election machinery is making all necessary electoral arrangement, taking into account safety requirements, as directed by Commission. However, as an important stakeholder of electoral process, you are requested to demonstrate the utmost vigil and care during the period of campaign in larger interest of public health.

6. Election Commission is confident that it will receive fullest cooperation from political parties in this regard.

Yours faithfully,


(N T Bhutia)
Secretary

Copy to: - The Chief Electoral Officers of all States and UTs with the request that a copy of this letter may be sent to all registered political parties with headquarters in the State/UT including the State Units of the recognized National and State Parties.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI -110001

No. 4/2021/SDR/Vol.I

Dated: 9th April, 2021

To,

The President/General Secretary
of recognized National/State political parties.

Subject - Reiterating Guidelines for strict observance of Covid Protocols during election rallies, meetings, campaigning, etc. - regarding

Sir,

It would be recalled that Election Commission issued detailed guidelines for conduct of general election/bye election on 21.08.2020, in view of COVID-19 pandemic in the country, after having considered views/suggestions of various National/State political parties and Chief Electoral Officers of States/UTs. In the said guidelines, it was inter-alia stated in Item no. 13(3) **that the political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities. It was further stated that non-compliance of instructions during the period of public interface will attract actions** as per provisions of Sections 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides invocation of Section 188 of Indian Penal Code, 1860 and as also specified in MHA Order no. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29.07.2020.

2. Those guidelines were followed during general election to Bihar state assembly and several bye-elections in 2020.

3. While announcing the election schedule of Legislative Assemblies of 5 States/UTs on 26.02.2021, the Commission again stipulated that the same guidelines should be followed during these elections. **Guidelines were further reiterated vide letter no. 4/2021/SDR/Vol-I dated 12.03.2021** to all recognized political parties and CEOs of all States/UTs for compliance (copy enclosed).

4. It is widely known that in the recent weeks, COVID cases are being reported in larger numbers. **However, instances of election meetings/campaigns have come to the notice of the Commission, where norms of social distancing, wearing of masks etc. have been flouted in disregard to the Commission's above guidelines.** Instances of star campaigners/political leaders/candidates not observing COVID protocols including non-

wearing of masks themselves at stage or while campaigning have come to notice. By doing so, the political parties and candidates are exposing themselves as well as the public attending such election meetings to the grave danger of infection.

5. **The Commission has taken a serious view of the laxity** in maintaining the norms, particularly not wearing masks and not keeping social distance by political leaders on dais/ stage and therefore, reiterates the said guidelines issued on 21.08.2020 referred to above **for observance in all seriousness.**
6. **Political parties, leaders, campaigners, candidates, existing or aspiring policy makers are expected to be torch bearers for the campaign against COVID** and hence are expected to not only set an example by maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and following prescribed protocols but also by exhorting all the local formations who attend programmes to follow COVID protocols.
7. The Commission seeks fullest cooperation from the political parties and candidates of strictest observance of the protocols so that all the COVID guidelines are adhered to by all the participants including organizers in the electioneering. **It is advisable that political leaders/candidates who have incumbent duty to control spread of Covid, demonstrate by their personal example and nudge all supporters in the beginning of rally, meetings, campaign itself to wear masks, use sanitizers and put in place crowd control measures as per social distancing norms.**
8. It is clarified that the Commission, in cases of breach, will not hesitate in banning public meetings, rallies etc. of the defaulting candidates/star campaigners/ political leaders without any further reference.

Yours faithfully,



(N. T. Bhutia)
Secretary

By Speed Post / Email

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI - 110001

No. 464/WB-LA/2021

Dated 16th April 2021

To,
President/Chairperson/General Secretary
National/State Political Parties


Madam/Sir

The Commission, cognizant of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, has issued detailed guidelines **dated 21.08.2020** prescribing arrangements at polling stations for voters, for polling officials, as well as for political campaign to be followed during the conduct of Assembly Elections in the State of Bihar. The same guidelines were prescribed for all Bye Elections that were conducted in 2020. These Covid **guidelines were reiterated** while announcing the Assembly Elections for the States of Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and UT of Puducherry on **26.02.2021**.


