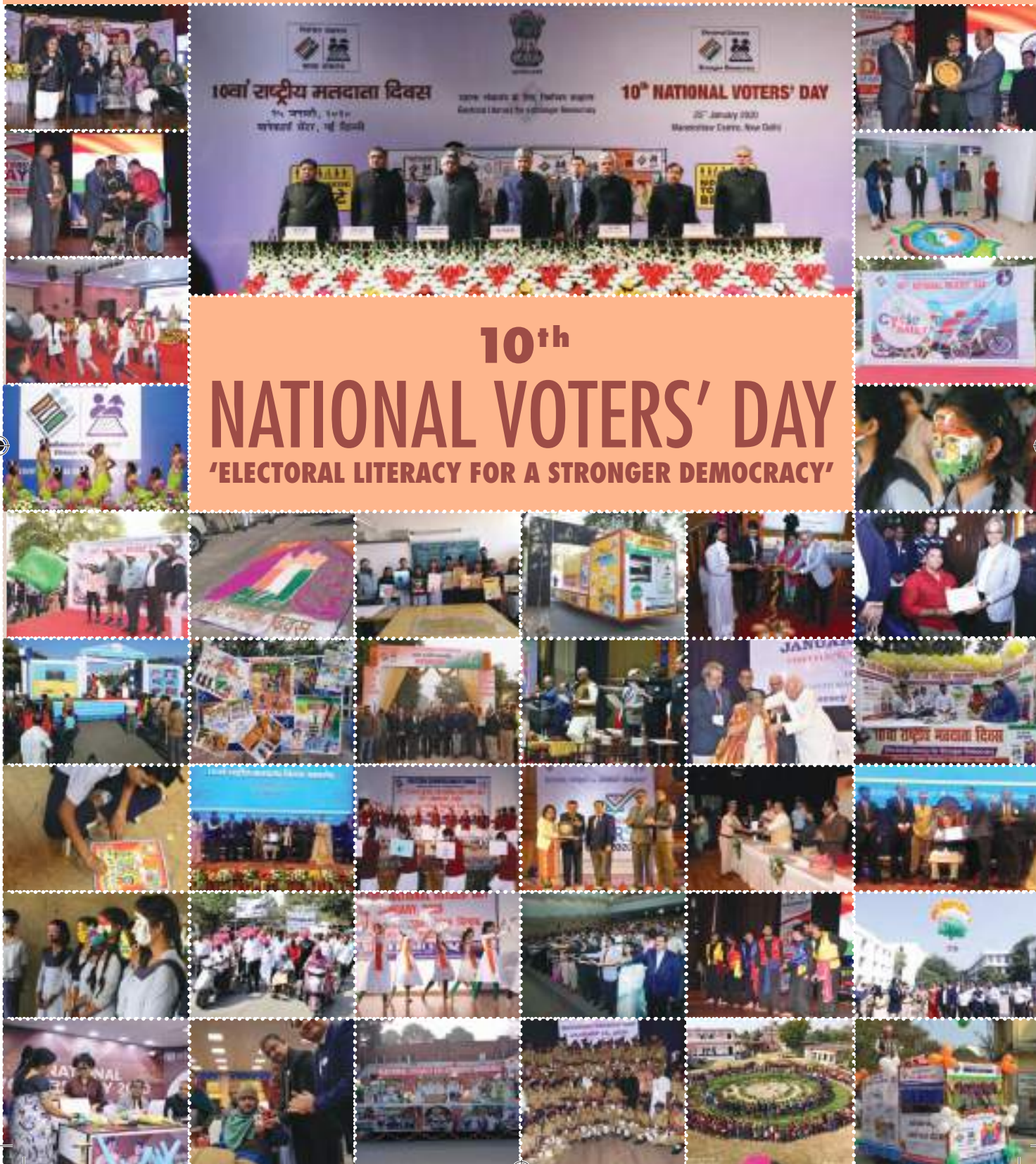


MY VOTE MATTERS

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA



10th NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY 'ELECTORAL LITERACY FOR A STRONGER DEMOCRACY'



10th NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY

25th January 2020

NVD 2020 Theme: Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy



Lok Sabha Election 2019 witnesses Highest Ever Voter Turnout

Lok Sabha Election or the General Election to the Lower House of Parliament of India has been rightly called world's largest democratic exercise. The Electoral Roll is prepared in 16 languages and more than 12 million officials were engaged in the elections which were conducted in 7 phases running over 39 days from April 11 to May 19, 2019. Named as 'Desh Ka Mahatyohar', the mega electoral exercise was conducted at over 1 million polling stations located in a vast expanse of the country including far flung hamlets in rural, hilly and difficult terrains. The 2019 election recorded the highest ever voter turnout of 67.4% in the history of Indian elections.



Electoral Literacy for a Stronger Democracy

• Electoral Literacy Clubs

As young and future voters constitute a sizeable part of India's democratic polity and its future, it is essential to focus on making them electorally literate and enthusiastic to participate in the electoral process. Evidence based on international practices suggests that electoral literacy imparted through

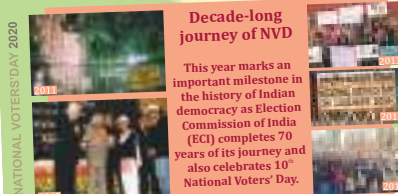
India celebrates 10th National Voters' Day

National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated on January 25 every year at over ten lakh locations across the nation, that include polling stations areas, sub divisions, divisions, district, and state headquarters. It marks the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on this day in the year 1950. Today, NVD initiative has been institutionalized as an annual feature for celebration of democracy and electoral participation in the country.

This year, we celebrate 10th National Voters' Day. The main purpose of the celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters and also spread awareness among voters for effective participation in the electoral process.

Voter's Pledge

"We, the citizens of India, having abiding faith in democracy, hereby pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of our country and the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections, and to vote in every election fearlessly and without being influenced by considerations of religion, race, caste, community, language or any inducement."



Decade-long journey of NVD

This year marks an important milestone in the history of Indian democracy as Election Commission of India (ECI) completes 70 years of its journey and also celebrates 10th National Voters' Day.



Themes for National Voters' Day

The theme sets the tone for yearlong activities which are focused on providing a continuity in voter education and a renewal of a citizen's faith as a unit of democracy and its electoral process.

- 1st NVD 2011 'Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy'
- 2nd NVD 2012 'Women's Registration'
- 3rd NVD 2013 'Inclusion'
- 4th NVD 2014 'Ethical Voting'
- 5th NVD 2015 'Easy Registration, Easy Correction'
- 6th NVD 2016 'Inclusive and Qualitative Participation'
- 7th NVD 2017 'Empowering Young and Future Voters'
- 8th NVD 2018 'Accessible Election'
- 9th NVD 2019 'No Voter to be Left Behind'
- 10th NVD 2020 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'

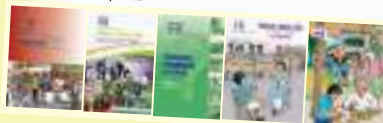
education at a young age helps in informed and ethical electoral participation. For this purpose, the Commission instituted Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs), on

The Numbers:

ELCs in Schools	: 1,21,108
ELCs in Colleges	: 37,368
Chunav Pathshalas	: 4,71,746
Voter Awareness Forums	: 58,721
Total	: 6,88,943

*December 2019

ELCs focus on participatory activities, games, films, etc to concept of ethical and informed voting and ultimately ensure wholesome citizenship development.



Celebrations of National Voters' Day 2020:

• First Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture (January 23, 2020)

This annual lecture series is envisaged as a tribute to Shri Sukumar Sen (1898 - 1963), the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, who commendably conducted the first two general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative assemblies, thereby putting India into the terra firma of democracy.

• International Conference (January 24, 2020)

An International conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity of Election Management Bodies' was held in New Delhi. Excellencies

Chairpersons/Chief Election Commissioners/ Commissioners/Members and other distinguished delegates from the Election Management Bodies of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Tunisia along with the President & CEO, International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), Secretary General, Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), Representative from International IDEA graced the occasion.

10th Meeting of Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBSA) was also held. On this occasion, 10th Issue of VoICE International magazine was launched.

• National Voters' Day 2020 (January 25, 2020)

In this context, the Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC) at school and college levels, 'Chunav Pathshalas' and Voter Awareness Forums (VAF) have an important role to play in the forthcoming NVD celebrations and times to come.

Launch of Second Edition of 'Belief in the Ballot'

India is the world's largest democracy and has inspired nations across the globe in imbibing the finest traditions ensuring right to vote to its citizens even in the remotest corners of the country. The voters are the bedrock of democracy and the functionalities of the Election Commission of India serve on the mandate 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

While the first volume of 'Belief in the Ballot' was an anthology of stories that documented the sacrifice, hope, creativity, enthusiasm, grit and determination that made the world's largest democratic exercise a success - the second volume brings to the readers stories of recent elections which further depict how our nation's perseverance and commitment to democracy stands resolute.



National CSO Awards

Maj Gen Anil Verma (Retd), Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), Delhi, Voter Awareness

- Annual National Conference organised in Lucknow with primary focus on Electoral and Political Reforms.
- Representatives of National election watch from each state chapter, Members of Political Parties, Members of Parliament besides Diplomats from various countries and representatives from national and international organizations working in the area of democracy and elections attended the National Voters' Day function.

Sh. Bhashan Punani, Blind People's Association, Gujarat, Accessible Election

- Special drive to make election process accessible to all Persons with Disabilities
- Provision of accessible electoral process with Braille Ballots preparation, orientation of Electoral Officers about disabilities and Braille Marking on EVM machines.

National Media Awards

Best Campaign for Voters' Education and Awareness 2019 - Electronic Media (Radio)

- Nationwide Campaign 'Ab Watan Dabayege Button' by 93.5 RED FM during Lok Sabha Elections 2019.
- Information about registration, doubts and queries addressed to an audience of 14,21,000 listeners every day.
- Organized road shows, registration and awareness drives
- Collaborated with RedBus to provide free travel vouchers to those travelling to their native place to vote.

Best Campaign for Voters' Education & Awareness 2019 - Print Media

- Hindu Tamil Thisai, (KSL Media Ltd, Chennai, Tamil Nadu) - a Tamil Daily Newspaper with average readership of 7,35,000 per day.
- Extensive coverage and targeted campaign towards informed and ethical voting during Lok Sabha 2019. Encouraged masses to exercise their franchise & vote on merit of candidates.
- Major initiatives - newspaper campaign Jananayaga Thiruvizha (Celebration of Democracy), Digital Campaign, Idhuvadu Indha Thogudhi (This is the Constituency), Cash for Vote and Num Vakku, Num Kadamai (Our Vote, Our Duty).

Sh. B. Murali Kumar, DG Income Tax (Investigation), Election Management

- Appropriate action on complaints regarding bribing of voters resulting in recovery of Rs. 89.65 Crores.
- Cash seizure of Rs. 11.50 Crores.

Dr. Anand Prakash Maheshwari, DG, CRPF, Election Management

- Coordinated security grid mechanism across the country.
- Mobilized state and central forces for facilitating smooth accesses to polling booth.

Sh. S. B. Shashank, Ex. CEO Mizoram, Election Management

- Reached out to Civil Society Organisations to ensure voting rights of marginalized displaced community in Mizoram

Sh. Anjali Kumar, Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, Security Management

- Identification of 13 vulnerable Polling Stations post which 1027 NBWS were executed.
- Extensive planning and coordination with CPF to mitigate the needs of critical and vulnerable hamlets, booths, including surprise NAKA checking and special vigilance on border
- Cash seizure of Rs. 25.06 Crores.
- 4618 weapons deposited as also binding of 5550 persons and registration of 68 MCC violator cases.

Sh. Murari Lal Meena, State Police Nodal Officer, Jharkhand, Security Management

- Ensured smooth coordination between state forces and 275 CAPFs deployed.
- Adopted innovative measures to tackle incidents of violence in Latehar, alamu and Lohardaga districts.
- Hypersensitive PS, identified, secure and alternative routes to PSIs arranged and use of best-trained and well equipped force in core LWE areas done.

Sh. V. Raghavendra, Joint CEO, Karnataka, EVM Management

- Actively involved in every stage for EVM & VVPAT management - from assessment, transportation, FLC, randomization and usage of machines in elections, till counting of votes.
- Designed training material and handbook, checklist for mock poll, etc.

Dr. Rangitabali Waikhom, DEO Imphal East, Manipur, Inclusive & Participative Election

- All PwD manned PSs - For the first time in Manipur PwDs were assigned the duty of polling personnel in Imphal East District.
- Achieved target of inclusive election by ensuring greater participation of women, transgender senior citizens & PwDs.
- Four PS in Thongliu AC, four PS in Khetriga AC, three PS in Heingang AC, six PS in Khurai AC manned by women only.
- 25 numbers of others/third gender voters (transgender) enrolled for the first time
- 1505 PwDs voters marked /enrolled in the electoral roll for the first time.
- Highest female voter turnout district in the L-MPC- 84.77%

Sh. Indrajeet Singh, DEO Alwar, Rajasthan, SVEEP Initiatives

- Launch of sSVEEP Android App for Virtual Mock Polling Experience on EVM-VVPAT
- sSVEEP allowed virtual activities like poster design, logo design, Social Wall (linked to facebook account), online registration for offline field activities like Vote Marathon, Cyclathon and updated BLO directory of District
- During LS 2019, 3.61 Lakh electors did mock poll on the app
- Four innovative ICT enabled applications developed.
- DIVYARITH App facilitated PwDs to identify, register and provide hassle-free logistic support, including transportation facility during elections.
- EEMS (Election Expenditure Monitoring System) Accounting expenditure incurred by contesting candidates.
- Daily Reports Monitoring System allowed nodal officers to upload date wise reports of area assigned.
- Mobile app / Web portal of Communication Plan used for communication between various election functionaries to ensure the smooth conduct of election.

Dr. Advathu Sarat, DEO Jagtital, Telangana, Election Management

- Conducted election with innovative means, leading to accuracy for 185 candidates, using M3 EVMs for 26820 Ballot Units, 2240 Control Units, and 2600 VVPATs, in a stipulated 10 days preparatory time.
- Bullock cart rallies in urban areas, fishermen boat rallies Godavari back waters and special rallies in tribal/interior areas organised.

