

By Fax/Camp Bag

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA
Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 464/INST/2008-EPS

Dated: 24th October, 2008

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States & Union Territories.

Sub. **Appointment of Micro Observers – Guidelines & Check List -**
Regarding.

Sir,

I am directed to state that the Commission has decided to deploy the Micro Observers in some constituencies in the State. For this purpose, it has framed Guidelines and Check-List for the Micro Observers. A copy of each of the guidelines and checklist is forwarded herewith as in Annexure-I & Annexure-II.

2. It will be ensured that copies of the same are provided to officials who are appointed as Micro Observers and also to all Observers of the Commission through the District Election Officers.

3. The receipt of this letter may please be acknowledged with the confirmation that the relevant instructions have been issued to all the concerned officers. A copy of instructions/directions so issued in this behalf may also be endorsed to the Commission for its information and record.

Yours faithfully,

(SHANGARA RAM)
(PRINCIPAL SECRETARY)

Guidelines for Micro-Observers

1. Observers have a very crucial role to play in the conduct of an independent, free and fair election. To strengthen the system of observation, the Commission has consciously decided to deploy micro-observers where necessary. These micro-observers would directly work under control and supervision of the general observer.

2. For deployment as micro-observer, the DEO will obtain the list of Gazetted Officers/officials of Government of India from different offices in the district. Such Gazetted officers/officials will be eligible to be deployed as micro observer. In case Gazetted officers are not sufficient in number, Group 'C' employees and above can also be utilized for this purpose.

3. The DEO will prepare a list of polling stations under the supervision of General observer where these micro-observers would be deployed. Such polling stations would be short listed on the basis of various factors which contribute to the vulnerability of the voters. Such factors, for example, domination of one social group over other, inaccessibility of the area, EPIC non availability, previous history of violence, etc. would have been taken into consideration while doing the vulnerability mapping in the district as per the extant instructions of the Commission on this issue. The list of such polling stations where micro-observers are to be deployed will be finally approved by the General observer and kept confidential in a sealed envelop till the last moment of deployment.

4. In multi-polling station buildings each location will have one micro-observer instead of one micro-observer per polling station. The micro-observer can oscillate between and visit the polling stations within the same campus at frequent intervals.

5. There shall be a nodal officer identified by the DEO for micro-observers to handle logistics and deployment related tasks of micro-observers in each district. General Observers will be in close touch with them for their requirements of micro-observers relating to their constituencies.

6. Each micro-observer shall be given a photo-pass and identity card by the DEO to ensure his access to the polling stations.

7. Observers will arrange and train their micro-observers. The officer selected for the job of micro-observer may not be aware of different aspects of election process. Therefore, a basic training of election processes on the day of the poll shall have to be given to them. This should enable them to understand and observe the activities relating to election on the day of the poll. An illustrative training material for the micro-observer in Micro Soft Power Point is attached with this letter. Since the micro-observer shall be reporting to the observer alone, it will be the responsibility of the observers to ensure that they are trained properly on the relevant and crucial issues. The DEOs will organize the training of these micro-observers.

8. The required number of officers for deployment as micro-observer would be picked up randomly from the list of all eligible officers. Further the assigning of polling stations also will be done in random manner a day prior to the day of departure in presence of the general observer and duly approved by him. However, the exact polling station would be given to them on the day of departure.

9. The DEO should ensure that the micro-observers are separately dropped to their destinations. Micro-observer should be provided with an Identity card, entry pass to his/her polling stations, and such other requirements as may be necessary for discharge of duties as per the direction of the Commission.

10. On the day of poll the micro-observer should reach the polling station at least one hour before the commencement of the poll, i.e., at 7 O'clock in the morning. If for certain reason it is not possible to reach in the morning, he should reach in the evening of the previous day.

11. Having reached the polling station he should assess the preparedness for the poll. During the poll day he should regularly note down the important points on the pre printed Performa (a Performa for this is appended). It is made absolutely clear that in no case the micro observer will act as presiding officer or the polling officer. 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.

12. In the process of observation on the day of the poll, the micro-observer should specially observe: -

- a. Mock Poll Procedures,
- b. Presence of Polling Agents and observance of ECI instructions with regard to them,
- c. The observance of entry pass system and access to Polling Station,
- d. Proper identification of electors in accordance with ECI guidelines,
- e. Identification and recording procedures for the **Absentee, Shifted and Duplicate** voter's list (ASD list),
- f. Application of indelible ink,
- g. Noting down particulars of electors in register 17-A,
- h. Secrecy of voting,
- i. Conduct of polling agents, their complaints, if any, etc.