2. It had been brought to the notice of the Commission that at some occasions, during public meetings, rallies, etc. these guidelines had not been followed. In view of this, the Commission **reiterated Covid Guidelines on 09.04.2021** for the conduct of safe elections wherein it also gave a strict warning that in case of breach Commission will not hesitate in banning public meetings, rallies, etc.

3. In addition to the guidelines, the Commission has also taken the following measures to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic during the period of elections:

- 1) Initiatives have been taken for generating intensive awareness among voters and all stakeholders connected to the election process regarding the process of fighting against the Covid pandemic.

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- 2) The maximum number of electors per booth has been reduced to 1000 from 1500.
 - 3) Facilities of casting of postal ballot has been extended to PWD electors, 80 yrs +, and Covid suspect/positive.
 - 4) Mandatory use of mask, sanitisers maintaining distance among the polling personnel during training, imparting training in small batches in big rooms.
 - 5) The handling of the EVM and VVPATs during different stages of its preparation like First Level of Checking (FLC), Randomisation and Assembly Constituency wise physical segregation, Commissioning were done, following all Covid norms like use of gloves, sanitising of the area, use of mask, placement of tables maintaining distancing protocols.
 - 6) Mandatory use of mask, face shield, sanitizer, gloves by the Polling Personnel during the poll process.
 - 7) Mandatory use of masks by every voter. Stock of reserve masks is kept at the booth for providing to default electors.
 - 8) Hand Sanitizer for all voters before entry.
 - 9) Checking of body temperature of all electors by IR thermometer by health workers. If any person has a temperature higher than normal temperature, he/she will need to come in the last hour of the poll fixed for Covid patients.
 - 10) Use of disposable gloves for right hand use of voters to push the button of the Ballot unit of EVM.
 - 11) Disposal of gloves at exit in bins and disposal of such bio medical waste by Agency after poll is over
 - 12) Marking of 6 feet distance for queue outside the polling station to maintain social distancing between voters.
 - 13) Sanitisation of polling stations.
 - 14) Declaring all polling officials as frontline workers for getting them vaccinated against Covid-19. More than 85% polling personnel have been vaccinated till date. Moreover, vaccination was also done for all officials i.e civil and police who are associated with the election process, in addition to Polling Personnel.
 - 15) Providing PPE kits for facilitating voting by Covid suspect/positives.
 - 16) Sector level health regulators have been appointed for monitoring and supervision.

Aforesaid guidelines issued by the Commission are supplementary to the directions prescribed from time to time by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and orders issued by the Central and State Governments under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to contain the spread of Covid-19.



4. The Commission on 16.04.2021 invoking its powers under Article 324 has already ordered the following:

1. **No rallies, public meetings, street plays, Nukkad sabhas, shall be allowed on any day during the days of campaign between 7pm and 10 am w.e.f 7pm of 16.4.2021.**
2. **Silence period for rallies, public meetings, street plays, Nukkad Sabhhas, bike rallies or any gathering for campaigning purposes shall be extended to 72 hours** before the end of the poll for Phase 6, Phase 7 and Phase 8 in the State of West Bengal. Thereby, for these phases, campaign shall end at 6.30PM on 19.04.2021; on 23.04.2021; and on 26.04.2021 respectively.