From the Chief Election Commissioner of India



The first issue of 'My Vote Matters' was presented to the Hon'ble President of India a year ago on the eve of the Ninth Voters Day. The magazine has now entered into the second year of its publication. It has been a medium that aptly captures, develops and shares knowledge on election management in all its nuances. The narratives, stories and vignettes emerge from real experiences from the field and are a testimony to both the challenges and opportunities afforded by each election. It gives voice to the millions of election personnel through the length and breadth of our magnificent country. It's a telling of their rare experiences, feats, joys and sorrows, since an exercise of such epic proportions reaches out to the very inner consciousness and tests the innate strength of each individual.

The NVD Awards bestowed on the occasion of National Voters' Day 2020 extolled the achievements of election officials who rose to the occasion despite formidable difficulties. The current issue of this magazine contains a detailed account of the outstanding contributions made by them during the 2019 General Elections. Their initiative, innovative approach and indomitable spirit are commendable. I also place on record my appreciation for all those who were nominated by their respective CEOs, but could not make it to the final list. Their achievements are a veritable lighthouse whose transformative radiance made the 2019 election successful in every sense of the term. The CEOs who undertook the exercise of selecting the award winners, are also worthy of appreciation.

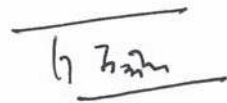
Our National Icons constitute an important link between the Commission and the voter. I wish to thank our National Icon, Ms. Mary Kom, one of the greatest sportspersons India has ever produced, who took time out to share her thoughts with 'My Vote Matters' on a range of issues.

I take this opportunity to welcome on board Mr. Jasbir Jassi, singer, lyricist, and performer-par-excellence. I am also delighted to welcome Dr Niru Kumar, a pioneer in the field of gender diversity, medicine, psychology and inclusion. Their appointment as National Icons shall surely add to the strength of the Commission's outreach and connect with voters.

The looming threat of Covid 19 has posed new challenges before EMBs across the world. Conduct of elections in the face of this deepening uncertainty and global health crisis will be nothing short of a critical test of confidence, leadership and robust democratic practices. ECI is working out targeted response mechanisms and redefining processes in order to address this challenge.

The current issue of 'My Vote Matters' offers a rich blend of insights from the ECI Headquarters in Delhi to real life experiences from the field. I am sure our readers will find the narrative and illustrations quite interesting.

I compliment the entire editorial team of 'My Vote Matters' for their remarkable efforts to bring out this issue in time, despite the constraints imposed by COVID-19.



Sunil Arora
Chief Election Commissioner of India

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From the Editor-In-Chief

Dear Reader,

Greetings to you from the Election Commission of India.

It gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction to present you the new issue of 'My Vote Matters', the first one in the second year of its vibrant journey. I am very thankful to all contributors and the editorial team, for making MVM grow and reach the readers despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

This issue carries a series of interesting articles from senior officers of the Commission on 'Advance Planning in Indian Elections', 'ECI's International Outreach', 'Towards Paperless Polling', 'New Benchmarking in Accessibility' and 'Journey of Indian Elections since Independence'. It also carries articles from the States such as 'EVP in Bihar', 'The Wide Embrace of Electoral Education' from NCT of Delhi, 'Techno- Advantages' from Haryana and 'An Unusual Ropeway of Democracy' from Meghalaya, 'Poll Star' from West Bengal and 'Celebrating 70 Years of Indian Elections' from Puducherry. They offer a glimpse of real-life happenings from across the country.

The country celebrated the 10th National Voters' Day on 25th January this year. This issue records a vivid recount of the celebration at the national level where the First Citizen of our country - Hon'ble President of India Sh. Ram Nath Kovind, graced the event as Chief Guest by lighting the lamp and enlightening us

with his valuable words of wisdom and guidance. He gave away the National Awards to the winners amidst befitting recitation of the meritorious work done by them during the last General Elections. Their dedication and devotion to duty is a source of inspiration to the more than one crore election officials, including security personnel, who contributed in the peaceful and successful conduct of General Election 2019. Briefs on NVD celebration from across the states of Bihar, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Telangana and UP etc show how the citizens, young and old, across the nation joined the celebration.

We heartily welcome Mr. Jasbir Jassi, a popular singer, lyricist, performer and an actor; and Dr Niru Kumar, a pioneer in the field of gender, diversity, medicine, psychology and Inclusion in India. The two great achievers have agreed to be National Icons with the Commission. Their association will certainly add to the strength of Commission's outreach and connect with voters.

It is a great pleasure for the ECI family to congratulate Sh Sunil Arora, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner for taking over as the Chairman of Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia for the year 2020-21 on the eve of 10th Annual Meeting of the FEMBoSA at New Delhi on 24th January this year. This further consolidates India's global leadership role in election management.

ECI has selected 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy' as the theme for NVD 2020. I am happy to see contributions from various States on this theme. These have been consolidated in one section in this issue. Hon'ble President of India lauded the Electoral Literacy Clubs and related initiatives launched by the Commission. We intend to strengthen their implementation and also bring a larger coverage on the theme in the MVM issues that follow.

The first lecture of the Lecture Series instituted by the Commission in the name of Mr. Sukumar Sen - the first Chief Election Commissioner of India and the architect of our electoral system - was delivered by Sh. Pranab Mukerjee, former President of India. This issue brings to you a brief account of the lecture.

COVID-19 has thrown a new challenge to the EMBs across the world. ECI is working systematically to deal with the new challenges, and making preparations for the forthcoming elections accordingly. The Commission is carefully examining the strategies adopted by various countries to address the situation arising out of the pandemic.

I hope that all the Chief Electoral Officers and officials of the Commission will soon be sending their write-ups for the forthcoming issue of this magazine.

Stay healthy and safe!

With warm regards and wishes,



Umesh Sinha
Secretary General, ECI
& Editor-in-Chief, MVM



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Advance Planning in Indian Elections

UMESH SINHA

SECRETARY GENERAL, ECI

As a cardinal rule, EMBs, like any other organizations, are expected to take stock of performance at every milestone in the course of their journey in democratic consolidation. For an Election Management Body (EMB), the significance of a Post-Election evaluation process and advance planning cannot be gainsaid. This provides them with a valuable opportunity to reflect and take stock of their milestones, while evaluating the **attendant successes, setbacks and false starts, vis-à-vis their mandate.** Such reflections provide vital insights and lessons that inform the subsequent objectives and strategic goals as a part of advance planning.

Broadly speaking, it affords the EMB and stakeholders in the electoral process an opportunity to examine, albeit in retrospect, the experiences of the voters, candidates, election officials and political parties on different facets of electoral process in a structured manner. Further, it highlights the issues in important areas of election management, challenges encountered, identify the

remedial actions proposed and set goals for the next elections, design a way forward by evolving an advance action plan.

Indian Experience

Advance Planning has been an integral part of our electoral system from the very inception. Election Commission of India has, from 1950 onwards, successfully conducted 17 General Elections to the Lok Sabha besides 378 General Elections to the State Legislatures. This glorious journey of 70 years of elections has contributed to (i) consolidation of Indian democracy, (ii) evolution of a robust electoral system with integration of state-of-the-art technology for conduct of free, fair and transparent elections; and (iii) a vibrant electoral process characterized by informed, inclusive and ethical participation from all categories of voters.

The total electorate has gone up from 17.3 crs in 1951 to 91.2 crs in 2019; number of polling stations has gone up from 1.96 lakhs in 1951

to 10.36 lakhs in 2019. The voter turnout has moved up from 45.67% in 1951 to 67.4% in 2019. Along with the enhancement in quantitative terms, ECI has made vast qualitative improvement in terms of accessible elections, user friendly polling stations, voter facilitation centres and facilitation to women, PwDs, senior citizens etc. The journey has witnessed innovation and enrichment through 'Model Code of Conduct', EVMs with VVPAT, and Integration of Technology for efficiency of the system as also user-friendly stakeholder facilitation in participation. Every new initiative has been a consequence of advance planning, pilot runs and addition of new features.

Today, democracies from across the world look at our electoral system and our election management with awe, respect and guidance. All this has been possible because of inbuilt features of monitoring and evaluation, advance planning, continued innovation and reform to match the emerging challenges with

a sense of pride and honour towards our constitutional goals.

This article is intended to share the recent experiences in advance planning with the Readers.

Post General Election 2014: Advance Planning for General Election 2019

Advance Planning for General Election 2019 started with completion of General Election 2014 to the 16th Lok Sabha. The General Election 2014 had recorded 83.4 cr Electors, 9.28 lakh polling stations spread over 543 Parliamentary Constituencies with 66.44% voter turnout. The Election Commission of India (ECI) deployed about 1 cr Personnel for managing elections, 20 lakh Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Voter turnout stood at 66.44% which was a record in itself. But it was felt that much more needs to be done.

The core Constitutional mandate of ECI essentially envisages

- Ensuring that all eligible citizens, who are eligible, be included in the electoral rolls and those who are not eligible do not have their names in the rolls.
- All persons whose names are there in the rolls, vote during elections
- All electors participate in the election without being induced by illegal gratifications, or external fear.
- Ensuring that the electoral

process is completed in free, fair, ethical and peaceful manner

The Commission took stock of the performance of the system, vis-a-vis their constitutional mandate, the issues, challenges and opportunities for a comprehensive, structured exercise for developing a Strategic Action Plan for next decade. Essential Objectives of the exercise included:

- (i) Further strengthening the system of efficient, effective, transparent, and professional electoral management;
- (ii) Ushering in an era of seamless mobility in processes by adapting to changing digital environment; and
- (iii) Creating a network of knowledge platforms to institutionalize the

learning outcomes for its adaptation globally.

Process of Strategic Plan Preparation

Developing Strategic Plan was a subject matter of discussion at different forums post General Election 2014 and Working Groups were set up on the subject. A Committee comprising of senior officers of the Commission along with select Chief Electoral Officers was set up for the purpose. The Committee, as it evolved the Strategic Plan, took note of the recommendations of the Working Groups, structured stakeholder consultation, inputs from different divisions of the Commission and the Chief Election Officers (CEOs) from various states. Advance Planning models of other EMBs was also looked at besides reference to the documents



and works of international expert institutions (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Harvard Electoral Integrity Project, United Nations Development Programme etc.) in the field of Election Management.

The Strategic Plan

The visionary Strategic Plan evolved and finalized with the approval of the Commission was based on 15 Strategic Pillars that defined clear Goals, Outcomes, Action required to be taken and Accountable Division along with the Timeline assumptions followed by the clearly stated 'Implementation Plan'.

The Implementation: A Story of Innovation and New Initiatives

The Strategic Action Plan, holistic and comprehensive in its scope, practically occupied the entire field of electoral system and the process. Put into action as per the inbuilt detailed activity and time lines, it unleashed the potential, hitherto dormant and unexplored, into vibrant and a robust system for efficient, user friendly, integrated with technology delivery of informed, inclusive, transparent and ethical elections to the nation under ECI's premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

As per the framework of this Advance Plan, the Commission took up a large number of innovative initiatives. While it may not be possible to discuss all the initiatives in this article, thrust of action in key areas under the umbrella framework

of the Action Plan is briefly mentioned hereinafter.

Ease of Voter Registration

Voter Registration is the 'gateway' to electoral participation. Initiatives for ease of registration through seamless integration of technology were launched. The National Voter Service Portal (NVSP) provided online registration facility and other ancillary service products to eligible voters besides the conventional methods of voter registration along with linkage to polling stations. Practically, all the voters in the country were covered under Photo Electoral Rolls and Elector Photo Identity Cards. Electors were linked to Polling Stations. Universal Helpline at 1950 along with Voter Helpline App for voter information was made available to all as 'one stop' information facility.

Barrier Free Inclusion of all categories of voters such as Future and New Voters, Gender, PwDs, Senior Citizens, Service Personnel, Persons on Poll Duty, Diplomatic Personnel and NRIs etc. was facilitated by the Commission. The brief note on 'Making Elections Accessible' briefly explains how the facilities for were extended by the Commission to PwDs to provide them larger facilitation for participation.

Making Elections Accessible

The subject was selected by the Commission as the NVD theme for 2018. The activities started with an International Conference on 'Inclusion

of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Processes' on January 24, 2018. National Consultation for Accessible Elections was organized with the stakeholder's right from the District level to the State level culminating into the National level consultation. Strategic Framework for Accessible Elections was presented and immediate facilitation measures such as Braille printed EPICs, Disability data base in electoral rolls and linkage to transport facility and special facilitation for PwDs on polling day etc. were declared. 62 PwD electors were identified and suitable facilitation provided for their participation in the form of their transport and comfortable access to the polling stations in General Elections 2019. PwD App has also been developed for facilitating PwDs vide digital connect.

Postal Ballot facility was provided to PwDs and senior citizens of 80+ age under a Pilot Project in General Elections to Legislative Assembly in Jharkhand (December, 2019). This facility was then extended to them at General Election to the Assembly of NCT of Delhi (January, 2020).

As a result of these measures the strength of the electoral roll went up to at 91.2 crs, the highest ever in our elections. A total number of 62 lakh (65.6 lakhs in Dec 2019) PwD voters were identified, mapped and facilities extended to them for Accessible Elections.

Making Our Polling Stations user friendly

In all, 10.36 lakh polling stations were set up in the country to ensure that no voter had to walk more than two kilometers distance. Assured Minimum Facilities were provided along with accessibility facilities at all polling stations. Voter Facilitation Centers were also set up at all the polling stations. Voter Guides and the Voter Slips further made it convenient to reach the polling station on time and cast the ballot conveniently. This is what helped in making a memorable experience in voting.

EVM and VVPAT Machines and Awareness Programmes

In all, 16.35 lakh Control Units, 23.3 lakh Ballot Units and 17.4 lakh VVPAT machines were deployed during General Election 2019. Ballot cast by the voter is shown in the window of the VVPAT printer for 7 seconds for verification by the voter. Deployment of the machines was done under multilevel randomization through sophisticated software. Comprehensive awareness and

familiarization programmes for EVM and VVPAT were undertaken through SVEEP.

Empowering Citizens through Information and Communication Technology

ECI developed and operated a number of IT/ICT driven services to enhance efficiency, efficacy and quality of electoral processes by using cloud technology, innovative user-friendly interfaces and strong databases. ECI operates numerous dynamic portals for service to the stakeholders, such as, all categories of voters, political parties, election officials, election observers, media and contestants. Some of the ICT driven facilities are as below.

cVIGIL

By using the cVIGIL app, citizens can record on Android mobile and promptly report any violation of Model Code of Conduct, incidents of intimidation or inducement within minutes of having witnessed them. cVIGIL provides time-stamped evidentiary proof of violation. The District Control Room allocates cVIGIL cases to

the Flying Squads etc. through GIS-based platform for time bound action.