13. During the poll, if the micro-observer feels that the poll is being vitiated for any reason, he will immediately bring it to the notice of General observer through whatever means of communication is available, for example, phone or wireless or any other means.

14. After the poll process is over, the micro-observer will report to the Observer in the format as enclosed as Annexure II at the collection center and hand over his envelop containing the report for the day personally to the Observer and brief him/her on any thing of importance that had happened during the day.

15. Observers will go through the report and if any further clarification is required then he should arrange for the micro-observer to be called for ascertaining those further details. These reports along with the scrutiny of the Register 17-A will be taken into consideration for taking a decision on repoll or disciplinary action against any delinquent polling staff.

Checklist for Micro-Observers

1. Whether mock poll has been conducted in presence of micro Observer? - Y/N.
2. Whether data of mock poll from the ballot unit was cleared and the EVM count was set to zero after the mock poll and before the beginning of real poll? - Y/N.
3. How may polling agents and of which political party, were present during the mock poll?
4. Whether more than one polling agent from the same political party were present inside the polling station at any time?
5. Whether polling agents were allowed to note the serial numbers of balloting unit and control unit and green paper seal?
6. Whether the entry pass system was enforced properly? Whether any unauthorized person was inside the polling station at any point of time?
7. Whether marking of indelible ink on left forefinger was done properly?
8. Whether the identification document particulars were being filled up meticulously in Register of Voters (Form 17-A)?
9. Whether the list of votes issued with Postal Ballot was available with the Presiding Officer & Polling Agents? Did any person already issued Postal Ballot appeared to vote again in person?
10. Whether events are recorded from time to time as and when they occur in the Presiding Officer Diary?
11. Whether the Presiding Officer or Polling Officer was going towards voting compartment or giving any undue instructions to the voters?
12. Whether the scrutiny of voters in the Absentee, Shifted and Duplicate list was done meticulously by the Presiding Officers in accordance with ECI Guidelines?
13. Whether copies of accounts of votes recorded in Form-17C have been given to the polling agents?

14. Whether voting compartment was properly placed to ensure secrecy of voting?
15. Whether sealing of voting machine was done according to instructions?
16. Whether any complaint by polling agent, election agent or any political party was received? If yes it's substance.
17. Any other incident or issue that you would like to highlight.

Signature of Micro Observer :

Name (in full) :

Designation :

Phone No. :

Date & Time :

Introduction

- ❑ Poll is conducted in designated **polling stations** specifically prepared for this purpose;
- ❑ Poll is conducted by a team of officials identified randomly and trained. It comprises a **Presiding Officer** and 3 **polling officers**;
- ❑ Representatives of the candidates (called **Polling Agents**) also sit inside the polling station and watch the poll proceedings;
- ❑ Electronic Voting Machine (**EVM**) used for recording of votes has two units – **control unit** which is with 3rd Polling Officer and through which he allows a voter to vote and second, **ballot unit** which is in secluded corner with a voting compartment and in which a voter votes;
- ❑ A Voter enters the polling station, **identifies** himself to the 1st Polling Officer and gets the **indelible ink** on his left fore finger, then goes to **2nd Polling Officer** and signs the **Register of Voters (Form 17-A)** and finally goes to the **3rd Polling Officer** who keeps his **Voter Slip, marks the electoral roll** and enables the control unit. Thereafter the Voter goes to ‘**voting compartment**’ where the ballot unit is kept and presses his chosen button to record his vote.