5. The Commission has further considered the matter and after taking the prevailing unprecedented public health situation has ordered the following:

- 1) **Candidates and Political Parties shall ensure absolute repeat absolute adherence to Covid guidelines in letter and spirit. Violations , if any shall be sternly dealt with and action, including criminal action, taken as per extant legal framework.**
- 2) **It shall be the responsibility of the organisers of public meetings, rallies, etc to provide of masks and sanitisers to every person attending these meetings, rallies, etc at their cost which shall be added and counted within limits of prescribed expenditure. Organisers shall also ensure proper usage of masks , sanitisers and also be responsible for maintaining minimum social distance by everyone.**
- 3) **Star campaigners/political leaders/candidates/aspiring policy makers shall demonstrate by their personal example and nudge all supporters in the beginning of the rally, meeting and any other event during campaign to wear mask, use sanitisers and maintain social distance and put in place such crowd control measures as are necessary for observance of extant guidelines.**
- 4) **District Election Officers and Returning Officers shall take strict measures to enforce Covid guidelines during campaign. They shall cancel public meetings, rallies, etc. if any violations are observed, in addition to invoking penal sections.**
- 5) **Special Observers and General, Police and Expenditure Observers shall strictly monitor compliance of covid norms during campaign.**

- 6) **Chief Secretary, West Bengal, CEO, West Bengal , all DEOs and ROs** of the remaining three phases shall ensure strict compliance of this order and enforcement of extant guidelines. Special observers and other district/ constituency (ies) level observers shall regularly monitor compliance.

Yours faithfully


(Madhusudan Gupta)

Secretary

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

No. 437/WB-LA/2021

Dated :21st April, 2021

To,

President/General Secretary
of all recognized National/State Political parties

Subject: Guidelines in relation to campaigns etc. during the Covid-19 pandemic - reg.

Sir,

The Election Commission of India, in view of Covid-19 pandemic, has issued detailed guidelines dated 21.08.2020 prescribing covid safe arrangements at polling stations for voters/officials as well as for election campaigns. These guidelines were reiterated while announcing Assembly Elections for the states of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and UT of Puducherry on 26.02.2021. These were further reiterated on 09.04.2021 warning that "in cases of breach Commission will not hesitate in banning public meetings, etc. of the defaulting candidates/ star campaigners/political leaders".

However, finding violations Commission on 16th April 2021 invoking Art 324 has extended the silence period in ensuing West Bengal Assembly elections 2021 and has instructed that:

(a) No rallies, public meetings, street plays, Nukkad sabhas, shall be allowed on any day during the days of campaign between 7pm and 10 am w.e.f 7 pm of 16.4.2021.

(b) Silence period for rallies, public meetings, street plays, nukkad sabhas, bike rallies or any gathering for campaigning purposes shall be extended to 72 hours before the end of the poll for Phase 6, Phase 7 and Phase 8 in the State of West Bengal.

The Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta, vide its common Order dated 20.04.2021 passed in WPA No. 117 of 2021 and WPA No. 118 of 2021, while taking a view of the Affidavit filed by CEO West Bengal detailing steps taken for implementation of Covid-19 instructions/guidelines was pleased to observe as under:

"That being so, it would be open to the Election Commission of India and the Chief Electoral Officer to take requisite steps as stated in paragraph 43 of the report and also to ensure successful implementation of COVID Protocols by requiring strict compliance of prescribed guidelines and orders by all political parties, electoral candidates and all other concerned with the election process."

Commission therefore once again warns that in case parties/candidates don't abide by the laid down Covid protocols during campaign, necessary action under Disaster Management Act 2005, Epidemic Diseases Act 1897. etc. will be initiated immediately by the district authorities and their permission for further campaigns, even if granted previously, shall also be cancelled. Chief Secretary West Bengal, Chief Electoral Officer West Bengal, and all District Election Officers are also being directed to scrupulously follow Hon'ble High Court's directions and extant guidelines.

Thanking you

Yours Faithfully

Sudeep Jain
(Sudeep Jain)

Deputy Election Commissioner

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No.464/WB-LA/2021

Dated: 22nd April, 2021

ORDER

Whereas, the Commission, cognizant of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, has issued detailed guidelines dated 21.08.2020 prescribing arrangements at polling stations for voters, for polling officials, as well as for political campaign to be followed during the conduct of Assembly Elections in the State of Bihar. The same guidelines were prescribed for all Bye Elections that were conducted in 2020; and

Whereas, the above Covid guidelines were reiterated while announcing the Assembly Elections for the States of Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and UT of Puducherry on 26.02.2021; and