Stakeholder Empowerment through Technology Driven Initiatives

These initiatives included Voter Helpline 1950, citizen empowerment through cVigil, Voter Helpline Mobile App, PwD App, Suvidha Candidate App, Samadhan web portal for grievances, Election Observer App, Sugam for transport management, EVM management system, Election Management Dashboard and whole lot of technological integration for enhancing efficiency, efficacy, transparency, accuracy, credibility and above all the integrity of election process.

Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)

SVEEP has been reshaped and strengthened for connecting people with electoral processes down to polling station and empowering them by way of information, awareness, motivation, facilitation and exhort them for ethical voting. Targeted interventions were developed and implemented for facilitating 'Inclusion' of all categories of eligible voters for registration and electoral participation. Linked to the Baseline and Endline surveys and extant guidance of the

Assured Minimum Facilities were provided along with accessibility facilities at all polling stations. Voter Facilitation Centers were also set up at all the polling stations.

Commission, comprehensive State SVEEP plans were prepared well in advance of the General Election 2019, implemented and monitored in a meticulous manner to engage citizens for maximizing their electoral participation through involvement of CSOs, voluntary organizations, youth organizations, State and National Icons and the state election machinery besides multimedia campaigns. To further augment the outreach, SVEEP Division launched massive National Multi-Media/Social Media campaigns during election period.

Some New Initiatives under SVEEP

In implementation of the Advance Action Plan, a number of initiatives were taken up. Some of the important ones are as follows:

- Focused outreach and campaigns for maximizing inclusion of new and future voters, gender, service personnel, personnel on election duty, diplomatic missions, NRIs etc.
- National Voters' Day Celebration with thematic progression on focused action for the entire year with defined outcomes.
- National Consultation on Accessible Elections followed by time bound actions for inclusion of PwDs, Senior Citizens etc.
- 'Sankalp Patras'- letters issued to students in schools ahead of elections to be

Linked to the Baseline and Endline surveys and extant guidance of the Commission, comprehensive State SVEEP plans were prepared well in advance of the General Election 2019.

resubmitted to the school after signatures of their parents for taking a pledge for voting in the forthcoming elections.

- Association/Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, Voluntary Organizations including Youth organizations, Campus Ambassadors etc.
- Appointment of National and State Level Icons.
- **Interactive School Engagement (ISE)** for 'Future Voters' was launched in January 2017 under the theme with students of Class 9-12th falling in the age-group of 14-17 years. The kit comprised of a presentation, computer game- 'Get Set and Go', a film - 'Masti, Dosti, Matdaan', Badges - 'Future Voter of India' (in local language) and a Brochure - 'How to register & Vote (in local language).' ISE in its Phase I covered 25.12 lakh students spread over 11,800 schools in the country. Phase II of the programme followed through July-August 2017 and covered 32.58 lakh students in 16,855 schools across the country.

■ National Elections Quiz (NEQ) 2018

ECI organized the National Elections Quiz, a knowledge outreach venture for the school students of classes IX to XII on elections and electoral processes. NEQ covered themes including Elections in India, History of Democracies and Elections, Voting Processes, Voter education and literacy, National Voters' Day to Electoral Technology, Model Code of Conduct. NEQ 2018 witnessed the participation of about 14 lakh students from over 38,000 schools across the country staking a claim to being the World's Largest Quiz on Elections.

■ Community Radio Programme

ECI strengthened its outreach by leveraging NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) Community Radio through a series named 'Mat Evam Matdan, Karen Loktantr Ka Nirman' in 2017. Each of the one-hour episodes was aired monthly and incorporated interviews/panel discussion with expert(s) along with snippets of different creatives such

as songs, jingles, audio/ videoplays, statements by icons, advertisements etc. developed by ECI to spread awareness on importance of elections.

■ **Social Media as ally**

The ECI campaign operated through social media specifically for voter education. The experiment was scaled up in approach to the elections. ECI formally launched its official Facebook page. A dedicated Twitter handle of the spokesperson to give updates to media already existed, and ahead of Lok Sabha Election, the Commission decided to launch the Twitter and Instagram accounts, specifically for voter education and outreach.

- Knowledge sharing for best of practices through organizing International Conference on 'Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation' (Oct 2016), 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' (Jan 2017), 'Accessible Elections for PwDs' (Jan 2018), 'Making our Elections Inclusive and Accessible' (Jan 2019) and 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity' (Jan 2020), and launch of VoICE. NET and VoICE International have provided global leadership to ECI in voter education. International experience has helped in enriching voter connect.

- A new quarterly magazine 'My Vote Matters' has been launched to present 'happenings on the election front in India' to stakeholders.

■ **Future and New Voters:**

Introduction of Electoral Literacy in curricula at the school level and above (including colleges and universities etc)

- Setting up **Electoral Literacy Clubs** in all educational institutions starting from Secondary School level and above as follows:

- (a) ELC Future Voters for Class IX to Class XII
- (b) ELC New Voters College and University Level.
- (c) *Chunav Paathshala* for those not covered by the formal education system, school drop outs, communities (ELC Communities)
- (d) Voter Education Forums for organizations.

ELCs operate under the philosophy of "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn" – Benjamin Franklin

The First batch of the ELCs was rolled out during National Voters' Day 2018. About 6.9 lakh ELCs and VAFs are already established in the country. Electoral Literacy Resources have been developed and passed on to the CEOs for translation in vernacular and make the same available to the

ELCs. Capacity Building exercise has been taken up and a close monitoring and evaluation is being done by the Commission.

- A new user friendly SVEEP Portal was launched for voter information, education with accessible features for easy navigation.

■ **National Multi-Media 360 Degree Campaign**

National Multi-Media campaign was launched during General Election 2019 to further boost the SVEEP outreach. This Campaign was operated through major national electronic media, both TV and Radio, social and digital media, major newspapers, cinema halls, outdoor media at airports and major railway stations. Partnerships with Railways included long distance trains for coverage. Metro rail in Delhi and many other cities have also been included. The campaign focuses on core areas such as registration, voter verification, voter helpline, informed and ethical voting, inclusion, gender, service voters, overseas electors besides motivational messages.

■ **Voter Guides**

Voter Guides carry valuable information regarding poll day, voting procedure, EVM and VVPAT, important contact numbers and other information of use to a voter. Braille supported guides were made available to visually

impaired electors.

- EVM/VVPAT familiarization for elector confidence has become an important area by using mobile Vans for demonstration and hands on experience to cover all hamlets, booths and villages, besides colleges and organizations.

Dividend of Advance Planning in General Election 2019

Advance Planning helped in reshaping, strengthening the ECI's approach to conduct of General Election 2019. Aptly termed as '**Desh Ka Maha Tyohar**', it was a unique celebration of the democracy, largest in the world, that engaged 91.2 cr. electors spread over more than 10.36 lakh polling stations in the country. It was a hallmark celebration that set records not

only in quantitative terms but also qualitative participation in chronicle of Indian democracy

The Dividend of Advance Planning

In quantitative terms the General Election 2019 realized highest records besides setting new standards of qualitative and user friendly facilitation for participation. Many States have recorded over 80% voter turnout, highest being Nagaland (83%). Among the union territories, Lakshadweep recorded the highest turnout at 85.21% In all, 62 lakh PwD electors have been mapped and registered, 1.19 lakh Overseas voters and 18.54 lakh Service electors have been registered.

Post General Election 2019: New Exercise of Advance Planning Starts

As General Election 2019 came to a close, exercise for advance planning for 2024 has started. A Conference of CEOs of all States/UTs was convened by the Election Commission of India on June 03, 2019 at New Delhi. The objective was to pool together the experiences and identify the learning's, the 'Best Practices' from General Election 2019. It is envisaged to standardise the Best Practices for replication elsewhere and incorporation in the framework.

The Working Groups

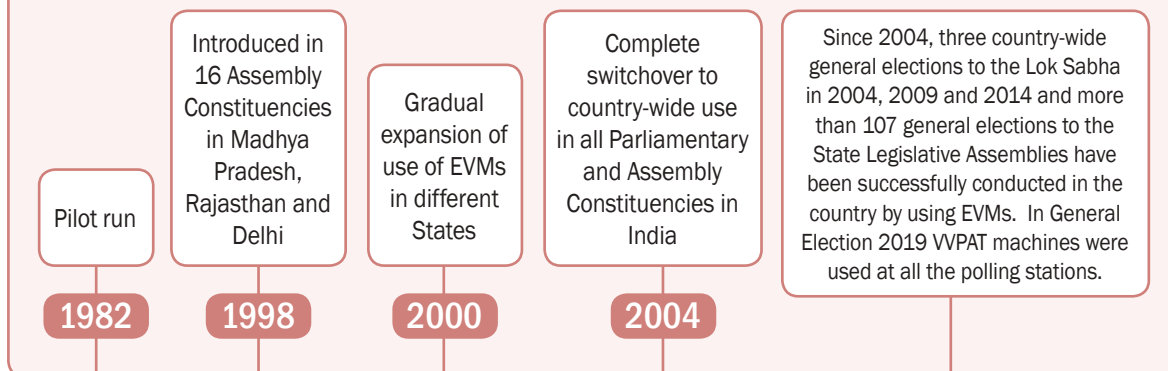
9 Working Groups (WGs), comprising of senior officials from ECI and CEOs, were constituted for gainful interaction in specific thematic area.

- Electoral Roll and Polling Stations
- Election Planning, Security Management, Observers
- EVM and VVPAT, Election Materials
- Model Code of Conduct and Manifesto
- Election Expenditure Monitoring
- SVEEP, Media, Paid News and Social Media
- IT & ICT
- Training and Capacity Building
- Electoral Reforms, Law, SDR & Political Party

The Working Groups presented their specific recommendations to the



Use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in Indian Elections



Commission in the Conference of CEOs in February, 2020 with a view to evolve a Strategic Framework for procedural and systemic reforms for future elections.

The recommendations have been hosted on the Commission's Website for public consultation and feedback available on eci.gov.in. The feedback and suggestions would help in strengthening the framework for advance planning for future elections.

Epilogue

Election Management Bodies (EMB) work in a continuum.

Much against the belief that after an election EMB's work is limited and there is time to sit back and relax till the next election, EMB's have to work on post election evaluation and start work on advance planning or the prospective planning by whatever name we may call it. The work relating to a General Election would normally start about a year in advance; expand in geometrical proportion to support the robust electoral process, culminates in

Glimpses of Advance Planning in Indian Elections

January 8, 1949 The motion for preparation of electoral rolls was adopted.

April 20, 1950 The Representation of People Act was passed (As per provisions of the Act all persons who were not less than 21 years of age as on March 1, 1950 and who had resided in a constituency for not less than 180 days during the period April 1, 1947 to December 31, 1949 were entitled for registration as voters.)

July 17, 1951 The Representation of People Act, 1951 was enacted and this facilitated the task of organizing the election process.

August 10, 1950 Scheduled Castes Order issued

September 6, 1950 Scheduled Tribes Order issued

Mid November, 1950 Order regarding the delimitation of the Constituencies

proud moments of declaration of results and presentation of authenticated list of returned candidates to the Head of the State. In the process, the EMBs consolidate their architecture, evolve and strengthen their systems and processes with the passage of every milestone with the aim of fulfilment

of their constitutional and legislative mandate. And the democratic polity keeps moving on the path of consolidation. Advance planning has brought rich dividend for our electoral system, electoral performance and in fulfilment of our constitutional mandate.



ECI's International Outreach

A thriving and vibrant electoral democracy has been India's distinct and durable identity at the global stage. The ECI is closely associated with a number of international fora in the field of electoral management.

DHIRENDRA OJHA
DIRECTOR GENERAL, ECI

Throughout history, democracy has proven itself to be the most attractive political system that humanity has ever invented. It is the best means to uphold human dignity, secure open access to the public for an equitable participation in the political process, resolve disagreement and disputes through debate and persuasion. Democratic countries develop strong institutions, and evolve and implement fair and predictable legal systems. Thus, democracies are better able to ensure good governance and empowerment of all the citizens.

There has been a wide and steadfast spread of democracy worldwide in the past century. However, a number of nascent democratic countries are still working on stabilising their political system through improving their electoral and legal systems.

On September 25, 2015, 193 member countries at the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a set of 17 Goals (SDGs) to **end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure**

prosperity for all. In recognition of democracy as the most attractive and popular political system of governance invented by the mankind, SDG 16 is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable Institutions at all levels.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has played a pioneering role in organising free, fair and credible elections in a transparent manner in the largest democracy in the world. A thriving and vibrant electoral democracy has been India's distinct and durable identity at the global stage. The ECI stands as an institution of repute in imparting knowledge, and sharing of best practices and skills with other Election Management Bodies (EMBs) through its robust International Cooperation Programme.

ECI's International Cooperation Programme

Since its genesis in 1950, the Election Commission of India

has been at the forefront of international organizations promoting the cause of democracy worldwide. Stronger democratic sentiments across the world necessitate building steady collaborations, learning from each other, and sharing best practices and accumulated knowledge. The ECI is closely associated with a number of International fora in the field of electoral management, viz.:

- **The Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB**
– www.aweb.org) is the largest association of Election Management Bodies worldwide and has 115 EMBs as members and 21 regional organisations as Associate members. A-WEB's mission is to foster efficiency and effectiveness in conducting free, fair, transparent and participative elections worldwide.

The ECI has been its Executive Board member, since its inception in October, 2013, for two consecutive terms (2013-15 and 2015-17) and as Vice Chair of A-WEB for 2017-19. The ECI hosted



Participants at the A WEB General Assembly in Bengaluru : Sep 03, 2019

the 4th General Assembly of A-WEB on September 3, 2019 at Bengaluru and took over as its Chair for the 2019-21 term. Further, ECI will continue to be a member of the Executive Board for 2021-23 as the immediate Past Chair.

- Founding member and Chair (at present) of the **Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia [FEMBoSA]**. The ECI took over as Chair of FEMBoSA at its 10th meeting held in New Delhi on January 24, 2020.
- Founding member and Ex-Chair (2015-16) of the **Association of the Asian Election Authorities [AAEA]**. The ECI is presently a member of its Executive Board.
- Founding member of International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA), Stockholm.
- Member of Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN) (2010) and was on the Steering Committee since its inception in 2010 till 2014.