Arrangements

Outside The Polling Stations

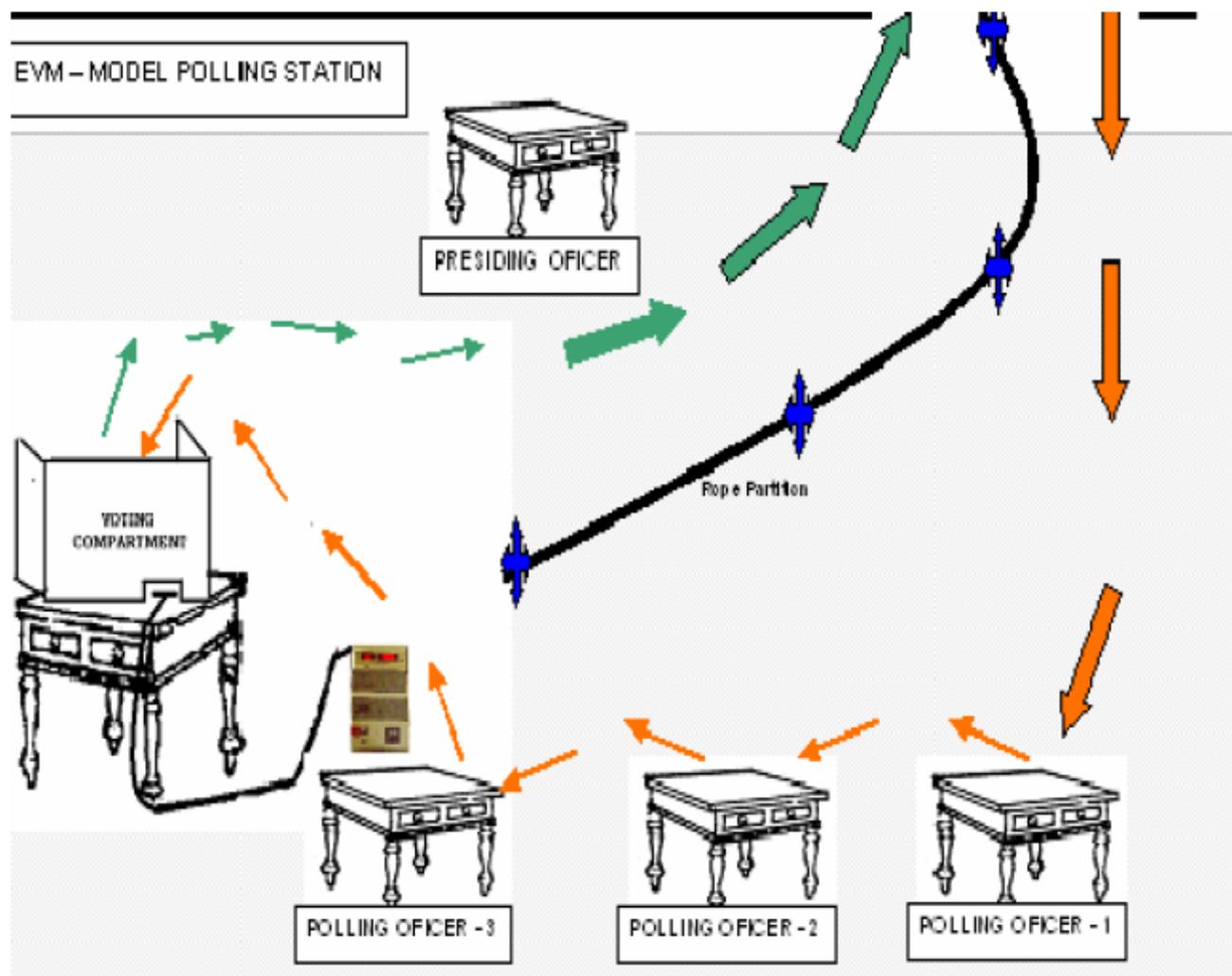
- Outside each polling station there shall be displayed prominently—
 - Notice specifying the polling area, the electors of which are entitled to vote at the polling station and, when the polling area has more than one polling station, the particulars of the electors so entitled; and
 - Copy of the list of the contesting candidates.
 - A card Board display of Ballot unit explaining a voter how to vote on an EVM
- Enough space for the voters to wait outside the polling station;
- Separate waiting space for men and women as far as practicable;

Law & Order Around Polling Station

- ❑ No vehicles to be allowed inside the 100 meter perimeter of a PS
- ❑ No canvassing of any kind allowed in this perimeter. Offence under S 130 of RoP Act 1951.
- ❑ Candidate's booths to have 1 table and 2 chairs beyond the PS perimeter
- ❑ Voter slips to be plain white slips without any party markings
- ❑ No posters or banners

