

"GENERAL ELECTIONS, 2023"
"TOP-PRIORITY"

"BY E-MAIL / POST"

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, TELANGANA
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION (ELECTIONS) DEPARTMENT
9th Floor, B.R.K.R Bhavan, Adarsh Nagar, Hyderabad -500 063

Memo. No.4004/Elecs.D/A1/2023-41

Dated:26.10.2023

Sub:- Elections - General Elections to Telangana State Legislative Assembly, 2023 – regarding electronic Transmission of Postal ballot Papers to Service voters through ETPBMS - Directions of ECI on dated 18th October, 2023 – Copy sent - Reg.

Ref:- 1. ECI Lr No. 52/2023/Vol.II/20153,dated. 18.10.2023
2. ECI, New Delhi, Direction No. 52/2023/SDR-Vol.II, dt.18.10.2023.
3. ECI, New Delhi, Lr. No. 52/2023/SDR-Vol.II, dt.18.10.2023.

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Copies of the references 1st to 3rd cited is sent herewith to the Commissioner & District Election Officer, Hyderabad, all the Collectors & District Election Officers in the State and all the Returning Officers of 119 ACs in which ECI has forwarded direction regarding electronic transmission of postal ballots to service voters to take necessary action.

2. It is therefore, the Commissioner & District Election Officer, Hyderabad, all the Collectors & District Election Officers and all the Returning Officers of 119 ACs in the State are requested brief the contesting Candidates, in this regard.

VIKAS RAJ,
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER &
E.O. PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVT

To,

All the Collectors & District Election Officers of Telangana State (w.e.)

The Commissioner of GHMC & DEO, Hyderabad (w.e)

All the ROs & AROs of 119 ACs of Telangana State (through concerned DEOs)
(w.e.)

SLA (for placing on ceotelangana website)

SF/SC

// FORWARDED: BY ORDER //


SECTION OFFICER

By Speed Post/E-mail

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI- 110001

No. 52/2023/SDR/Vol.II / 20153

Dated: 18th October, 2023

To,

The Chief Electoral Officer of

1. Mizoram
2. Chhattisgarh
3. Madhya Pradesh
4. Rajasthan
5. Telangana, and
6. Nagaland

Sub: - General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan & Telangana and bye election in 43-Tapi (ST) Assembly Constituency of Nagaland-the Election Commission's Direction regarding electronic transmission of postal ballot papers to service voters through ETPBMS - regarding.

Sir,

I am directed to forward herewith a copy of the Direction dated 18th October, 2023 issued by the Election Commission in terms of second proviso to sub-rule (1) of Rule 23 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, laying down the procedure of transmitting postal ballot papers electronically to service voters during the current **general elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan & Telangana and bye election in 43-Tapi(ST) Assembly Constituency of Nagaland.**

2. A copy of the Direction may be sent to the concerned Returning Officers for electronic transmission of postal ballot papers to the service voters. This may also be communicated to the concerned District Election Officers and the other election authorities. The contesting candidates should also be briefed by the Returning Officer /District Election Officer concerned in this regard.

3. Kindly acknowledge the receipt.

Yours faithfully,

(Abhishek Tiwari)
Under Secretary

6011

Date: 25/10/23

Section

Copy to the Director(IT), Election Commission, with a request to provide training to the officers concerned on new Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Management System(ETPBM)

25/10/23

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ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 52/2023/SDR/Vol.II

Dated: 18th October, 2023

DIRECTION

In terms of the second proviso to sub-rule(1) of Rule 23 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, the Election Commission hereby lays down the following manner for transmission of postal ballot papers by electronic means to the service voters and counting of the postal ballots received back from service voters: -

1. Documents to be transmitted -

The Returning Officer shall transmit the following documents, electronically:

- (a) Postal Ballot Paper,
- (b) Form 13-A-Declaration by Elector,
- (c) Label for Form 13-B- Cover A (Inner Envelope),
- (d) Label for Form 13-C-Cover B (Outer Envelope),
- (e) Form 13-D- Instructions for the Guidance of Elector.