- Member of the Advisory Group to the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security.

The ECI has signed **MoUs** with 28 EMBs and International Organisations (viz.,

Afghanistan, Australia, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Georgia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, the Republic of Korea, the Kyrgyz Republic, Libya, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, South Africa, Suriname,



July-September 2019 Issue of *Voice International* magazine released during A-WEB General Assembly meeting.



FEMBoSA participants January 24, 2020



Association of the Asian Election Authorities



International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA)



Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN)

Tunisia, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and United Nations, Intl. IDEA and IFES). These MoUs provide an excellent institutional framework for collaborative activities.

ECI officials have been invited to undertake **study/observation missions** for elections to various countries such as Australia, Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, Iraq, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Norway, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, the US and Zimbabwe.

For the **Election Visitor Programme 2019** organised by the ECI during General Elections

2019, a record number of 65 delegates from 19 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fiji, Georgia, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Romania, Russia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, UAE, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA) visited New Delhi from May 10-13, 2019 to witness Lok Sabha elections.

The ECI hosted the visit of 41 election officials from 17 foreign countries for Assembly and General Elections in India as part of the **Election Visitors Programme (EVP)** during **2014 Lok Sabha General Elections**. During General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of five states (Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur) held in Feb/March 2017, the ECI hosted 13 delegates from five EMBs (Bangladesh, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Namibia and Russia) to witness the election process in India. These EVPs were organised in partnership with UNDP-India.

Exchange Visits: The ECI has had exchange of more than 200 visits (approximately half of them incoming visits) during the last five years for exchange of experiences and skills, capacity building programmes, technical assistance, conferences/workshops and other events relating to democracy and election management.

Capacity Building at IIIDEM: The Election Commission of India established the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM - <http://>



CEC and ECs along with senior officers of ECI and the participating delegates for Election Visitor Programme 2019

iiidem.nic.in/) in June 2011. The IIIDEM has been developed as an advanced resource centre of learning, research, training and extension on participatory democracy and election management. Every year the IIIDEM organises several international training courses with a view to sharing the ECI's knowledge, experience and skills with fellow EMBs and assisting in their capacity building efforts. The ECI has also organised country-specific training programmes catering to the needs and requirements of respective EMBs. Apart from training courses for over 27,000 national stakeholders, IIIDEM has, since its inception, conducted 73 international capacity building programmes, in which over 1,470 electoral officials from 97 countries have participated.

India A-WEB Centre:

An India A-WEB Centre (<http://indiaaawebcentre.org/>) has been established at New Delhi for documentation, research and training for sharing the best practices and capacity building of officials of all A-WEB members. The ECI will provide the necessary resources for the India A-WEB Centre, which aims to become a global 'Knowledge and Resource Centre' for world-class 'Documentation, Research and Training' in pursuit of supporting free, fair, inclusive, accessible, efficient, transparent and credible elections and strengthening electoral democracy worldwide.

An online knowledge network called Voter Information, Communication, Education Network (**VoICE.NET** - <http://voicenet.in/>)

for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on voter education has been set up by the ECI. VoICE.NET was launched on October 20, 2016 at the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation held in New Delhi. VoICE.NET contents are provided by the member EMBs/organisations and the portal is maintained by the ECI. A quarterly magazine **VoICE. International** is published for VoICE.NET by the ECI. At the 4th General Assembly of the A-WEB held in Bengaluru on September 3, 2019, **VoICE. International** was declared as the magazine of the A-WEB.

Participation in VoICE.NET is being expanded by inviting all interested EMBs and organisations/institutions associated with democracy and elections. The current membership stands at 31 EMBs and four organisations/institutions, besides the ECI and IIIDEM.

Valuable Learnings:

Through its interaction with Election Management Bodies of foreign countries, ECI has acquired valuable learnings from its counterparts in other countries. This international cooperation outreach has been made in conjunction with

The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) was established in June 2011. It has been developed as an advanced resource centre of learning, research, training and extension on participatory democracy and election management.

India's foreign policy objectives, to promote democracy and strengthen election administration worldwide.

Briefings at the ECI: Foreign diplomats, journalists and officials invited to India by the Ministry of External Affairs, foreign Embassies in New Delhi and the Lok Sabha Secretariat regularly visit the ECI for briefing on India's electoral process. During the last two years (2018-19), the ECI has hosted more than 45 delegations from abroad, including Permanent Representatives of several foreign countries to the UN, a group of ASEAN students, diplomats from several foreign countries, parliamentarians and officials from over 40 countries.

Technical Cooperation: The ECI has provided technical assistance to Jordan, Maldives, Namibia, Egypt, Bhutan and Nepal. Bhutan, Nepal and Namibia are using Electronic Voting Machines made in India.

The ECI has earned worldwide respect for the delivery of free, fair and credible elections in India, the largest democracy. It is, then,

natural for it to play a leading role in promoting participatory democracy and election administration throughout the world. Some **highlights of recognition** earned by the ECI in this regard are:

- i) **The Indo-US Joint Declaration** signed during US President Obama's visit in November 2010 also spoke of a shared international partnership for democracy and development. As part of this agenda, the Joint Declaration pledged to explore cooperation in support of strengthening election organization and management in other interested countries.
- ii) Mrs. Hillary Clinton, during her visit to India in 2011 as US Secretary of State, referred to Election Commission of India as the '**Gold Standard**' in election management worldwide.
- iii) A number of **MoUs between the ECI and EMBs from foreign countries have been signed during VVIP visits, viz.:**
 - The MoU between

the ECI and the Election Commission of Russia

was signed at New Delhi in December 2010 during the visit of President of the Russian Federation to India.

■ **The MoU between the ECI and the Union Election Commission of Myanmar**

was signed at Yangon on September 6, 2017 during the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Myanmar.

■ **The MoU between the ECI and the General Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Suriname**

was signed at Paramaribo during the visit of the President of India to Suriname in June 2018.

■ **The MoU between the ECI and the Electoral Commission of Zambia** was signed at New Delhi during the visit of the President of Zambia to India in August 2019.

■ **The MoU between the ECI and the Election Commission of Maldives** was signed during the ministerial-level Joint Commission meeting held in New Delhi on December 13, 2019.

The ECI's International Cooperation programme is aimed at promoting democracy and strengthening election administration worldwide and the Commission's endeavour is to foster closer electoral cooperation with EMBs abroad alongside strengthening democratic institutions and processes.



Towards Paperless Polling: Booth App

It was perceived that Governments have been less effective than the private sector in using information technology to reinvent work processes. Now, mobile technology offers an opportunity to hit the reset button

DR. KUSHAL PATHAK

DIRECTOR ICT AND CISO, ECI

You are woken up by an alert from your phone about the election today. You then receive the navigation guide to reach the polling station. As you are having a sip of morning tea, you get an alert about the facilities at the polling station like toilet, parking area, wheelchair availability and seating place with a digital photograph of your polling station. While you are reading the newspapers, you get an alert about the list of all the contesting candidates of your area. While you get ready, you get an alert about the best time to vote and how long the current queue is at your booth. You get excited and decide to go to the polling station and find that you get the digital token number at the gate and you are asked to sit comfortably till your token number is announced, like the flying attendant calling your name in the airport before boarding: 'row number 10 to 15 please come forward for boarding'.

You enter the polling station with your digital photo ID card and the polling staff instead of searching your name in the big ledger, simply scan your ID card in a second. They instantly mark your attendance on the mobile device and allow you to vote.

Mobile: A source of security, not a threat

Upon authorisation and secured authentication, only the polling party can log on to the app. The Booth level Officer at the polling gate scans the QR code printed on the Photo Voter Slips / Digital Photo Voter slip and allows authorised voter entry. The polling staff inside the polling station scans and identifies voters by marking their attendance. Meanwhile, the Presiding Officer keeps a watch of polling and records events and incidences. All such reports are notified to Sector

Magistrates, the Returning Officer and to District Election officers.

This technology was first piloted in Hamirpur (Uttar Pradesh) in five polling stations; after that in three assembly constituencies Samastipur (Bihar), Kasba Peth (Maharashtra) and Phagwara (Punjab); and then in 10 ACs of Jharkhand; and most recently in 11 Assembly constituencies of Delhi. A total of 6,447 polling



stations have used the Booth App with a fair bit of success. A total of 59,70,388 scans have been done using the app.

Achieve more for less

The Booth App has brought in many transformations in the way polling is conducted.

Firstly, identification of voters is made through the Mobile App: instead of searching from the physical list of electors, polling officials are able to search voters by using the Booth App.

Secondly, the Booth App ensures faster polling: Considerable time in the polling station is spent in the identification of the voter from the multiple pages of the physical copy of the electors. If the name is not found in the usual list, another laborious exercise of searching for the name in the list is carried out; the Presiding Officer gets involved and an elector list of the previous year is then searched. Many times, a voter not finding the name, insists on searching again. This creates uncertainty and a colossal waste of time. All this has been eased out by the instant search using the app.

Not only has the identification become fast, it has also become more reliable. The Mobile App displays the coloured photograph along with complete details of the voter directly from the central database; the polling staff are confidently able to identify the voter, instead of relying on the printed black and white copy of the elector list.

ECI ADOPTS A 'MOBILE-FIRST' APPROACH

Welcome to Digital Polling Station, a foreseeable future, powered by the Election Commission of India's digital mobile technologies. The Election Commission of India has developed in-house the minimalist technology interface through the use of the mobile phone for the Polling Party.

The Booth App is a mobile app meant for Booth Level Officers, Polling Officials, Presiding Officers and Sector Magistrates. The App helps in faster identification of voters using edge technology. It is unique in that the app is not dependent upon connection with the server for operation. It works in an offline environment, even when there is no Internet connection. Thus, it is designed to work in an absolute network shadow area. It has evolved from iterative design: Prototype, test and prototype again



The Booth App is environment-friendly and saves a lot of paper. Imagine the Lok Sabha Elections of 2024 when the polling official is saved from so many documents and paperwork. He transacts his core function only through the mobile app.

Thirdly, Booth App is a panacea for detecting duplicate voting. If the voter re-enters the queue after voting, the app does not allow duplicate voting and alerts the polling official. On the other hand, if polling officials reinsert a voter by any malicious intent, the app will not allow that to happen. This feature will further improve with facial recognition and strong network connectivity and will then be able to prevent duplicate voting across polling stations.

Fourthly, the Booth App introduces yet another fantastic feature: advance queue information. By using an advanced computational algorithm, it calculates the queue at the booth and displays it on the Voter Helpline Mobile app. This facilitates voters immensely by letting them know in advance what the best time for them to vote could be.

Fifthly, Booth App can scan the 'Digital Photo Voter Slips' that were recently made available on the Voter Helpline mobile app. Voters can now download the digital Photo Voter Slips from the Voter Helpline Mobile app by linking up their mobile phones. The digital slips contain an encrypted QR code that can only be read by the Booth App. Once the voter presents the Digital Photo

Voter Slip, polling officials only need to scan it to ascertain the identity of the voter.

More aware, more effective, more in control

The Booth App mobile technology not only helps polling officials to do more with less in the face of shrinking workforces and tightly stretched timelines but also allows them to do their jobs better.

The Booth App has, on the one hand, improved the convenience to voters but on the other hand, it has completely transformed the efficiency with which statutory requirements can be fulfilled by polling staff. Presiding Officers can fill in the mandatory PRO diary through the mobile app. The many statutory reports are generated on the fly without the manual calculation. Thus, the chances of errors are decreased manifold.

The Booth App establishes a channel of communication between the various vital functionaries. It provides structured and rapid communication in case of events and incidences. By a simple app-based reporting mechanism, the report travels to the Sector Magistrate, the District Election Officer and the Chief Electoral Officers.

One of the very important features of the system is the real-time reporting of the voter turnout. Earlier, a data entry team was established to call, record and compile the voter turnout every two hours. This created a lot of clerical errors in recording, transmission and

reporting. With the introduction of the Booth App, voter turnout is recorded without any manual intervention.

As the app works without the Internet to transfer the voter turnout to the Returning Officer, almost all polling station data is received at the server in real-time. This not only generates voter turnout but also provides a rich decision support system tool. Returning Officers are able to see the gender distribution of voters in real-time, male/female/others distribution, queue at the polling station, speed of the poll and the

just one day of training.

By integrating the Mobile App in the workflow of the polling official, the Booth App has not only simplified the work of the polling officials but greatly improved the convenience for the voters. The day may not be far when polling officials will carry a mobile and EVM to the polling station and walk away with confidence at the end of the poll.

It was perceived that the Governments have been less effective than the private sector in using information technology to reinvent work processes.



busiest hour at the polling station. They are now also able to get reports such as the time of polling party dispatch, arrival, mock poll start, poll start and poll end on the dashboard.

By using simple technologies, the Booth App has proved its tremendous potential in transforming how polling is conducted. The ultra-simple mobile interface allows faster acceptability. As of now, 25,270 officials have used the Booth App, including Booth Level Officers, polling officials, Sector Magistrates and Returning Officers. They were hands-on with the use of the app, after

Now, mobile technology offers an opportunity to hit the reset button. The effectiveness of mobile technology in elections is dependent largely on how it is implemented. But if mobile technology is a challenge, it is also an opportunity: a chance for the ECI to start closing the productivity gap, reassess its reporting practices, boost its efficiency in conducting elections, and renegotiate its relationship with the voters it serves.

And the Booth App has proved it.



National Voters' Day Celebration 2020

Indians Celebrate their Power to Vote

“आप सबको मैं स्मरण कराना चाहता हूँ कि आजादी के तुरंत बाद, सभी नागरिकों को वयस्क मताधिकार प्रदान करने की काफी आलोचना भी हुई थी क्योंकि उस समय तक लोकतन्त्र केवल सम्पन्न और विकसित देशों तक ही सीमित था। ऐसी आशंका व्यक्त की गई थी कि केवल 16 प्रतिशत साक्षरता तथा गरीबी के कारण वयस्क मताधिकार का प्रयोग सफल नहीं हो सकेगा। यहाँ तक कि भारत में वयस्क मताधिकार दिए जाने को “the biggest gamble in history” कहा गया था। परंतु हमारे मतदाताओं ने इसे विश्व इतिहास में लोकतन्त्र का सबसे बड़ा और सफल प्रयोग सिद्ध कर दिखाया। संविधान निर्माताओं द्वारा सामान्य व्यक्ति पर जो दृढ़ विश्वास जताया गया था उस पर वे खरे उतरे। पहले आम चुनाव से लेकर पिछले वर्ष सम्पन्न हुए 17वें आम चुनाव तक, भारत के मतदाताओं ने हमारे लोकतन्त्र की साख पूरे विश्व में बढ़ाई है। इसके लिए मैं देश के सभी मतदाताओं का अभिनंदन करता हूँ।

—Excerpts from the speech by the President of India at NVD National function”

The essence of India as the largest democracy lies in its electoral strength and voter participation. Dedicated to the voters of the country, National Voters' Day (NVD) is an annual national celebration to encourage, facilitate and maximise their participation in the electoral process. The 10th National Voters' Day was celebrated across the country on January 25, 2020.