MODEL POLLING STATION FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE

LAYOUT OF POLLING STATION FOR SINGLE ELECTION



Arrangements Inside a PS

- ❑ Separate entrance and exit for voters;
- ❑ Easy flow of voters from the time they enter the polling station to the time they leave it;
- ❑ The polling agents to be seated in such a way that they can see the face of an elector as and when he enters the polling station and able to see the entire operation;
BUT
- ❑ Polling agent not to be in position to see voters actually casting their votes;
- ❑ Video covered PS shall have Videography arrangements

Arrangement Inside a PS

-Placement of Voting Compartment

- ❑ The Voting Compartment has to be so placed that neither the Presiding Officer nor the agents or the polling officers should be able to see the actual voting;
- ❑ For this reason, the voting compartment cannot be near to the Presiding Officer or even near any window where one can see from outside;
- ❑ For this reason only, care has to be taken that the compartment/partition of the balloting unit is not transparent or semi-transparent;

Who all can come (or be) inside Polling Station?

- Voters in manageable numbers
- Candidate in that AC
- Candidate's Election Agent in that AC
- Polling Agents of Candidates in that PS – maximum of one for each candidate
- Authorized Media Personnel
- Election Officials
- Micro-Observer's seating arrangements inside the PS when deployed
- A child in arms accompanying an elector
- A person accompanying a blind or an infirm voter who cannot move without help
- In case of a elector/candidate having been provided Z+ security, one security personnel in civil clothes with concealed small arm can accompany the secured person inside the polling station
- Every one must have a valid pass properly displayed

Seating of Polling Agents

- Polling agents shall sit in following order
 - Agents of candidates of recognized parties
 - Of recognized state parties
 - Recognized parties of other states
 - Registered unrecognized parties
 - Independents
- If less space then take turns or sit out

Polling Agents

- ❑ Polling agents are appointed by the candidates.
 - They must be voters in that very polling station
 - Must have a valid photo-identity card.
 - Person provided with security can't be an Agent
- ❑ The presiding officer shall, after due verification, give them entry passes for the Polling Station.
- ❑ For every polling agent, there may be a maximum of two relief agents. But only one person can be inside the polling station at one point of time. Entry pass system ensures this.
- ❑ Polling agents can not be relieved after 3 P.M.
- ❑ Polling Agents can challenge bogus voters

Media Persons

- ❑ Media persons are issued Passes by the ECI on the recommendation of DEO
- ❑ Such media persons can enter the Polling Stations of the AC/District indicated in their Passes
- ❑ They cannot take the photo or video of the balloting process in any manner that will reveal the secrecy of ballot;
- ❑ Other media persons (not having valid ECI passes can not enter the polling stations.
 - However they can cover the outside of the polling station, voter's queue etc.
 - They cannot take the interview of audio-video bites of voters or any other personalities for direct relay – that amounts to canvassing on the poll day

Security of Polling Station

- ❑ No armed personnel can enter a polling station. Only exception is a Z+ security covered person who is either a voter or candidate in that polling station. In that case, a security personnel in civil clothes and concealed small weapon can accompany such person inside the polling station; (Any security covered person cannot be election or polling agent)
- ❑ Where CPF is deployed, a Jawan will stand outside at the door and can watch proceedings from there itself. He can not enter the polling station
- ❑ Where non-CPF is deployed, the uniformed personnel will position himself away from the line of sight of the insides of the polling station and shall not stand at the door of the polling station;

Electronic Voting Machine

- ❑ Voting machine consists of two units – (1) control Unit and (2) Balloting Unit interconnected by cable.
- ❑ One balloting unit caters up to sixteen candidates and displays names of
- ❑ contesting candidates and the symbols .
- ❑ There is a blue button on balloting unit by pressing which the voter can record his vote.



Control Unit

DEC (JP)



Balloting Unit

Activities inside Polling Station

- ❑ Presiding Officer shall arrange for setting up of polling station, seating arrangements and EVM
- ❑ He shall give entry pass to the polling agents after due verification
- ❑ He shall demonstrate the voting machine before the commencement of poll, to the polling agents.
- ❑ He shall also demonstrate the marked copy of the electoral roll and the Register of Voters (17-A) to candidates or their polling agents present and take their signature.
- ❑ He will **conduct mock poll** by recording a few votes at random for each of the contesting candidates and tallying the result.
- ❑ After the mock poll, the votes recorded at such mock poll shall be cleared from the control unit of the voting machine. A certificate shall be given to the Sector Officer (SO) in prescribed format.
- ❑ The control unit of the voting machine has then to be sealed by fixing the green paper seal (s) and special tag.
- ❑ Thereafter, electors shall be allowed to vote strictly in the order in which they have been entered in the register of voters.

