

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110001

No. ECI/PN/32/2020


2nd April, 2020

PRESS NOTE

Subject: Extension of Date for submitting comments/suggestions on main recommendations of working groups on various aspects of electoral management-reg.

Election Commission of India on March 7, 2020 (copy enclosed), had invited comments/suggestions from citizens and stakeholders on main recommendations of Working Groups on various aspects of electoral management until March 31, 2020.

Some representations have been received to extend the deadline in view of the current situation of lockdown measures to contain Covid-19 in the country. The Commission has considered the same and extended the deadline of receiving comments to April 30, 2020.


(PAWAN DIWAN)
UNDER SECRETARY

PREFACE


Subject:- Inviting comments/suggestions from the members of public on main recommendations of Working Groups of various aspects of electoral management – regarding

General Elections, 2019 witnessed a number of innovative measures including dedicated focus on accessibility at every polling station, providing dedicated transport facilities to PwD electors, designing targeted SVEEP materials for awareness and ethical participation of voters, launching c-vigil app to empower citizen for reporting against any malpractices during elections, using various ICT applications for ease of processes, creating unique Voluntary Code of Ethics for use of Social Media during elections, and making the elections as “Desh Ka Mahatyohar”, which helped in **the highest voter participation of 67.4% in Indian Electoral History**. Participation of **women voter reached at the record high of 67.18%**. First time, ETPBS was used for the Service Voters across the country and the number of service electors rose to 18 lakhs.

After this unprecedented electoral participation, Election Commission has decided to focus on consolidation of all the steps and measures and incorporation of all the learnings to further improve the electoral administration. Accordingly, in June, 2019, Election Commission constituted Working Groups on various aspects of electoral management for these purposes. Each of these Working Groups is headed/coordinated by Secretary General /Sr. Deputy Election Commissioner/Deputy Election Commissioners/Director Generals from the Commission and consists of various Chief Electoral Officers from different states. Working Groups collated inputs from the field, analyzed these inputs in the context of existing legal and institutional frameworks, and suggested pathways for future to add value to the electoral process in the country. Working Groups undertook the study of related provisions from other election management bodies from the globe and after taking all inputs into consideration, made the recommendations to the Commission.

Based on these recommendations, Commission has decided to place main recommendations of Working Groups in public domain for inviting comments/suggestions on these recommendations from the citizen and stakeholders.

The comments/suggestions on these 25 recommendations can be sent through email to coordination@eci.gov.in by 31st March, 2020.


(A. Mona Sreenivas)
Director

Main Recommendations

S.No	Recommendation
1	<p><u>Single simplified Form for all services to voters eg. Registration, change of address, deletion of names etc.</u></p> <p>At present, citizens and electors use different forms for specific electoral service. Like, Form 6 for voter registration for the first time or in case of change in constituency, Form7 for deletion of names or filing objections, Form 8 for shifting of residence within the constituency, Form 8 (A) for correction of entries in existing electoral roll. Form 6 (A) for registration as the overseas voter and Form 1 for replacement of EPIC. Multiple numbers of forms create confusion and affect the efficiency in the process. It is now proposed to have a unified and simplified form for all services to voters.</p>
2	<p><u>Expanding the network and Electoral Service Centres (ESCs)/ Voter Facilitation Centres (VFCs) to streamline Electoral Services to citizens.</u></p> <p>Decentralisation of locations for providing electoral services is important to deliver the services at the nearest location, as far as practicable. Expanding the network and electoral service centres/ voter facilitation centres will help in streamlining electoral services to citizens.</p>
3	<p><u>Door-step electoral services to Persons with Disability (PwDs) and Senior citizens (80+ years).</u></p> <p>Commission is committed to its motto “No Voter to Left Behind” and accordingly there is a need to explore the possibility of</p>

S.No	Recommendation
	doorstep delivery of electoral services to the persons with disability and to the senior citizens of above 80 years of age.
4	<p data-bbox="264 363 1995 475"><u>Online registration of prospective voters at age of 17 years – registration facilities to be provided in schools and colleges.</u></p> <p data-bbox="264 539 1995 724">Democracy requires smooth transition of young citizen in the electoral roll the moment they become eligible to become elector. It requires creating a framework to facilitate such transition. Accordingly, it is recommended to have online registration facilities at the school/college level to all prospective voters at age of 17 years.</p>
5	<p data-bbox="264 790 1995 826"><u>Preparing Electoral Roll of Graduates’ and Teachers’ Constituency through online platforms of ERO Net.</u></p> <p data-bbox="264 884 1995 1069">At present, electoral roll of graduates’ and teachers’ constituency is prepared in the offline mode. Since electoral roll for which the elections is prepared on online platform, similar platform needs to be developed for the electoral rolls of graduates’ and teachers’ constituencies to assist the prospective electors.</p>
6	<p data-bbox="264 1136 1995 1248"><u>Revamping Booth Level Officer (BLO) System and appointing full time tech-savvy BLOs in a phased manner for services through handheld digital devices.</u></p> <p data-bbox="264 1305 1995 1417">Booth level facilities are the foot soldiers of electoral system in the country. At present, these officers are mostly drawn from Anganwadi, Asha workers, other available Government functionaries at the village/ ward level who handles the electoral</p>