Since 2011, NVD is celebrated across the nation every year with utmost fervour and vigour to mark the Foundation Day of the Election Commission of India (ECI), that is, on January 25, 1950. In this regard, the NVD celebration of the year 2020 was more special as it marked an important milestone in the history of Indian democracy as the ECI completed 70 years of its journey.

The theme for NVD 2020 was 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'. This reiterates the commitment of the ECI towards electoral



President giving EPIC to new voters

literacy for all, to ensure maximum participation and informed and ethical voting.

National-Level Celebrations

The national-level event of NVD celebrations was held at New Delhi and the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, presided over it. Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Minister for Communications, Law and Justice, and Electronics and Information Technology, also graced the event as the Guest of Honour.

During this prestigious gathering, President Ram

Nath Kovind hailed the varied interventions undertaken by the ECI for the successful conduct of the 17th Lok Sabha Election in a free, fair and transparent manner. He also praised how the election machinery, comprising over one crore officials, efficiently executed the electoral process, which had over 91 crore voters enrolled in it.

The President particularly appreciated the initiatives for reaching out to voters in the remotest areas to include their names in the electoral roll and to encourage them to exercise the Right to Vote.



Best Electoral Practices Awards recipients with dignitaries

He specially congratulated the six new voters who were given the Electoral Photo Identity Cards on the occasion. The President also particularly mentioned the principle of universal adult suffrage, which helped all Indian eligible citizens to vote from the very beginning of the journey of the Indian republic. He also took note of the special efforts of the ECI to ensure that the gender gap was reduced to less than 0.1% in the last Lok Sabha General Election. He particularly lauded the Electoral Literacy Clubs' endeavours and use of vernacular languages in reaching out to even the remotest areas.

On this occasion, the President gave away the National Awards for the Best Electoral Practices to Officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections in different spheres. The district administrative and security officers were lauded for their efforts to ensure enrollment of new eligible voters with sustained efforts, the launch of SVEEP apps to facilitate the polling experience, the conduct of elections with innovative means, the facilitation of Persons with Disabilities at polling booths as



Launch of ECI Publications during the event

also working amidst challenging circumstances such as a severe cyclonic storm or coordinating security grid mechanisms. In addition, awards were also conferred on CSOs, Government departments and media houses for their outstanding contributions to voter awareness and outreach.

Two books were launched by Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and presented to the President. The first book was ***Belief in the Ballot-II***, an anthology of 101 human stories about Indian elections from across the nation. An amalgamation of daring, interesting and inspiring stories of both election officers and voters, this anthology presents experiences of courage, sacrifice and dedication of the election personnel as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the voters. The second book launched was ***The Centenarian Voters: Sentinels of Our***

Democracy. This collection includes the experiences of centenarian voters who braved difficult terrain, poor health and other challenges to come out and vote.

Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia graced the occasion. Reputed international organisations working in elections, such as A-WEB, IFES and International IDEA, were also represented on the occasion. Members of political parties and the Parliament, diplomats from various countries as well as representatives from national and international organisations working in the area of democracy and elections also attended the national function.



A Look at the Exhibition



The gallery is traditionally divided into different state-wise segments and mounted on printed exhibition panels. Taking a step forward in this digital era, this year, the exhibition gallery was more sophisticated in terms of technology, with sleek audio-visual screens on eight separate exhibition walls.

The digital screens displayed short-motion graphics films highlighting the following eight themes:

1. Desh ka Mahatyohar: Lok Sabha Election 2019

A branded outreach campaign, called 'Desh ka Mahatyohar', was launched nationwide for the 17th Lok Sabha election. This exhibit was dedicated to the music videos and creative advertisements designed for the campaign.

2. ICT Innovations in Elections

This section showcased the numerous digital services developed by the ECI for the facilitation of electors, candidates, political parties and polling officials.

3. 70 Glorious Years of Indian Elections

As the Commission completes 70 years of conducting free and fair elections, this exhibit highlighted the crucial milestones and innovations in conducting elections in the past seven decades.

4. Reaching Out Globally

With the feat of conducting free and fair elections on the most massive scale in human history, the ECI holds the distinction of being the leading election management body in the world. This exhibit highlighted the ECI's active collaboration with several international associations as

well as its training programmes, exchange visits and experience sharing with election management bodies of other countries.

5. A Decade of SVEEP

The year 2020 marked ten years of the launch of a structured nationwide voter education programme in the country. This exhibit showcased the evolution and expansion of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme in the country over the years.

6. EVM-VVPAT Sensitization

The 17th Lok Sabha election





witnessed the introduction of the VVPAT device along with EVMs for the first time. This exhibit was dedicated to the extensive outreach campaign that was conducted nationwide to familiarise electors with the use of VVPAT.

7. Making Elections Accessible for PwDs and Senior Citizens

For the past two years, the Commission's prime focus was on making the election process more accessible for disabled electors and senior citizens. Several accessibility measures were standardised countrywide, and this exhibit highlighted all such initiatives.

8. Mainstreaming Electoral Literacy

The Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) is a flagship voter education scheme of the ECI, which aims at enhancing knowledge related to electoral processes among citizens of various age groups and social backgrounds. With the motive of further promoting this scheme, the theme for NVD 2020 was announced as 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'. This exhibit featured various aspects of the ELC programme.

Apart from the multimedia exhibits, several other attractions were also a part of the extended exhibition. A backlit revolving logo of 'Desh Ka Mahatyohar' campaign caught the attention of the

guests. Several distinguished delegates got their photographs clicked at the photo booth on '70 Glorious Years of Indian Elections', composed of a collage of photos of voters and election officials.

Two educational games, which are a part of the ELC toolkit, were also developed into magnetic board games for a hands-on experience for the visitors. These games, i.e., a dart game titled 'Matdan Varnmala' and a game of Snakes and Ladders, were installed at a separate location at the venue. This section also had a photo booth on the theme of NVD 2020 – 'Electoral Literacy – Stronger Democracy' and a selfie point.



State Celebrations of National Voters' Day

BIHAR

For National Voters' Day 2020, the Election Commission of India (ECI) set the theme of 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'. Electoral literacy has been a significant and worthy pursuit of the Commission right from the start as an important aspect of social change in the development of Indian democracy.

In the historical perspective, India's first general elections were to be held in 1952 and Chief Election Commissioner Sukumar Sen faced an unusual problem, rooted in orthodox perceptions. The Chief Electoral Officers of several states of North India informed the CEC that many women registered in the electoral rolls did not want to be registered under their real names; under pressure from their relatives, family and society, they wanted to register their name as that of someone's mother or someone's wife. Certainly, this was a roadblock for the election officials who were carrying out the mammoth work of building an authentic and verifiable voters' list.

The second problem was that most of the electorate was illiterate. To overcome this barrier, the ECI arranged for the use of the multipurpose ballot, along with the system of election

symbols. In the multipurpose ballot system, each party candidate was given a separate box at each polling booth and the respective candidate's election symbol was marked on that ballot box so that voters who could not read could still easily vote for their intended candidate. In this regard, the ECI had conducted awareness campaigns on the radio and through documentary films in cinemas besides print publicity.

From that time of the first general elections to the most recent Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the ECI has been consistently dealing with the social challenges in promoting

its initiatives in voter education and electoral participation. Highlighting the importance of electoral education, the ECI has been running SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation), its flagship programme, since 2009 and is now in the third phase of the SVEEP programme. It underlines the ECI's important goal of preparing future voters to develop a fair and morally strong democratic election process, without which extensive electoral reform and participation is not possible.

Thus *Continuous Education in Electoral Democracy* was included in the Strategic Plan



Tableau based on the theme of election literacy at the state-level programme in Patna on Republic Day 2020

2016– 25, under the Strategic Pillar 8 – ‘Electoral Literacy & Education’ – as one of the ECI’s goals. Designing and implementing extra and co-curricular activities in schools and colleges is one of the defined ways to achieve this goal.

Electoral Literacy for Young Voters, PwD Voters and Women Voters in Bihar

Well in time for the Lok Sabha 2019 elections, the Election Literacy Club and Chunav Pathshala were formed at the school, college and booth levels in Bihar. There were 186 ELCs set up at the college level, along with 1,004 at the school level and 43,173 at the booth level.

The aim was to make efficient use of ELCs and Chunav Pathshalas for voter awareness activities with special focus on young voters, PwD voters and women voters. ELCs were the centre-points for engaging activities for school and college students to sensitise them to their electoral rights and familiarise them with the electoral process of registration and voting. Mobile Chunav Pathshalas were organized in booths on a roster-basis along with the deputation of master trainers in Matdata Jaagrukta Rath, with special attention on PwD voters.

Static model polling stations were also established at the district, subdivision and block levels. Saran, Sitamarhi and Kaimur district of Bihar had started to run the Sugamata



(Top) Tableau based on the theme of an election-literate electorate on Republic Day 2020 in Nawada District (below) Tableau based on the theme of an election-literate electorate on Republic Day 2020 in Vaishali District

Express and Sugamwahini to ensure the smooth and active participation of PwD voters in the electoral process in Saran District. The Sugamata Express and Sugamwahini were mobile buses operated by the Buniyad centres run by the state social security department, which provides physiotherapy facilities to PwDs. The buses were linked to voter awareness activities and Chunav Pathshalas were organized for PwD voters who were identified block-wise. Mock voting was done in the

Chunav Pathshalas with training on EVM-VVPAT for PwD voters, for whom a primary-level health checkup was also made available by a medical team.

National Voters' Day 2020 and Electoral Literacy

National Voters' Day (NVD) 2020 programmes were organized on the designated theme 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy' in all districts of Bihar and an all-out

NVD 2020 CELEBRATIONS >>

effort was made to connect students in schools and colleges with this campaign. A state-level programme was organized in the state capital Patna and the basic information of the election process was given to all stakeholders present in the state-level programme. The Voters' Pledge was taken by all participants on NVD 2020 and it was broadcast live through social media platforms.

Along with this, a tableau on the Election Literacy theme was presented by the Election Department in a state-level programme held on January 26, 2020 on the occasion of Republic Day. A tableau on this theme was also organized in the Republic Day functions



Tableaux of election departments of various districts in Bihar for the occasion of Republic Day 2020

of many districts, apart from the state-level event in Patna. On the occasion of NVD, voter ID cards were distributed to new voters at the state, district and polling station level programmes as is the tradition.

While getting the voter ID cards, the enthusiasm of the new voters was worth seeing and the sense of responsibility to maintain democratic processes as voters was also clearly visible on their faces. NVD 2020 was truly a momentous occasion of celebration for all involved!



UTTAR PRADESH



KARNATAKA

The 25th day of January holds a special significance for the Indian democracy. Bound to the spirit of justice, liberty and equality, and universal suffrage since Independence, the country's Constitution was promulgated on January 26, 1950. Just a day before, the Election Commission of India (ECI) was constituted on January 25, 1950. To commemorate this day, the first National Voters' Day (NVD) was celebrated on January 25, 2011 to mark the Commission's Foundation Day, and the ECI earmarked this date for the annual NVD functions across the country to celebrate the spirit of democracy.

Thus began the tradition of enrolling eligible first-time voters and handing over their Electoral Photo Identity Card [EPIC] to them on January 25 every year. This initiative made a significant contribution towards giving the youth a sense of pride in their empowerment as voters and inspiring them to exercise their franchise.

It had been observed that young people close to adulthood were showing less interest in

getting enrolled in the electoral roll. In order to deal with this issue effectively, the Election Commission decided to take up a positive and vigorous exercise to identify all eligible voters attaining the age of 18 years as of January 1 every year in each of the 8.5 lakh polling stations across the country. The new voters were graced with a badge featuring the caption 'Proud to be a voter – Ready to vote'.

The 10th National Voters' Day was celebrated at the state, district and booth level in Karnataka. The slogan for NVD 2020 was 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'. The voters' pledge was taken by the Governor and all present including students in order to emphasize the importance and value of voting.

Students from 33 Districts Participated in a State-level Election Quiz

In order to spread electoral awareness far and wide, competitions were held in

schools and colleges to inform students who are future voters of the country. A total of 3,33,199 students from 2,749 schools and colleges participated in various election-themed contests. As many as 25,748 ELCs were formed, which facilitated the celebration of NVD 2020 at all educational institutions. Besides, 3,102 students from 780 drawing and art schools participated in a collage competition and 5,239 students from 1,278 drawing and art schools participated in a poster-making contest.

On January 17, 2020 a written qualifying test for a state-level quiz competition was conducted at Maharani Science College, Bengaluru, and 66 students from 33 districts participated. From each division, six teams were selected for the quiz titled '*That Antha Heli*' at Doordarshan Kendra Bangalore. It was recorded and telecast by *Dooradarshana Chandana* channel from January 20 to 24, 2020 at 9.30 PM.



MEGHALAYA

The State Level function of the 10th National Voters' Day 2020 was celebrated at the Meghalaya Bharat Scouts and Guides Headquarters under the theme 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'. A Democracy Run saw the participation of more than 2,000 participants from various categories, including new and future voters, uniformed services and PwDs.

EVP champion awards were presented for outstanding work in electoral verification to the best District and AC in the

state, and the best BLO was recognized and duly awarded. Other highlights included taking the Voters' Pledge, creative presentations, and election-themed musical performances on the entire E2E process (Enrolment to Elections) by Electoral Literacy Clubs.

The state ELC Corner, depicting various electoral aspects and a hands-on experience in voting, was inaugurated by the chief guest – M.S. Rao, Chief Secretary, Government of Meghalaya – with an aim to serve as a

permanent and continuous learning centre for young and future voters to become responsible citizens of the state. Also present at the occasion were CEO F.R. Kharkongor, DC East Khasi Hills, DC East Jaintia Hills, BLOs, CSO partners, creative communities, awardees, ELC members and the Meghalaya Youth Ambassador for ELCs, besides other dignitaries.