2. Mode of transmission-

As soon as the Central Administration Officer (C- Admin) activates the 'RO operations' for release of postal ballot paper electronically, the Returning Officer shall be able to log into the system and perform the following activities:-

- (a) The Election Schedule alongwith the start date and time and the end date and time for ETPBS shall be populated by the Central Administration Officer (C-Admin) and be available pre-filled in the system to the respective Returning Officer(s).
- (b) The Returning Officer shall login into the ETPBMS as per the SoP provided.
- (c) RO has to enter full postal address for mailing/dispatching back the market Postal ballots.
- (d) Load template of the Postal Ballot Paper specific to his constituency.
- (e) View and approve the sample Postal Ballot generated by the system
- (f) Generate the password(PIN) and password protected Postal Ballots in bulk for the service voters registered in his constituency.

3. Downloading and printing of ETPB -

- (a) The officer in charge of Records/Unit Officer concerned/Nodal Officer competent to download the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Papers (ETPBs) shall download the same using the secure OTP.
- (b) Thereafter, if the service voter concerned is in a position to take printout of the ETPB, he shall do so using the PIN. In other cases, the Unit Officer/Nodal Officer shall take the print of the ETPB and handover the ETPB along with print of Form-13A, labels for Form 13B and 13C and instruction in Form 13D to the service voter concerned. It shall be ensured that the ETPB and the accompanying

documents meant for a particular service voter is handed over to the very particular service voter only and to no one else.

- (c) Two envelopes - one smaller envelope for Form 13B and a larger envelope for Form 13C shall also be supplied to each service voter by the Record Officer/Unit Officer/Commandant or any other competent authority. The envelopes should be plain and of white colour. The dimensions of the said two envelopes are mentioned as under:

(i) Inner envelope (Form 13B) - 4" x 9"

(ii) Outer envelope (Form 13C) - 4.75" x 11"

- (d) The Unit officer/Nodal Officer shall maintain a record of ETPBs handed over to each service voter. This record shall be preserved in the unit concerned for five years so that the same can be produced for inspection before any authority or before Courts in the event the same is required to be inspected.

4. Voting and return of ETPB-

On receipt of the ETPB and the accompanying papers, the service voter shall-

- (a) Mark his vote on the ballot paper by putting a cross (X) or tick (√) against the name of the candidate of his choice as per the instructions in Form 13D. He shall then, place the marked ballot paper inside the smaller envelope, close the envelope by gum and paste the label for Form 13B on this envelope. Also, the serial number of the ballot paper shall be noted on the Form 13B at the space provided for the purpose on that envelope, if not already printed thereon.
- (b) Fill up the declaration in Form 13A, sign the same and get it attested by the officer designated for attestation.
- (c) Put (i) the closed (gummed) smaller envelope (Form 13B) and (ii) the declaration in Form 13A, inside the larger envelope and close the same using gum.
- (d) Paste the label for Form 13C on the larger envelope and put signature in the place marked for signature of sender.
- (e) Dispatch the envelope (Form 13C) back to the RO through the speed post/available postal means.
- (f) No postage stamp need to be affixed on the envelope (Form 13C) if posted, within India.
- (g) The CEO should inform GM Post Office to accept the envelopes from service voters for speed post-delivery to addressee (RO) and that the charges would be paid by the CEO Office.

5. Counting of ETPBs

- (A) Counting of ETPBs shall be done at RO's Table, as in the case of the other postal ballots.
- (B) Only such Postal Ballots which have been received before the hour fixed for commencement of counting, shall be counted.
- (C) **Opening of the Envelopes and Verification: -**
- (i) Opening of Form 13-C or cover 'B' (Outer Envelope)-The covers in Form 13-C, received in time, should be verified and opened one after another. QR code on the

outer envelope will be scanned using a computer software and QRcode reader and necessary validity checks will be performed. After verification of the outer envelope, a unique serial number will be provided by the computer. This serial number will also be manually marked by RO on the envelope being verified. The computer software will check the entry in the QR code for any possible duplicates in the list of Postal Ballots received and flag a warning for such cases. The computer software will also provide the list of serial numbers which are all duplicates to the Postal Ballot being handled. The RO will locate all such duplicate envelopes as indicated by the computer software and keep them together physically and invalidate all such duplicate/multiple votes. All such envelopes declared invalid shall not be opened for further processing and will be kept aside and preserved for future reference. Number of such duplicate Postal Ballots shall be marked in the register.