Whereas, the Commission observed violation of the Covid guidelines during public meetings, rallies, etc and again reiterated Covid Guidelines on 09.04.2021 for the conduct of safe elections in which the Commission also gave a strict warning that in case of breach the Commission will not hesitate in banning public meetings, rallies, etc.; and

Whereas, the aforesaid guidelines issued by the Commission are supplementary to the directions prescribed from time to time by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and orders issued by the Central and State Governments under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to contain the spread of Covid-19; and

Whereas, the Commission is vested with the responsibility of conducting free and fair elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures and to the Offices of the President and the Vice-President of India; and

Whereas, it is a well settled law that Article 324 of the Constitution of India confers upon the Commission the widest possible power in the matter of "*superintendence, direction and control of... and the conduct of, all elections... to the Legislature of every State...*"; and

Whereas, the Commission has noted several instances of election meetings and campaigns wherein norms of social distancing, wearing of masks etc. have been flouted in blatant disregard of the Commission's aforesaid guidelines; and

Whereas, the Commission has also taken a serious view against repeated violations by star campaigners/political leaders/candidates who are supposed to be torch bearers for the campaign against Covid-19, grossly violating Covid-19 protocols, thereby exposing themselves as well as the public to the danger of infection; and

Whereas, in view of unprecedented public health concerns, the Commission on 16.4.2021, invoking its plenary powers under Article 324, ordered the following:

1. No rallies, public meetings, street plays, Nukkad sabhas, shall be allowed on any day during the days of campaign between 7pm and 10am w.c.f. 7pm of 16.04.2021.
2. Silence period for rallies, public meetings, street plays, Nukkad Sabhas, bike rallies or any gathering for campaigning purposes shall be extended to 72 hours before the end of the poll for Phase 6, Phase 7 and Phase 8 in the State of West Bengal. Thereby, for these phases, campaign shall end at 6.30PM on 19.04.2021; on 23.04.2021; and on 26.04.2021 respectively; and

Whereas, on 21.04.2021, the Commission further ordered that in case parties/candidates don't abide by the laid down Covid protocols during campaign, necessary action under pandemic act etc will be initiated immediately by the district authorities and their permission for further campaigns, even if granted previously, shall also be cancelled; and

Whereas, the Commission has noted with anguish that many political parties/candidates are still not adhering to the prescribed safety norms during the public gatherings and this is making difficult for the State/District election machineries to enforce the aforesaid directions fully; and

Now, therefore, in view of aforesaid and taking all material facts into consideration, and in addition to Commission earlier orders dated 21.08.2020, 26.02.2021, 16.04.2021 and 21.04.2021, the Commission invoking its powers under Article 324 further orders that w.c.f. from 7.00pm of 22.04.2021, in the State of West Bengal -

1. No road show/ *Pad-Yatra* shall be permissible;
2. No cycle/bike/vehicle rally shall be permissible.
3. No public meeting beyond the limit of 500 persons at a place subject to availability of adequate space with social distancing, adhering to COVID-19 safety norms, shall be permissible.
4. Permission for road show, cycle/bike/vehicle rally, if granted already, stands withdrawn. Permission for public meeting, if granted already, stands modified to the extent above.

CEO West Bengal, all DEOs and ROs shall bring this to the notice of all concerned immediately and shall ensure compliance repeat ensure compliance without fail.

By Order of the Commission


(RAKESH KUMAR)
SECRETARY



Election Urgent

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग सचिवालय
**SECRETARIAT OF
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA**

निर्वाचन सदन,
अशोक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110001

Nirvachan Sadan,
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 464/WB-LA/2021

Dated: 23rd April, 2021

To,

Chief Secretary,
State of West Bengal,
Kolkata.

Subject: Compliance of COVID-19 norms, under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, during public campaign in the ongoing elections in the State of West Bengal-regarding.