Verification of Voters

- Electors required to identify themselves – through EPIC or alternate document approved by ECI
- Minor discrepancies in voter's EPIC can be overlooked
- Voters without establishing their identity should not be allowed to vote

Duties of Polling Officers

- The **identity of elector** should be verified by the 1st Polling Officer in following manner:
 - The Voter will give a slip (or announce) with his serial no. in **marked copy of roll**. The 1st Polling Officer will locate that serial no. in the roll and ask the voter to announce his name. The name announced should be same as the one in the roll. This is first check on a bogus voter. Thereafter, the officer should ask for his identity document.
- After an elector has been identified, the entry relating to the elector in the marked copy of the electoral roll should be underlined. A tick mark will also be put on the left side of entry in the case of a female elector
- The voter should move to 2nd Polling Officer who will note the voter particulars in the **Register of Voters** (Form 17-A). The serial number (not the name) of the elector as given in the marked copy of the electoral roll should be noted.
- The type of Identity document and the Sl. No. of the ID-Document should be noted in the **“REMARKS”** column of the 17-A.
- Then the 2nd Polling Officer should apply **the indelible ink** on the left forefinger. If elector does not have left fore finger, ink should be applied to any other finger of left hand.

Contd.....

Duties of Polling Officers

- ❑ If an elector refuses to put his signature or thumb impression on the Register of Voters, he shall not be permitted to vote and an entry 'Refused to vote' will be made in the 'Remarks' column of the Register of Voters.
- ❑ If elector refuses to vote, the Presiding Officer shall record this in **Presiding Officer's Diary**.
- ❑ Presiding Officer shall tally the vote counts every hour and keep an **account of hourly poll**

Duties of Polling Officers

- ❑ **First Polling Officer :** will be in charge of the marked copy of Electoral Roll and also responsible for identification of electors.

- ❑ **Second Polling Officer:** will be in charge of indelible ink and register of voters in form-17A.
 - ❑ Put a mark with the indelible ink above the root of the nail.
 - ❑ Take signature or thumb impression of each elector on register of 17A.
 - ❑ Issue a voter slip to each elector after he has entered his particulars in the register.

- ❑ **Third Polling Officer:** will be in charge of the Control Unit of the voting machine. To keep watch on control unit and voting process. He will be seated on the same table where the Presiding Officer sits.

Challenged Vote

- Polling Agents can challenge voter's identity by depositing Rs. 2/-
- Presiding Officer holds summary inquiry
- If challenge not established, voter proceeds to vote
- If challenge established, person is not allowed to vote and handed over to police

Tendered Vote

- ❑ Situation when a voter finds that his/her vote is already cast by someone else
- ❑ Such voter can tender his vote if he/she can establish the credentials, by tender ballot paper – but not through EVM
- ❑ Tendered ballot shall be kept in separate cover

Voting by blind & infirm

- Permitted a companion of 18+
- Same person cannot be companion to more than one person
- Companion will be required to declare that he will keep secret the vote recorded by him/her
- None of the polling staff or agent shall act as companion

Presiding Officer's power to adjourn poll

- S 57(1) of RoP Act 1951, PrO can adjourn poll due to:
 - Natural calamity like flood, storm, snowfall
 - Damage to poll materials including EVM
 - Disturbance of peace making it impossible to continue with poll
 - Non arrival of polling team due to serious difficulty
 - Stoppage of EVM etc
 - Any other unforeseen and sufficient cause

Supervisory Visits

- Observers will visit
- Sector Officers will visit frequently
- Candidates may visit
- Candidate's Election Agents may visit
- All of them must record their visit and observations in the visit sheet

Closure time

- Presiding Officer to check if electors are in queue
- If they are, give numbered slips. Give slip no. 1 to the last person in queue. This will ensure that no further person joins the queue thereafter
- When all electors have voted, press the close button on ballot unit
- Ballot unit will show the total votes polled – it should be noted in part - 1 of 17 C
- Then switch off the power/battery button
- Tally 17-A, 17C and EVM count
- Seal the machine thoroughly
- Presiding Officer must complete his diary
- Presiding Officer must complete the additional report format
- Micro-Observer to complete his report in the prescribed format