- (ii) If no duplicate and correct verification is found, then only outer envelope (Form 13C) will be open. On opening outer envelope or Cover 'B' (Form 13C), two documents are required to be found inside. The first is the declaration by the voter in Form 13A and the second the inner cover i.e. Form 13B containing the Postal Ballot Paper.
- (iii) As each cover is opened, RO should take out the declaration in Form 13A and the cover in Form 13B, Now, scan two QR Codes on Form 13A one by one and after that scan the QR code which is on lower right side on Form 13B. Note down the Sl. No. generated. If the QR Code reading does not raise any anomaly, keep Form 13B envelope and the declaration back in Form 13C envelope and keep the envelope in a tray meant for valid envelopes to be taken up for counting.
- (iv) Before opening any cover in Form 13B containing the Postal Ballot Paper, the RO must check the declaration in Form 13A and all such Forms 13A which he has found to be in order shall be placed in a separate packet which shall be sealed and on which shall be recorded the name of the constituency, the date of counting and a brief description of its content.
- (v) RO will reject a Postal Ballot without opening its inner cover in Form 13B if:-
 - (a) the declaration in Form 13A is not found in the cover, or
 - (b) the Electronic Postal Ballot Identification Number (e-PBID) in the declaration in Form 13A does not match the issued e-PBID, or
 - (c) The declaration has not been duly signed and, or not attested by an officer competent to do so, or the e-PBID of Postal Ballot appearing in the declaration is different from the e-PBID on the cover in Form 13B.
 - (d) If the QR Code reading indicates any discrepancy such as the documents not being genuine or multiple copies of the document have been received.
- (vi) Each such rejected cover should be endorsed suitably and the declaration and the cover should be placed back in the cover in Form 13C (Outer Envelope). All such covers in Form 13C should be kept together in a separate packet duly sealed and

full particulars such as the name of the constituency, the date of counting and a brief description of contents should be noted thereon for easy identification.

- (vii) For further counting, all instructions for counting of postal ballot paper shall apply.
- (viii) Scanning of QR Codes SHOULD be done in the sequence without fail. Form 13C should be scanned first, followed by both the QR Code on Form 13A and then Form 13B. SEQUENCE OF QR CODE SCANNING SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Yours faithfully,



(S.B.JOSHI)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 52/2023/SDR/Vol.IV

Dated: 18th October, 2023

To,

The Joint Secretary (Administration),
Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India.

Subject: Modified Guidelines relating to Procurement of Envelopes by Record Officer of Service Voters instead of Chief Electoral Officer in Assembly and Parliamentary Elections- regarding.

Ma'am/Sir,

As you are aware that in order to exercise the right to franchise by the Service Voters the postal ballot paper (ETPB), in an election, is transmitted electronically by the Returning Officer to the Service Voter through Record Officer/Unit Officer.

Further, Rule 23 and Rule 27E of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 provide that the following documents shall be issued/transmitted together with the postal ballot to the service voter:

- (i) Form 13A-Declaration by Elector,
- (ii) Form 13B- Cover A (Inner Envelope),
- (iii) Form 13C-Cover B (Outer Envelope),
- (iv) Form 13D- Instructions for the Guidance of Elector.

Date: 25/10/23
Section 3.

3. The Service Voter, after marking his choice put the ETPB in the inner envelope (Form 13B) and seal the envelope. Thereafter, he after signing the declaration in Form 13A and getting it attested by the attesting officer put both of them (inner envelope and Form 13A) in the outer envelope and seal it. Thereafter it is dispatched through speed post for the return journey of the ETPB to the Returning Officer. The envelopes are separately forwarded by the Chief Electoral Officers to the Record Officers directly for using them by the Service Voters.