Sir,

It has been brought to the notice of the Commission that in public campaigns during the ongoing elections, the COVID appropriate behaviour, as mandated under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, has not been adhered to by the public in general and by the political parties/candidates in particular. It is also observed that the authorities under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) have not been enforcing the norms with promptitude, prescribed under the said Act, despite the Act providing penal consequences as a sanction for such violations.

2. It would be recalled that since the advent of pandemic, NDMA/ SDMA have been prescribing guidelines for appropriate COVID behaviour during public gatherings to stop the spread of COVID-19. On 21.08.2020, the Commission framed broad guidelines which provided that the State specific guidelines would be drawn up by the State authorities taking into consideration local conditions. The Commission announced the ongoing elections on 26.02.2021 and it was expected that all would adhere to the extant instructions as specified by NDMA/SDMA and the concerned authorities under the 2005 Act would take appropriate action for enforcement. After observing the violations during public campaigns, the Commission has issued series of orders/advisories on 09.04.2021, 16.04.2021, 21.04.2021, and 22.04.2021 for adherence to COVID-19 norms during the public campaign. However, the Commission has observed that a few actions have been taken by the authorities empowered by the 2005 Act on the ground. It seems that very little fruitful actions have been done by the SDMA against such omissions by the district authorities in the State.

4. In view of the aforesaid, the Commission has directed that all necessary measures must be taken for strict compliance with COVID safety norms during all public campaigns in the State under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 by the concerned empowered authorities on the ground.

Yours faithfully,


(RAKESH KUMAR)

Secretary

By Speed Post/Email

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Tel: 011-23052246
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निर्वाचनसदन,
अशोकरोड, नई दिल्ली-110001.
NirvachanSadan,
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.

No.464/INST/2021/EPS

Dated: 28 April, 2021

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
all States/UTs

Subject: General Election to Legislative Assemblies of West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, 2021 and bye election in various states - Broad Guidelines for Covid-Safety During Counting of votes on 2nd May, 2021- Regarding.

Sir,

The Commission had issued Broad Guidelines for conduct of General Election/ Bye- Election during Covid-19 after on 21st August, 2020 incorporating views/suggestion of National/State Political parties. The Commission also considered the views and suggestion given by the Chief Secretaries before finalizing the broad Covid-19 guidelines.

2. After issuing the above guidelines, the Commission conducted General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar and other Bye-Elections to various State during Covid-19 period by strictly following these Guidelines in 2020.

3. Even though the spread of pandemic had reduced in the month of February 2021 Commission continued with same strict regime of Covid safety guidelines and announced the election of 5 poll going States/UT's. The Commission has already conducted polls of ongoing General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry along with Bye-Election to Various States and has also conducted 7 Phases of Election in West Bengal and 8th Phase of West Bengal Election is due on 29th April, 2021.

4. Counting of votes for all these elections is due on 02.05.2021.

5. In view of second wave of pandemic and in order to ensure a completely Covid safe arrangements during counting the Commission has

been regularly consulting the Chief Secretaries and the Chief Electoral Officers of all 5 poll going States/UT and has taken their views and safety Measures/protocol to be followed during the pandemic.

6. After considering the views and inputs from Chief Secretaries, Health Secretaries and the Chief Electoral Officers of all poll going States/UT, the Commission has directed all the poll going states/UT to adhere the following instructions during the counting process of the General Elections/Bye-Elections-

- i. **DEO shall be the Nodal Officer at each Counting Centre to ensure adherence to the following the COVID-19 related norms at Counting Centres, with assistance of Nodal Health Officer.**
- ii. **Compliance Certificate in respect of Counting Centre that all arrangement has been made as per extant COVID guidelines shall be obtained from the concerned Health Authorities.**
- iii. **No candidates/agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having 2 doses of vaccination against Covid-19 and will have to produce Negative RT-PCR report or RAT report or Vaccination reports within 48 hours of start of counting. The DEO shall make arrangement of RT-PCR/RAT Test to Candidates/Counting agents before the day of Counting. List of counting agents shall be made available by the contesting candidates to the RO concerned by 1700 hours on the day three days prior to the date fixed for counting of votes. (para 15.12.2 of RO handbook)**
- iv. **No public gathering outside the counting venue shall be allowed during the process of counting.**
- v. The Counting Hall should be sufficiently big to maintain Social Distancing, and should have proper ventilation, windows, exhaust fan etc. as per available protocol of SDMA.
- vi. The counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.
- vii. Sealed outer boxes of EVM/VVPAT shall also be sanitized/disinfected.
- viii. Number of Counting tables to be allowed in a counting hall as per the size of Hall and keeping in view safety norms prescribed for Covid-19.