S.No	Recommendation
	<p>services after their office hours. There is a need to have a dedicated system of booth level officer who can handle digital devices to operate various IT based applications of the Commission for the purpose of electoral roll.</p>
7	<p><u>Provision of e-EPIC for voters.</u></p> <p>Commission provides EPIC (Voter I-Card) to each voter. In the digital environment it is recommended to have e-version of this EPIC for the voters for better mobility.</p>
8	<p><u>Quarterly /six monthly qualifying date for voter registration instead of one annual date (1st January) as qualifying date.</u></p> <p>As per law, 1st January is the qualifying date to be calculated the eligibility age for the electors. This deprives all those citizens who attain 18 years in that particular year after 1st January but remain ineligible to become voter for any election in that year. Commission has proposed 4 qualifying dates – 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October. Ministry of Law has suggested for 2 qualifying dates viz., 1st January and 1st July for this purpose.</p>
9	<p><u>Modern online Election Planning Portal for ECI, State/UT or district levels.</u></p> <p>Election requires a lot of planning well in advance. Commission has already designed election planner to guide its ground machinery to carry out different activities during stipulated time frame for each election. Now it is appropriate to have online</p>

S.No	Recommendation
	platform for real time data handling related to election planning.
10	<p><u>Accessibility portal for providing speedy services to PwDs or Senior Citizens.</u></p> <p>Commission has developed PwD App for electoral services, however, a dedicated portal for accessibility to facilitate speedy services to persons with disabilities and/or senior citizens will further help them</p>
11	<p><u>GIS based Electoral Atlas for mapping of Parliamentary Constituencies, Assembly Constituencies or Polling Stations for public information.</u></p> <p>Utilisation of technology to disseminate the information about territorial boundaries of Parliamentary Constituencies, Assembly Constituencies, and Polling Stations will be useful for the public.</p>
12	<p><u>Digital Election Calendar for information and schedule of Elections to public.</u></p> <p>Creating digital platform for election calendar and election schedule will create more awareness to the public.</p>
	<p>Electoral education and awareness in a democracy is a continuing activity. It requires connect with various institutions to convey the importance of electoral education and ethical participation in the electoral process in the country. It has also been seen that with considerable effort the voting percentage in 2019 Lok Sabha Election has been the highest (67.4%) since beginning. There is unprecedented voter participation, demonstrations and awareness of democratic values of people. However, there is further need to strengthen and strategize the process of outreach and dissemination of information.</p>

S.No	Recommendation
	Accordingly it is recommended:
	A. Institutional Strengthening
13	i. Partnership with Govt. organizations, PSUs and Private Trade/Industrial Organizations for Electoral education and awareness.
14	ii. Setting up Electoral Literacy Clubs in all schools and colleges.
15	iii. Setting up voter awareness forums in all Govt. and private organizations.
16	iv. Setting up Chunav Pathshala in all Polling Stations, for voter awareness.
17	v. Inclusion of voter education in school curriculum.
18	vi. Setting up regional six hubs for voter education and awareness.
19	B. New Outreach Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pro-active use of New Media Technology ii. Setting up Web TV and Web radio for education of voters and other stakeholders. iii. Starting a weekly programme on Doordarshan or Radio for voters. iv. Setting up Community Radio Stations for voter education. v. Periodic SVEEP Talk programmes.

S.No	Recommendation
20	<p><u>Orientation Programme for Media Persons, Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).</u></p> <p>India conducts largest elections in the world. There has been active participation of various stakeholders including media persons, political parties and civil society organisations in the electoral process. However, to meet up the challenges of current environment, Commission has been updating its documents and processes. There is a need to create orientation programme for such stakeholders on regular basis so that they remain aware of various steps taken by Commission for continuous moment in electoral process.</p>
21	<p><u>New Voting Methods:</u></p> <p>Exploring the possibility and feasibility of different voting methods, which are secure, for enhancing electoral participation.</p> <p>Commission has already implemented one way online transfer of postal ballots for service and implemented the same for the whole country in 2019. It has been seen that approximately 30% of electors are not able to participate in elections for various reasons, some of them, as assessed in a report on facilities of domestic migrants may polling to the category of migrants who continue to remain voters at their previous locations. Commission is exploring the possibility and feasibility of different voting methods which remains secure and safe to ease and improve the electoral participation.</p>

S.No	Recommendation
22	<p><u>Print Media and Social Media regulation:</u></p> <p>Print Media and Social Media platforms may also be prohibited on the lines of electronic media during the period of silence under section 126 of the RP Act, 1951.</p> <p>Silence period of 48 hours from the close of poll as a legal sanctity and it allows the voters to reflect on the promises made and the choices they have to make. Though electronic media is prohibited from propagating any election matter. This, at present, does not cover print media and social media platforms, specifically for creating level playing field and giving voters absolute right over the seize period, it is recommended to include print media and social media platforms under the ambit of Section 126 of the R.P. Act, 1951.</p>
23	<p><u>Online nomination:</u></p> <p>It is proposed to provide online facility for filing nomination for candidates.</p> <p>Candidates are filing nomination in person before the concerned Returning Officer. There has been avoidable error and long queue before the Returning Officer during the nomination process. Creating online facility for filing nomination will help in avoiding errors and will ease the process of filing nomination.</p>

S.No	Recommendation
24	<p><u>Political Party Expenditure:</u></p> <p>At present, there is no cap on the expenditure to be incurred for an election by the political parties. There is felt need for having such cap for level playing field. In view of this, in 2015, ECI has recommended to Ministry of Law, a proposal to cap maximum expenditure of political parties to a multiple of half of maximum prescribed limit for individual candidates with the number of candidates fielded.</p>
25	<p><u>Integration of Citizen-facing services:</u></p> <p>Integration of voter registration process with Citizen-facing services such as Digi-Locker and UMANG. Citizens maintain their documents in Digi-locker/UMANG. Linkage will help in early upload/connect of necessary documents for the purposes of registration.</p>