4. It is also informed that the labels for Form 13B and Form 13C which contain particulars like name of the constituency and address of the Returning Officer are sent electronically. These are downloaded and then required to be cut from the perforated line and to be pasted on the respective envelopes by the Service Voter.

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As/sd.
SLA - to place
in CEO website.

25/10/23

5. In this regard, it is stated that during last meeting with the Nodal Officers the matter regarding providing envelopes to service voters by the respective establishments instead of by the Chief Electoral Officers was thoroughly discussed. In view of inputs received in the meeting, the Commission has decided that from now onwards (ongoing elections and future elections) the envelopes will not be forwarded by the CEOs to the Record Officers instead the Record Officer/Unit Officer/Commandant or any other competent authority, as the case may be, shall procure the envelopes and provide them for use by Service Voters.

6. The envelopes should be plain and of white colour. The dimensions of the said two envelopes are mentioned as under: -

- (i) Inner envelope (Form 13B) – 4" x 9"
- (ii) Outer envelope (Form 13C) – 4.75" x 11"

7. Further, the Service voters are not required to bear the cost of postal service for return of ETPB to the Returning Officer. The postage expenses will be borne by the election machinery at the State/ District level and booking of envelope will be made by scanning the QR code provided on the outer envelope. Commission's instruction dated 20.08.2023 is enclosed for ready reference.

8. The above instructions may be brought to the notice of the Record Officer/Unit Officer/Commandment/ Competent Authority of the Forces for immediate necessary action.

9. All CEOs are requested to give due publicity about the change of procedure.

Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully,



(S. B. JOSHI)
Principal Secretary

Copy to:

1. The Nodal Officers of all wings of Armed Forces, Para Military Forces.
2. The Chief Electoral Officers of all States and UTs.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI- 110001

No. 52/2023/SDR-Vol.II

Dated: 20th August, 2023

To,

The Secretary
Department of Posts,
Ministry of Communications and IT,
Dak Bhawan,
New Delhi-110001

Subject: Booking of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot for all general and bye elections – regarding.

Sir/Madam,

I am directed to state that the Election Commission has provided the facility of one way transmission of postal ballot papers which reaches electronically to the service voters for casting of their votes:-

2. In this system, as you are aware, the Returning Officer concerned has to transmit the postal ballot papers to the service voters electronically through the Record Officers/Unit Officers designated in this regard. It may be stated here that Service Voters are the electors belonging to members of the Armed Forces, Para Military Forces etc. and persons who are employed under the Government of India on a post outside India. After recording of votes on postal ballot paper, the service voters are required to send it to the Returning Officer concerned by post. For ensuring timely delivery to the Returning Officer, the Commission has decided that the return of the envelopes containing postal ballot will be by 'Speed Post'.

3. The Service Voters are not required to bear the cost of postal service for this purpose. The postage expenses will be borne by the election machinery at the State/District Level.

4. For smooth management of the system, you are requested to issue the following instructions to all Post Offices regarding receiving and delivering of envelopes containing postal ballot:-

(i) The Post Office will book the speed post without taking any charges during the booking and the applicable postage charges will be paid by the Chief Electoral officer of the State concerned.

(ii) The "customer id" provided by the Department of Post for Election Commission of India and bar code, has already been printed on Form 13-C. The Department of Post will ensure that booking of envelope containing ETPB should be made by scanning this bar code and without taking any charges from the service voter.

(iii) The Department of Posts will also ensure that all postal ballots are trackable and are delivered to the respective Returning officer of the Constituency concerned on top priority basis. It is pointed out that postal ballots including ETPBs delivered after stipulated time and date of commencement of counting of votes are not taken up for counting, therefore it should be ensured that delivery of Postal ballots is not delayed.

(iv) ETPB booked upto a day prior to counting of votes may be accepted for delivery to the Returning Officers.

Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully,



(S.B. JOSHI)

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

Copy to:- All Chief Elector Officers of States/ UTs.