Hence, counting of votes of a constituency may be considered at 3-4 halls by appointing additional Assistant Returning Officers.

- ix. At the entry of hall/ room/ premises-
 - a. Thermal Scanning of all persons shall be carried out;
 - b. Sanitizer, soap and water shall be made available and every person entering in hall shall sanitize his/her hand.
- x. No one having any symptom of COVID-19 like fever, Cold etc. shall be allowed to enter in the Counting Hall.
- xi. Candidate may appoint/replace the counting agents in case report is positive.
- xii. Social distancing shall be maintained inside Counting Hall, seating arrangement of Counting Personnel/Agents etc. should be made as per extant COVID-19 guidelines of NDMA/SDMA.
- xiii. There shall be sufficient number of PPE Kit for Counting Agents/Candidates. The Counting Agents sitting arrangement shall be made in such a way that between 2 counting agents 1 agent shall be in PPE.
- xiv. The following items shall be provided to every counting official and security personnel in addition to other prescribed items:
 - a. Mask
 - b. Sanitizer
 - c. Face-Shield
 - d. Gloves
- xv. For counting of Postal Ballots, additional number of AROs may be deputed. If required, Postal Ballots may also be counted in a separate hall under the supervision of the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning officer.
- xvi. As per the government guidelines, there shall be proper arrangement of disposal of COVID related wastage viz Mask, Face Shield, PPE Kit, gloves etc.
- xvii. There shall be proper display of guidelines “Does & Don’t” at convenient places including entrance gate and inside counting hall.

The Commission vide instruction No.464/INST/2021/EPS dated 27th April, 2021 has already directed that

- i. No victory procession after the counting on 02.05.2021 shall be allowed.
- ii. Not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate or his/her authorized representative receive the certificate of election from the Returning Officer.

Non-compliance of Instructions - Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable, as specified in Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29th July, 2020 of Ministry of Home Affairs. District Election Officer should bring this to the notice of all concerned.

Based on these broad guidelines, a detailed COVID-19 related comprehensive plan for counting arrangements will be prepared at the State level, taking local conditions into account. Three-layer plan will be prepared in consultation with the concerned Nodal Health Officers: AC, District, and State levels. In case of bye-elections, the plans will be prepared at the District and AC levels in consultation with respective Nodal Health Officers.

The above instructions shall be followed strictly in letter and spirit by all concerned authorities.

These instructions shall be brought to the notice of all political parties/contesting candidates immediately.

Yours faithfully,


(SUMIT MUKHERJEE)
SR. PR. SECRETARY

No. 40-3/2020-DM-1(A)
Government of India
Ministry of Home Affairs

North Block, New Delhi-110001

Dated 28th August, 2021

ORDER

In exercise of the powers, conferred under Section 10(2)(1) of the Disaster Management Act 2005, the undersigned hereby directs that the Order of Ministry of Home Affairs of even number dated 29th June, 2021, to ensure compliance to the containment measures for COVID-19, as conveyed vide Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) DO No. Z.28015/85/2021-DM Cell dated 28th June 2021, will remain in force upto 30th September, 2021.


Union Home Secretary

and, Chairman, National Executive Committee (NEC)

To:

1. The Secretaries of Ministries/ Departments of Government of India
2. The Chief Secretaries/Administrators of States/Union Territories
(As per list attached)

Copy to:

- i. All Members of the National Executive Committee
- ii. Member Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority