

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NirvachanSadana, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 52/2013/SDR

New Delhi, 18th June, 2013

To

Chief Electoral Officers of all
States and Union Territories

Sub: - Preparatory activities for Exercise of Franchise by persons on election duty.

Sir,

You are aware that very large numbers of persons are put on duty for the purpose of conduct of elections. In the last Lok Sabha election approximately one crore persons were put on election duty. These include person in polling teams including Presiding Officers and Polling Officers, Police personnel used in elections, sector and zonal officers, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, District Elections Officers and their staff, micro-observers, Assistant Expenditure Observers, Observers of the Commission, drivers conductors and cleaners of vehicles used in elections and police personnel, etc. It is a known fact that many of these persons are not able to exercise their franchise because of being on election duty. The Commission is keen that all persons on election duty are able to exercise their franchise as per law.

2. Under the law, there are two ways in which franchise can be exercised by a person on election duty. If the person is on duty in the same constituency where he is enrolled as an elector, he is given in the Election Duty Certificate (EDC), which entitles him to cast his vote in the polling station of the constituency where he is on election duty. If on the other hand, the person is on duty in some constituency other than the one in which he is enrolled as an elector, he is entitled to vote by Postal Ballot.
3. Common reasons why a person may not be able to exercise his franchise when on election duty are: -

- 3.1. Problems with enrolment in electoral rolls –
 - 3.1.1. Many Persons on Election Duty are not enrolled at all.
 - 3.1.2. Many Persons on Election Duty are not enrolled at their ordinary place of residence, but continue to be enrolled in their native villages or towns where they are not living any longer.
 - 3.1.3. Many Persons on Election Duty are enrolled at more than one place.
- 3.2. Problems with requesting Postal Ballot or EDC –
 - 3.2.1. Many Persons on Election Duty are not aware that they are entitled to EDC or Postal Ballot.
 - 3.2.2. Many Persons on Election Duty are not aware of the application forms required to be filled for the purpose of applying for EDC or Postal Ballot.
 - 3.2.3. Many Persons on Election Duty do not know their enrolment details and are therefore not able to fill the application forms correctly.
 - 3.2.4. Many Persons on Election Duty do not have access to the application forms.
 - 3.2.5. Many Persons on Election Duty are not able to send the application forms to the concerned Returning Officer in time.
- 3.3. Problems with issuance of EDC and Postal Ballot –
 - 3.3.1. Returning Officers do not receive request forms for EDC and Postal ballot from most persons on poll duty in time.
 - 3.3.2. Many request forms received are either incomplete or have wrong information, thus making it difficult to issue an EDC or Postal Ballot. There is no time to send the form back for correction.
 - 3.3.3. Even if EDC or Postal Ballot is issued, it is difficult to get them delivered to the Person on Election Duty in time.
- 3.4. Problems with return of marked postal ballot for counting –
 - 3.4.1. There are postal delays due to which postal ballots do not come back to the Returning officer in time for counting.
4. Recently, the Commission has tried to improve the system of Postal Balloting by persons on poll duty. This has resulted in significant improvement. One of the important lessons learnt in the process is the fact that it is difficult to collect all information required for Postal Balloting and

also ensure enrollment of persons on election duty at their place of ordinary residence in the short time available after the announcement of elections. It will be much better if these preparatory activities are undertaken much before the announcement of elections.

5. **Preparatory Activities** – The following preparatory activities should be undertaken immediately by all DEOs: -

- 5.1. **Preparation of a database of Persons likely to be on election duty** –

There are existing instructions of the Commission to prepare a database of all Government Employees posted in the district for the purpose of randomization and allocation of election duties. So far this database has been prepared after announcement of elections. The Commission has directed that every district should prepare this database immediately and keep it updated if there are transfers, retirements or new recruitments. The database should include not only employees of the State Government, it should include all employees of State Government, Central Government and Central and State PSUs. It should also include all police personnel posted in the district including Home Guards etc. This database should include drivers, conductors and cleaners of Government vehicles, vehicles of State Road Transport Corporation etc. An effort should be made to get the information of drivers, conductors and cleaners of private vehicles in the district like trucks, buses, minibuses etc. with the help of vehicle owners associations. Apart from other things, Information relating to Cell Phone numbers and Email Ids of all persons shall also be collected and stored in the database. The software for preparation of this database shall be developed by the Commission and be made available on the website of the Commission soon. The work of preparation of the database should be completed by the end of August 2013.

- 5.2. **Checking the enrolment status of persons in the database** –

Information about enrolment status and EPIC numbers shall be collected in the database. Based on this information the DEO should undertake a search in the elector database to find, whether any person is not enrolled at all, or enrolled at more than one place or enrolled at a place other than place of ordinary residence. This search should be completed by end of September 2013.

- 5.3. **Correction in electoral roll entries** –Based on the search described above, if any correction in the enrollment in electoral roll becomes necessary, appropriate forms should be got filled from the persons concerned and corrections in electoral roll entries should be made after following statutory procedure. This activity will coincide with the summary revision of electoral rolls for the next year. After all corrections are made, all persons in the database should be enrolled at the place of their ordinary residence. They should be enrolled only once and all of them should have an EPIC. It should be made clear to all Government Employees by a circular sent to all Government Offices that enrolment at more than one place is an offence and that a person is entitled to be enrolled only at the place of his or her ordinary residence and not in the native village or town.
- 5.4. **Linking of database of persons likely to be used for elections with electoral roll database**– The database of persons likely to be used for elections prepared in the manner described above should then be linked with the electoral roll database on the basis of the EPIC number. This will be useful at the time of elections for filling on-line Form 12 for issue of Postal Ballot or Form 12A for issue of EDC.
- 5.5. **Information regarding Home District and posting history in the entire service**– Information regarding home district and previous posting shall also be collected in the database of employees. This information will be useful for transfers of employees according to the transfer policy of the Commission.
6. **On-line Applications in Form 12 and Form 12A** –Software for on-line applications in Form 12 and Form12A requesting Postal Ballot and EDC is being developed and will be released for use soon. This will simplify the task of collecting Form12 and Form12A.
7. **Issue of Postal Ballots and EDC and preparation of Marked Copy of the Electoral Roll** – Software for issue of EDC and Postal Ballots and automation of preparation of marked copy of electoral rolls is also being prepared and will be soon released. It is therefore recommended that arrangements for printing of Form 12 and Form 12A, printing of EDC and postal ballots and printing of marked copies of electoral roll in adequate number should be kept ready at the time of elections. For this purpose, a small cell with

adequate number of computers, laser printers and Internet connection should be kept ready.

8. These instructions should be communicated to all concerned and strict monitoring should be done to ensure that all preparatory activities are carried out according to the deadlines given in this letter.

Yours faithfully,

(Ashish Chakraborty)
Secretary