1 & 2: The Democracy Run: keeping in step with electoral awareness; 3 & 4: Youth activities during NVD 2020; 5: The chief guest addresses the gathering; 6: Election musicals by Electoral Literacy Clubs; 7: Meghalaya Bharat Scouts and Guides lead the National Anthem



TELANGANA

The 10th National Voters' Day (NVD) was being celebrated on January 25, 2020 and this was an occasion which I, as a first-year college student, had been looking forward to eagerly. I had registered as a voter and was looking forward to receiving my Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC). I thought it would be a proud occasion when the Chief Electoral Officer would present me with my voter ID card. As a member of the Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) in our college, it was an exciting prospect for me to celebrate National Voters' Day as a registered voter of my country, along with other members of the ELC who would also receive their voter IDs on National Voters' Day 2020.

The memorable day dawned and I, with my group, reached the venue of the celebrations. The venue, a school playground with an auditorium, was decorated with NVD banners, flags, balloons and informative posters. The atmosphere was festive. Our college students were informed that there would be competitions and other interesting activities like plays, skits and debates and the winners would receive prizes. There were also rangoli competitions being held in a section of the spacious grounds, in which many competitors were participating with enthusiasm. The rangolis they were designing were all related to National Voters' Day and prizes were announced for this competition too.

A 5-kilometre run had been organized and I was thrilled to see many young people, dressed in white, and carrying placards and armbands with the NVD logo, coming back to the venue after completing the run. They were in a jubilant and celebratory mood, happy to be participating in this grand event. They later formed a human chain in the shape of the map of India, to display their solidarity and unity as citizens of this great country. It was an awesome sight to witness.

The NVD programme began and I was delighted to go up on stage and receive my EPIC Card. My friend wanted to take part in a quiz contest and I accompanied her. It was a quiz on Voter Awareness and I thoroughly enjoyed participating and getting to know more about registration, voting and the elections in India.

The elders or centenarians who had crossed 100 years were also felicitated at the event, and presented with shawls and certificates. They were immensely happy to be honoured in this manner.

A skit on how to register was presented by members of another ELC, which clearly explained the registration process in an entertaining manner. The audience enjoyed it and also gained knowledge of how to enrol, register and get their Electoral Photo Identity Cards.

As the time for conclusion of the celebrations drew near, the prizewinners in the various competitions were called on stage to receive their prizes. The Chief Electoral Officer gave an illuminating talk on how elections are conducted with the dedicated efforts of the staff and teams of the Election Commission of India, and I was very impressed by the manpower and machinery that is mobilized to make elections peaceful, seamless

and incident-free. As a newly enrolled voter, I felt proud to be part of this magnificent celebration and went home as an 'Empowered Voter of Young India'.

—Sneha, Student
Government High School



A Glimpse of Inclusive India in Imphal

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of a free, fair, transparent and inclusive electoral process in a democracy. To achieve this, under the direction of the DEO Imphal East, election officials of the district undertook a number of initiatives towards the increased and enhanced participation of women, PwDs, transgender, senior citizens and youth.

A detailed SVEEP plan was prepared through convergence with Health, Social Welfare, Education and RD departments. Attention was focused on networking with media houses, PRIs/ULBs, NGOs and NSS/NYK volunteers to disseminate information regarding election processes and ethical voting. Seniors, pregnant and lactating mothers, PwDs and first-time female voters were identified and motivated to adopt ethical voting. Special registration camps for transgender voters and PwDs were organised in collaboration with organisations/NGOs working in the field, to maximise registration of such voters.

EETA polling stations were a ground-breaking initiative. The word 'Eeta' is a local word used by female friends to address one another, and these polling stations (PSs) symbolised the inclusivity of women. The first-ever all women PSs were planned for the entire Yaiskul AC, along with six such PSs in Khurai AC, four PSs each in Thongju and Kshetrigao AC and three PSs in Heingang AC. While some of the EETA model PSs had women security personnel for the first time, others were named model polling stations, with the provision of a senior citizens' corner, voter assistance booths, health booths, a crèche, a children's play corner, an ambulance, selfie points, wheelchairs, Braille guides and youth/ASHA/AWW volunteers, among other facilitation, besides provision for PwD voters and assured minimum facilities.

These efforts bore noteworthy results:

1. Moulding public perceptions about PwD:

For the first time in the State, a polling team consisting entirely of PwDs was assigned duty under Wangkhei AC. Also, 1,505 PwDs voters were marked/enrolled in the electoral roll.

2. Transgender upliftment: For the first time the transgender community was identified and 25 voters enrolled.

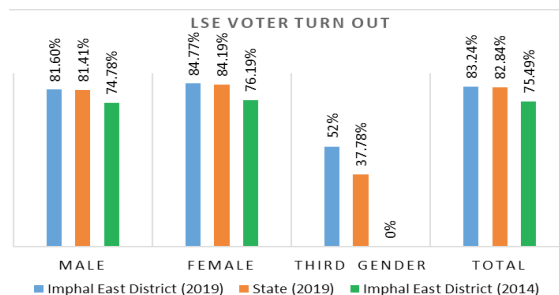
3. Breaking the stereotype: Settling

apprehensions and crossing new frontiers in women empowerment, women were trained and appointed as Presiding Officers/ Polling Officers. Special training on EVM and VVPAT, followed by tests and gradation, boosted their confidence. The public applauded the performance of EETA PSs, and the women polling officials and women police officials. Remarkably, there was no repoll in any EETA PSs.

4. Success story of Yaiskul AC: Yaiskul was selected to be an all-woman-manned AC because it is the most urban AC but with the least voter turnout in the Lok Sabha election in 2014. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election the AC saw a turnaround, with 79.31% female voter turnout and 77.55% total voter turnout in a noteworthy example of enhanced participation and maximum inclusion.



**Dr Rangitabali
Waikhom,**
DEO Imphal East,
Manipur



To Summarize-

Total VTO	83.24%	Higher than State VTO
Female VTO	84.77%	Highest female VTO district in the 1-IMPC and higher than State VTO
Male VTO	81.60%	Higher than State VTO
Transgender VTO	52%	State VTO is 37.78%
PwDs VTO	79%	Higher than State VTO



mSVEEP: A Sweeping Success in Enhancing Electoral Participation

The **mSVEEP** app, a mobile based IT initiative for Voter's Education and Electoral Participation was undertaken by DEO, Alwar during the Lok Sabha Election 2019 especially to reach the young voters of Alwar. It garnered solid, quantifiable results, with many lakhs of voters using the app's features.

The mSVEEP app was initially introduced during the Election Commission of India's review meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner, Deputy Election Commissioner (IT) and Chief Election Officer of Rajasthan held in Udaipur on November 16, 2018. The app's main objective is to familiarise its users with the voting process, and the app includes virtual and interactive sessions in the use of the EVM-VVPAT machines.

Multiple SVEEP events organised in Alwar district are initiated and converged through the digital platform of the mSVEEP app, reaching out to a large number of voters and enhancing electors' participation in a very cost-effective way. Online event activities in mSVEEP were also interfaced with the Facebook platform to share election moments on the user's social

media profile. Other highlights of mSVEEP are the BLO Directory – featuring the BLO's contact details; Call for Pledge by making a missed call; SVEEP Gallery – sharing pictures of events organised in district; videos for SVEEP-related publications of the ECI; and Quick Links to important voter-oriented websites.

The popularity of the mSVEEP app among the voters of the district can be gauged from its download count of 1,47,000 while its primary feature, i.e., the 'mock-poll familiarisation voting process via EVM VVPAT machine' clocked an attempt count of 3,61,000 during the election period.



Inderjeet Singh,
District Election
Officer, Alwar
Rajasthan

The app's main objective is to familiarise its users with the voting process, and the app includes virtual and interactive sessions in the use of the EVM-VVPAT machines.



Hisar's IT Initiatives for an Enhanced Electoral Process

The District Administration, Hisar, initiated innovative IT applications with the assistance of NIC District Centre in Hisar to help make the Lok Sabha 2019 election process automated, efficient and transparent.

To start with, the **DIVYARTH App** (Disabled Voters & Youth Application for Rights, Transportation in Hisar) was created for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to help them cast their votes conveniently. The main features of the app are the registration of PwD voters; details and tracking of vehicle facility for PwDs to reach the respective polling stations; contact facility for calling the staff deputed to know status; information about their rights as PwDs; information about candidates; and assistance in casting of votes

Further, the **Election Expenditure Monitoring System** IT application was developed to facilitate AROs in preparing the shadow observation register. It helped in making the expenditure register on a real-time basis in the required format (Election Expenditure Manual Annexure B 11). The ARO only had to enter the number of items/units of expenditure and the software calculated

the total expenditure. It facilitated the accounting team deployed for maintaining expenditure and the automatic preparation of the shadow observation register at the RO level and included a role-based facility to use the app at the ARO/AEO and RO (accounting team) levels, a Standard Master Database for items/candidates/events and as per rates specified for Hisar-04 PC; and the provision to update the inspection dates and details.

With a view to enhancing day-to-day efficiency, the **Daily Reports Monitoring System** app facilitated nodal officers to upload date-wise information for effective Daily Reporting and Monitoring, especially during the MCC period. It also archived the reports for easy accessibility. Its important features include an e-dashboard for daily reporting and monitoring of various reports, doing away with cumbersome emails or manual systems. The app also facilitates the nodal officer (MCC) and Returning Officer to monitor daily reports using a dashboard (such as daily reports on MCC, accounting, shadow register, EMS, cash seizure, liquor seizure, law and order, etc.) and offers alerts on non-receipt of reports.

Finally, the Android-based **Mobile App and Web Portal of Communication Plan** was developed to improve response time on poll day. It proved very useful for making direct calls to the concerned person in case of any law and order situation or election related complaints/issues and was used by RO/ARO/Police officers/Zonal Magistrates/Sector officers. The key features of the web portal and app are a strong search facility to locate the desired officer, the mapping of officers deputed at assigned booth, the role-based use of the app and a direct calling feature to the concerned officer.

These IT initiatives amply proved the efficacy of technology in managing elections in an effective way while dispensing with manual work, errors and delays.



Ashok Kumar Meena, DEO
Hisar, Haryana



A Story of Innovation and Achievement in Election History

The successful conduct of elections in Nizamabad PC using 12 EVMs made headlines. This Lok Sabha constituency in Telangana took this historic step, finalised on April 2, because the voters had to choose from 186 candidates! It was decided to use M3 machines, so that 12 BUs could be connected to one CU to accommodate all the candidates. It was a herculean task to accomplish this in a short time.

Beginning with preparation and commissioning, polling machines were brought in from Bengaluru to Jagtial on the evening of April 4. Loading and unloading the large number of machines was handled by special manpower. In order to carry out this massive task, many arrangements were made, including having halls with capacity of 20 tables; 200 tables with teams for two assembly segments; 220 teams, with each consisting of one gazetted officer, one assistant and two engineers (BEL/ECIL); accommodation and convenience arrangements for 600 engineers;



the training of all those involved in commissioning of EVMs, using a specially prepared manual; and the deployment of Gazetted officers involved in EVM commissioning as sector officers.



Dr A. Sarath, DEO
Jagtial District,
Telangana

In this election, FLC and commissioning of each set of machines had taken 4-5 hours. With a target of three days, the commissioning of around 600 sets of machines was completed in just two and a half days by utilising manpower effectively.

On poll day, EVM management was a critical duty. These many machines with these many votes cast while connecting 12 BUs to the same CU and VVPAT had never been tested before. It became imperative to position reserve EVMs with sector officers, to organise night halts at PS locations and store EVMs securely so that replacement of EVMs could happen instantly during mock-poll and commencement of poll.

In terms of voters' mobilization, people-friendly methods were adopted to educate voters, such as posters, hoardings, cartoons, short films in vernacular languages, bullock cart rallies in urban areas, and Model Polling Station for mock polling and demos. PwDs were issued Direct Entry passes to enable them to bypass queues at the polling booth, like VIPs.

A tele alert-cum-call centre from the grassroots level to the DEO, with a dedicated team and lines, acted as the 'nerve centre' for foolproof coordination: wake-up calls, tracking of mock polling, facilities to staff and voters, and security and technical snags, among other critical concerns. It communicated progress to the CEO Telangana and the ECI instantly.

In the final analysis, the replacement of EVMs was a bare minimum of 0.8%. Voter turnout increased to 77.6% from 71.5%, a historic achievement. The acceptance of EVMs was a true victory, resulting from solid preparation, the education of voters and innovation in conducting elections.



An Innovation in Policing Brings Results

The Election Commission of India always aims to conduct free, fair and unequivocal elections. It is pertinent for the institution to ensure that money or muscle power does not tamper with the sanctity and transparency of the electoral process of the world's largest democracy.

In the district of Araria in Bihar, Special Police Sectors were formed to maintain increased vigil at the polling booths and to work directly at the lower levels to ensure free and fair elections. Here are some important steps taken up by Araria's Superintendent of Police:

The Special Police Sectors consisted of one officer, who was preselected by the SP, and a few constables as the force. They were tagged with 5-7-10 PSLs. Their main idea was to continuously patrol the tagged booths, at a regular interval of not longer than half an hour, and to ensure the following detailed checks on every booth:

- a) To ensure that there was no gathering within 200 metres of the booth;
- b) To randomly check voters' fingernails for bogus voting; check that no voter has used nail polish after being inked; and no male has applied nail polish on just one index finger;
- c) To ensure nobody takes mobiles phones inside the booths;
- d) To randomly match voter I-card photos with the person carrying it;
- e) To make random checks of voter slip details with the valid I-card details of the person

carrying it;

- g) To ensure that no one sells anything or serves any food to any voters or static guards or the polling personnel;

- h) To ascertain that no fraudulent polling agent sits at the booth;

- i) On receiving a complaint for any booth, the Special Police Sectors of that booth were informed first. They would reach and quickly ascertain the relevance and genuineness of the complaint, and accordingly tackle the situation, or call for the sector magistrate.

The officers were trained more than once for the above procedures and the relevant actions to be undertaken.

The advantage of this initiative, in addition to normal sector patrolling, was that these officers were tagged with fewer PSLs, were under the direct command of the Superintendent of Police, and their mobile numbers (more than one) were readily available to call while those of normal sector officers could be jammed most of the time. The officers belonged to the local PS, were familiar with the area and people, and could get information easily through local sources about any untoward incident, as compared to sector magistrates, who are not field officers.

Their continuous patrolling drove the message into the minds of the

local voters, making them realize what needs to be done, as well as driving fear in the minds of the guilty, to prevent bogus voting. These officers became the first responders to any incident at a any booth.

Thus, this extra effort and continuous pre-poll monitoring and the innovation of special police sectors for polling day helped to achieve fair and incident-free Lok Sabha elections in Araria.



**Saayli Savlaram
Dhurat, SP**
Araria, Bihar



Challenges Overcome in Andhra Pradesh's Simultaneous Elections

Elections in Andhra Pradesh presented many challenges for the electoral machinery: simultaneous elections and a surcharged political environment besides more than 70% of the constituencies being highly expenditure sensitive.

It is noteworthy that Andhra Pradesh was the only state where the Chief Secretary, the DG Intelligence, one DEO, three SPs and several other election officials were shifted mid-election. Further, disciplinary action/suspensions were initiated against one DEO, three ROs, five AROs and several other POs, APOs and BLOs, among others.

In the record time of a month, more than 12 lakh forms 6/7/8 were disposed of. A concerted effort for election awareness was made through SVEEP. Facilitation of PwD voters was ensured, including arrangement of ramps, wheelchairs, volunteers, supply of IEC material, voter slips and ballot paper in Braille signage to 82,000 visually handicapped electors. These initiatives resulted in the enrolment of 47 lakh voters (including 9.9 lakh first-time voters) after the draft publication of the

electoral roll. There were no recorded complaints of missing names on poll day.

These efforts resulted in the highest increase ever in voter turnout (a historic 81.34%) figures as well as the highest voter turnout of women (1.58 crore) among the 13 largest states of India. A record 65.1% of PwDs voters participated and out of 3 lakhs postal ballots issued, a record 90.5% were polled back.

Moreover, 5.2 lakh calls were handled by 1950 call centres during the peak period (March 10 to April 11), with a per day average call count of 14,248 (highest: 33,028 in a day). IVRS voice messages and SMSs were sent to callers-in-waiting regarding Voter Helpline, PwD and cVigil Mobile apps. With the extensive use of the Voter Helpline mobile app, New Suvidha, real-time, accurate and faster results were disseminated. All polling stations with videography and 60.40% by webcasting.

The strict implementation of expenditure monitoring resulted in cash seizures of Rs 141 cr (second highest in the country), liquor seizure worth Rs 30 crore and total seizures worth Rs. 232 crore (fourth highest). In cVigil, a total of 7463 complaints were received (the third highest in India); 3,883 cases were registered by the Police and 9,996 by the Excise department. Social media violations were also effectively monitored. The CEO's office issued 208 notices to different political parties for MCC violations. An amount of Rs 16,07,760 was included in the accounts of political parties for violations in 96 cases. In addition, services and election materials, such as voter compartments, GPS tracking app and EPIC card, were procured at very reasonable costs.

The manner in which challenging circumstances were overcome by the continuous guidance of the ECI and the support of the State election machinery to ensure the successful conduct of elections is truly laudable.



Gopal Krishna Dwivedi,
CEO,
Andhra Pradesh



Expenditure Observers Act as the Eyes of ECI

Expenditure monitoring is an integral part of the election exercise to ensure the transparency of the electoral system of India and the Election Commission of India has been deploying Expenditure Observers to fulfill this mandate.

As is the normal course of measures taken for electoral checks and balances, in the 2019 General Election too the ECI appointed Special Expenditure Observers for States considered to be sensitive, such as Tamil Nadu.

There was intelligence available to suggest the possibility of inducement to voters both in cash and kind. An all-out effort was made to bring the involved inspection agencies and stakeholders together through a close meeting between their heads. The endeavour paid off as certain inspections led to the detection of cash and articles meant for wrongful distribution to voters.

Further, a strategy was evolved after detailed discussion with the concerned officers to ensure the verification of complaints with emphasis on credible intelligence already available with the Income Tax Department. This was done so that, whenever and wherever necessary, searches under the Income Tax Act could be undertaken.

This was augmented through field visits to expenditure-sensitive constituencies where interactions at the ground level helped in assessing the preparedness of agencies for dealing with such instances and enabling the fine-tuning of the series of steps to be taken in this regard.

Day-to-day verification of complaints was emphasised and Expenditure Observers were sensitized and informed in this area, while being directed to verify the timely and genuine disposal of such complaints.

All the aforementioned initiatives led to

seizure of unaccounted cash of more than Rs 90 crore. Further, resources meant for distribution to voters were safeguarded. The experience and lessons garnered from the election in these two States was effectively utilised in the Maharashtra Assembly election a couple of months later.

A strategy was evolved with the concerned officers to ensure the verification of complaints with emphasis on credible intelligence already available with the Income Tax Department.



Madhu Mahajan,
Special Observer
Expenditure,
Tamil Nadu



Election Expenditure Monitoring in Tamil Nadu

Expenditure monitoring is an important factor in ensuring free and fair elections. Keeping this in view, extensive preparations were made in Tamil Nadu for the General Election to the Lok Sabha in 2019.

To begin with, an adequate numbers of officers were posted as District Nodal Officers in all 37 districts of the State. They were notified with statutory powers under the Income Tax Act and provided with all necessary resources. Vulnerable constituencies were mapped, and technical and human intelligence gathering mechanisms were activated so that no incident should escape the election machinery.

As a result of the proactive measures taken, the cash seizure of Rs 81.60 crore made in Tamil Nadu was the highest in the country. Out of this amount, the cash seized by the IT department was Rs 80.25 crore.

In addition to the regular actions, a secret operation was launched with a few chosen officers, and the activation of multiple means of technical and human intelligence. With concerted efforts of intelligence gathering, verification and validation, the secret place where a stockpile of cash meant for voter bribing was located. A second search was launched within 48 hours with the help of CRPF personnel for security. During this search, unaccounted cash amounting to Rs 11.50 crore was found, of which Rs 10.50 crore

was in denomination of Rs 200 notes. These currency notes were found in plastic envelopes with computer-printed labels – mentioning ward/booth numbers, number of voters, amount to be paid to each voter and the total amount to be paid. There was evidence of these being shifted hurriedly in cartons and gunny bags. An involved party functionary, who does not have any source of income or even a PAN number, sought to own up the cash but could not explain its source.



B. Murali Kumar,
DG Income Tax
(Investigation),
Tamil Nadu



Through the serial numbers on the currency notes, the bank, branch and officers involved in the irregular exchange of the large amount of currency were traced and action was duly initiated against them. The information was also shared with other regulatory and enforcement authorities.

Elections to Vellore PC were subsequently held and the keenly contested election (the victory margin was only 8,111 in an electorate of 14.7 lakhs) was lauded by the local media as free and fair – in no small measure due to the ECI's eagle eye on the prevention of illegal money distribution.





CRPF: Proud Protectors of Democracy

Over time, the CAPF have become the veritable linchpin of the election process of the Election Commission of India in its endeavour to hold free and fair elections, due to their neutrality, discipline and capability to handle challenges. Reposing its trust in the CRPF, the Election Commission of India has made them the Chief Force Coordinator for elections, and the CRPF in turn has made all efforts to merit this faith.

The General Elections of 2019 were historic for being the largest ever electoral exercise in the democratic world, with more than 900 million voters exercising their franchise. This called for fail-safe planning and execution in terms of marshalling resources and ensuring the flawless movement of forces across the nation, from one election phase to another. To obviate inordinate delays and consequent fatigue, the movement of forces was done in a calibrated manner, with the focus on avoiding long journeys. This humungous exercise of mobilising and deploying over 3 lakh personnel of CAPF, SAP and Border Wing Homeguards, and providing the requisite force levels for each phase, required in-depth planning and unflagging attention to detail. Rightly so, befitting their profile as the nation's lead CI force, the CRPF contributed 1387 Coys, while 550 Coys came from the BSF, 208 Coys came from the CISF, 244 Coys came from the SSB, 210 Coys came from the ITBP, 79 Coys came from the RPF and 448 Coys came from the SAP. Thus a total of 3,126 Coys were deployed.



To prepare our personnel for area-specific challenges, the CRPF organised pre-induction training. In addition, elaborate security do's and don't's were issued to all CAPF and SAP personnel and briefing to all adhoc Bns was ensured by the lower formations.

The security scenario in an area and how its threats and challenges might affect the election process was central to deciding which SF would be deployed there. For this purpose, the CRPF provided a complete security grid across the country, in consultation with the respective State Police departments.

The seamless movement of forces across the country, covering the seven phases of elections, was achieved by real-time coordination with the Indian Railways, with 261 special trains and 541 splinter coaches arranged for the purpose. The distribution of 24.5 lakh on-board meals became possible due to the close monitoring of the trains and the timely dissemination of

the details to IRCTC. Forces were also inducted by road, boat, ship and aerially. However, induction and de-induction in severely Maoist affected areas continued to be cross-country, on foot, while parts of the North East, due to remoteness and terrain difficulties, required cross-country movement for three days, one way. Similarly, the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir had its own set of challenges, which were overcome.

Under the directions of the Election Commission of India and with the support of the Ministry of Home Affairs and other stakeholders, the CRPF delivered the General Elections with remarkably low violence and minimum losses to forces. Finally, democracy triumphed and the highest ever turnout of voters was witnessed.



Dr. Anand Prakash Maheshwari,
DG, CRPF
Coordinator, Delhi

The General Elections of 2019 were historic for being the largest ever electoral exercise in the democratic world, with more than 900 million voters exercising their franchise.



Holding the Flag of Electoral Democracy High

Conducting elections in present times is a herculean task, given the large extent of India and the number of stakeholders involved. Add to that the socio-cultural elements of our nation, and you get a situation at hand where challenges do not seem to stop cropping up. It is the sheer determination of the Commission to ensuring 'No Voter to be Left Behind' that makes these challenges worth the while!

During the Mizoram Assembly election in October-November 2018 the majority, belonging to influential dominant tribes in the state, put forth demands which, if accepted, would effectively mean the disenfranchisement of a much smaller community called the Reang/Bru. The members of this community were victims of an ethnic clash in 1997, as a result of which they had to flee for refuge to the neighbouring state of Tripura. The only connection these 30,000-odd people had with their home state was their names being present in the electoral rolls of three villages in Mizoram to which they originally belonged. The foremost task in this case was to resume the

revision of the electoral roll, which had been suspended for three years due to opposition from the majority and the fear of violence. Despite the shadow of distrust, disruption, threats and the theft of thousands of forms, for name inclusion in the electoral roll collected from these displaced people - this complicated task was completed in record time, due mainly to meticulous planning and execution.

The next thorny challenge was to set up polling stations where members of the displaced Bru community could vote. As they were living in temporary camps in Tripura, hundreds of kilometres away from their home villages in Mizoram, the possibility of voting there was out of the question. After numerous meetings what was agreed upon was to have special polling stations on the Mizoram-Tripura border. This resulted in an unprecedented voter turnout of around 55% for the Bru community.

The third task successfully accomplished was to bring new-generation EVMs and VVPATs from the ECIL factory at Hyderabad to the hilly terrain of Mizoram, transporting them in only ten days over a distance of 2500 km through seven states. It required real-time coordination with the police and civil officials of these states to provide foolproof security and logistics. The VVPAT was introduced for the first time in these states, and reaching out to remote villages over hills and streams, by boat, cars and even by foot, for hands-on demonstrations of these machines was another challenge well handled.

One of the most rewarding activities was to ensure assistance to Persons with Disabilities in reaching polling booths. Several voluntary organizations came forward enthusiastically to support this.

Despite all challenges, the Mizoram election team accomplished the mandate that the Election Commission of India is known for the world over - free, fair and informed elections.



S.B. Shashank,
former CEO,
Mizoram



Hyderabad's Successful Security Strategies

The Hyderabad City Police successfully aided the electoral machinery in the conduct of the General Election to the Lok Sabha 2019. The large scale of preparatory work started much in advance and resulted in blemish-free elections.

The Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad City, issued comprehensive instructions to all levels of officers to implement the provisions of the R.P. Act in letter and spirit, while carrying out the instructions issued by the Election Commission of India. The systematic planning at the leadership level and precise execution on the ground by the officers resulted in elections that remained free of untoward incidents.

Training made a significant contribution to efficient implementation at all levels. Phase-wise training of Police personnel (Civil and Armed), by senior officers experienced in the conduct of elections, included 9,749 police personnel. The first phase of training covered electoral offences and the Model Code of Conduct, while the second phase dealt with the identification of critical polling stations and vulnerable areas. A detailed training programme was also conducted by CP Hyderabad on election-related matters including criticality and analysis on election-related duties, for all ranks above Inspectors. Legal experts and officers of other departments were also involved in the training process.

A nine-point checklist was prepared for visits of polling stations by the Additional and Sub Nodal Officers. This exercise helped the field-level officers immensely in understanding the ground reality and making the required arrangements at the 4,025 polling stations in the 1,600 polling locations in Hyderabad Police Commissionerate.

Vulnerability mapping was done as per the guidelines of the ECI. A total of 13 polling stations were identified as vulnerable. Persons causing such vulnerability were also identified and kept

under watch. Similarly, clusters of polling stations were analysed and a deployment plan prepared based on the number of polling stations at each polling location.

In the pre-poll phase, the duties of route march, flag march, area domination exercises, vehicle checking, visits to critical polling stations, check post and cordon, and search operations were effectively conducted by the CAPF at all the identified vulnerable hamlets and critical polling stations. A total of 238 flag marches and 67 vehicle checks were carried out by the CAPF.

Arrangements for poll-day monitoring included a total of 432 route mobiles to cover all the polling stations, with the deployment of 45 Special Striking Forces (SSFs) and 45 Flying Squads, besides observation and intelligence teams. Special control rooms at the zonal and commissionerate levels were set up. One officer at each Police Station

was assigned the duty of communicating with all the deployed route mobiles, SSFs, QRTS and Special Investigation Teams.

Advanced planning, a series of multilevel trainings, repeated briefing to officers and the ranks, frequent visits to polling stations – particularly the vulnerable ones, micro-level planning for each polling station, confidence-instilling in the community by regular area domination programmes, effective surveillance and competent enforcement work were some of the measures taken to ensure the smooth conduct of elections. Ensuring deployment as well as mobility of the forces during the pre-poll period as well as on poll day truly made the security arrangements for the elections a successful affair.



Anjani Kumar,
Commissioner
of Police,
Hyderabad City



Ensuring Peaceful Elections in Naxal Areas of Jharkhand

The conduct of elections in Naxal-affected states such as Jharkhand has always been a challenging task for the Police. As many as 19 out of 24 districts of the State and 67 out of 81 ACs are affected by this.

Measures during Preparation and Poll

To deal with the testing situations, multipronged strategies were put into place:

- Forces with no exposure to Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected areas were deployed in urban or semi-urban non-Naxal-affected areas.
- Helicopters dropped the polling parties on P-2 and P-1 days to the highly sensitive Naxal areas where road travel was risky. Polling parties were withdrawn using helicopters on P+1 day.
- The training of IED trainers was conducted on the Jharkhand STF campus to sensitise the District Armed Police and the forces from outside.
- Chowkidars, SPOs and Police personnel were sensitised for the collection of local intelligence.
- A communication plan was drawn up for



covering shadow areas. Troop trackers, satellite phones and wireless sets were used extensively for bridging communication gaps.

- A nodal hospital, such as Medica in Ranchi, was identified for cashless treatment of all the ranks involved in the election.
- Uniform insurance cover was given to all ranks of forces.

Efficient Deployment

Deliberations at different levels in districts and Police headquarters resulted in the following general principles for the deployment and movement of forces during elections:

- COBRA and Assault Groups (AGs) of Jharkhand Jaguar (JJ) for pursuing Maoists and other splinter groups in the districts were utilized for the domination of areas adjacent to polling station locations.
- Some in-situ troops were used for poll purposes (as per the order of MHA) and others for anti-Naxal operations, area domination and road-opening parties.
- Highly sensitive booths were assigned to in-situ CRPF troops familiar with the existing Naxal scenario and the terrain of the area.
- The troops of the BSF, ITBP and SSB were assigned to sensitive Naxal areas not covered by the CRPF.
- The troops of the CISF, RPF and State Armed Police were assigned to the PSLs that were not Naxal-sensitive.
- The State reorganized the district Police into company formation for the first time to ensure their smooth movement.
- A Central Vehicle Cell was created for the efficient movement of CAPF troops.

All these measures went towards building a very peaceful, free and fair election.



Murari Lal Meena,
State Police Nodal
Officer, Jharkhand



EVM-VVPAT Management

The Lok Sabha election 2019 was the first ever General Election in which each EVM was 100% backed by a VVPAT and in which the physical verification of VVPAT slips was done. In Karnataka, this was achieved with well-defined, planned management to garner complete faith in the functioning of this system.

The preparatory activities for EVM-VVPAT management included the following steps:

- Identifying the gap between the required and available number of machines;
- Obtaining orders of the Commission to make good the shortfall;
- Organising the EVM-VVPAT lifting and transportation strategy;
- Ensuring EVM Management Software (EMS) updates;
- FLC and separation of faulty machines and their timely dispatch to BEL;
- Disseminating EVM-VVPAT awareness to stakeholders at State, district, Assembly and booth levels;
- Providing proper training to DEOs, SLMTs, ALMTs and others;
- Sensitisation and confidence building among stakeholders;
- Printing of manuals and brochures (including in vernacular languages) for stakeholders; and
- Maintaining a checklist on the SOP for each stage.

The other steps taken during the EVM-VVPAT management included:

- The appointment of an EVM nodal officer at the district level;
- The procurement of EVMs, power packs, seals, tags, and suchlike;
- The inspection of EVM godowns and preparation of related reports;
- Overseeing strong room arrangements;
- Sharing lessons learnt on EVM failures and preparation from the previous elections;
- Dissemination and use of a checklist of EVM-VVPAT related Do's & Don'ts;
- All-out efforts to create awareness of EVM with VVPAT and give hands-on experience in using them throughout the State.

For further efficacy, EVM Management Software (EMS) was put into action in Karnataka for the first time. Training and capacity building for all stakeholders on EMS was implemented without any technical problems.

On poll day, management of EVMs and VVPATs was a key responsibility. Under an action plan, a team of six members headed by the Deputy CEO was formed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. A State contact centre was formed at the CEO Office to address any technical issues related to EVM-VVPAT, and these were resolved immediately. The team successfully obtained reports of EVM-VVPAT replacement from districts in time and sent them to the ECI. A rapid response mechanism was set up at the CEO Office, District Headquarters, to deal with misinformation related to the credibility of EVMs. There was not a single complaint against EVM-VVPAT on the poll day by any of the stakeholders.

Further, extensive training on the counting process was given, with special emphasis on VVPAT Slips Counting, at the State Headquarters and a model counting centre set up to explain the mock procedure. The counting took place on May 23, 2019 simultaneously in all the counting centres in the State and was completed smoothly, along with the mandatory verification of five polling station VVPAT Slips Counting. Haveri PC was the first to declare result in the country and the results of all 28 PCs were declared by 7.30 PM on the same day without any issues. After the counting, the EVMs and VVPATs were stored back in strong rooms.



V. Raghavendra,
Joint CEO,
Karnataka



'Mera Vote Mera Desh' Campaign Creates an Informed Citizenry

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) is a non-partisan, non-governmental organisation that works in the area of electoral and political reforms. It was founded in 1999 by professors of IIM-Ahmedabad, who were deeply concerned about the influx of criminality in the political system. Along with National Election Watch (NEW), ADR works towards ensuring transparency and accountability in Indian politics, and reducing the influence of money and muscle power in elections.

Since its inception, ADR has worked to create an informed citizenry, by providing detailed authentic and unbiased information on the background details of candidates contesting Parliamentary, State Assembly and in some cases, municipal and panchayat elections. ADR also provides financial details of political parties to enhance transparency and accountability. Over the last two decades, ADR's relentless efforts have paved the way for a fundamental transformation in how the people of India go about choosing their elected representatives.

Prior to every Lok Sabha and Assembly election, ADR launches massive awareness campaigns to sensitise citizens to money and muscle power in politics. Last year, the nationwide campaign 'Mera Vote Mera Desh' was launched for the general elections to Lok Sabha 2019. It was formally rolled out for the first time in February 2014 in the run up to the Lok Sabha elections that year. It aims to empower the electorate through greater dissemination of information about contesting candidates and political parties.

It promoted the ideals of ethical voting in tandem with the SVEEP campaign launched by the Election Commission of India as well as built a strong public opinion on the need to decriminalise politics.

The campaign was promoted across India and reached out to several crore people, both on digital platforms and at the grassroots level through ADR's strong network of 1,200 partner organizations/state co-ordinators. States with active partners covered at least 60-90% of their districts while in other cases, at least 30-50% of the districts were covered through direct and indirect campaigning. Celebrities helped to create voter awareness videos and audios in vernacular languages, which were broadcast on ADR's social media platforms, cable/satellite channels, and FM and community radios. Message-based posters, banners and other visual materials were displayed on hoardings, autos, buses and metro trains. A large number of messages were pushed through SMS and Out Bound Calls (OBDs) providing background data of candidates with appeals to select good candidates. Press releases were sent out for every phase of the Lok Sabha and four states elections (at least a week before polls), releasing information on the background details of the candidates, to enable an informed choice. Several lakh people were reached through ADR's citizen engagement efforts.



Maj. Gen. Anil Verma (Retd.),
Head - Association
for Democratic
Reforms, New Delhi



The results were heartening. In the run up to the Lok Sabha elections 2019, there were more than 85 lakh visitors to ADR's MyNeta website, which includes a database of the background information of over 2 lakh candidates who have contested elections since 2003, and there were 3.2 crore page views from several States across India, 51.81% of which were in the age group of 18-24 years.



Accessible Voting- A Landmark Achievement

We should all rejoice in the fact that the Election Commission of the largest democracy in the world has been conscious about the electoral rights of persons with disabilities. Thanks to judgment of the Supreme Court of India dated April 19, 2004, the Election Commission of India has already taken a variety of measures. These measures include their identification, inclusive electoral roles, appointment of special officers, awareness, public education, involvement of NGOs, DPOs and CSOs, sensitization and orientation of election machinery, accessible website, communication, physical access at polling booths, cooperation of political parties, priority in entering, entry of companion, Braille signage, Braille ballot papers and special care for persons with speech and hearing impairment.

With the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provision of all these facilities or taking of these and all such other initiatives is no more a matter of choice. As per Section 11 of this statute, it is mandatory to make all polling booths accessible; and to provide all material of electoral process in an accessible format. It is heartening that the Election Commission of India has taken virtually all measures for making elections accessible for all people with disabilities.

During the General Elections of 2019, the Election Commission of India took bold initiatives in providing ballot papers in Braille, providing Braille markings on EVMs, producing Voting Cards in Braille, providing election booklet in Braille, signage at polling booths, appointment of persons with disabilities as guides at election, physical accessibility at election booths, encouraging district authorities to provide transport facility and ensuring 'walk-in' entry to the election booths.

Another most note-worthy initiative of the ECI is to create nationwide public awareness through print and electronic media as regard voting rights

of people with disabilities, importance of their vote and facilities available at the polling booth for facilitating their voting. Similarly, providing facility to such persons for their online enrolment, the special campaign for their registration and making the website of ECI and SECI accessible are excellent measures towards promoting accessible elections.

These measures have not merely given an opportunity to persons with disabilities to exercise their voting rights, these have, for the first time, recognized the concept of equal

opportunity, equality, equity and social justice in the field of disability development. These measures have not only fulfilled the mandate of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 in respect protection of voting rights, they have also recognised the voting power of such people. These initiatives have given a universal message that people with disabilities can also contribute towards formation of democratically

elected Governments. These measures have given voice, self-confidence, dignity and respect to such people.

Similarly, providing National Awards for promoting accessible voting to the respective State Governments, individuals and NGOs is a step in the right direction. It is a beginning of an inspiring journey on the path of inclusive development of people with disabilities and for that the efforts of the ECI are most appreciated.



Bhushan Punani,
*Blind People's
Association*

**These initiatives have
given a universal
message that Persons
with Disabilities
can also contribute
towards formation of
democratically elected
Governments.**



Tamil Daily Invoking Voters Towards Electoral Duty

Hindu Tamil Thisai,
(KSL Media Ltd, Chennai, Tamil Nadu)

Hindu Tamil Thisai is a Tamil Daily Newspaper published by the Kasturi & Sons Ltd, Chennai, Tamil Nadu with an average readership reach of 7 lakh 35 thousand per day. The daily did an extensive coverage of and initiated targeted campaign towards an informed and ethical voting during the 17th Lok Sabha 2019. Their major initiatives to sensitize voters to participate in the electoral process include newspaper campaigns Jananayaga Thiruvizha (Celebration of Democracy), Idhudhan Indha Thogudhi (This is the Constituency) and the digital campaign, Cash for Vote and another campaign on both ground and Digital platform 'Num Vakku, Num Kadamai (Our Vote, Our Duty) Elections 2019' -awareness on the need and the right to vote, encouraging the masses to



exercise their franchise and to 'Vote on Merit of the Candidates'.



Reaching Out Through Radio

93.5 RED FM, Bengaluru

It is one of the most popular FM channels of the city, reaching out to an average number of 14,21,000 listeners every day. During the Lok Sabha Elections the channel did a nationwide Election Campaign 'Ab Watan Dabayega Button' to encourage electors to cast their vote. The RJ on the show extensively provided listeners with information about the registration process and answered their doubts and queries. As an outreach effort they coordinated with the CEO office and organised registration and awareness drives. To further increase voter participation RED FM also teamed up with RedBus and provided free travel vouchers to those who were travelling to their native place



to cast their vote. The channel also organised roadshows to increase voters' participation, part of their on-ground awareness drive.



Anantnag Setting an Example

In the district of Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir, 100% polling stations had Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) like ramps, wheelchairs, drinking water, electricity, furniture, etc, to encourage all eligible voters in the state to participate in the exercise. New eligible voters were also enrolled with sustained efforts to educate and motivate them about elections. SVEEP activities were also rolled out with active collaboration of government institutions, schools, Anganwadi workers, ASHAs etc. Keeping in mind inclusive and accessible elections, requisite aids/appliances, including transportation for the PwD voters at polling stations was also arranged.



Khalid Jahangir, DEO,
Anantnag

Ensuring Accessible Election

In order to abide by the tenet of 'No Voter to be Left Behind' several steps were taken by the state of Punjab to attain maximum voter participation. Mapping and identification of 1,10,000 PwD voters was undertaken to look into proper arrangements for them. A mobile app with sign language was released for the benefit of hearing impaired voters. Availability of free transport facility to all PwD voters was provided to ensure their participation in the polls. In 23,214 polling stations, measures like volunteers, ramps and wheelchairs were also arranged.



Dr. Sirra Karuna Raju,
CEO Punjab

Attaining Success Despite Natural Calamit

The state of Odisha was hit by a major cyclone, Fani, just four days prior to the election. However, this could not deter the spirit of the election officials who worked on war footing mode to ensure the conduct of free, fair, safe and transparent election. A comprehensive voter awareness and outreach program was also conducted to educate the voters about the significance of their franchise.



Surendra Kumar, CEO,
Odisha



“लोकतंत्र, सबकी भागीदारी से मजबूत बनता है और आगे बढ़ता है। मुझे यह जानकर प्रसन्नता हुई है कि मतदाताओं की भागीदारी को और बढ़ाने के लिए, निर्वाचन आयोग द्वारा ‘**Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy**’ यानि ‘**सशक्त लोकतंत्र के लिए निर्वाचन साक्षरता**’ कार्यक्रम के तहत सुनियोजित प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं। स्कूल और कॉलेज स्तर पर Electoral Literacy Club बनाए गए हैं। औपचारिक शिक्षा व्यवस्था से वंचित लोगों के लिए ‘चुनाव पाठशालाएँ’ आयोजित की जा रही हैं। निर्वाचन आयोग के प्रयासों में स्थानीय भाषाओं का प्रयोग करना विशेष रूप से सराहनीय है। यह प्रसन्नता की बात है कि समय के अनुसार निर्वाचन आयोग ने सोशल मीडिया पर अपनी उपस्थिति बढ़ाई है। इससे विशेषकर युवा मतदाताओं के बीच निर्वाचन संबंधी जागरूकता बढ़ेगी।

—Excerpts from the speech by the President of India at NVD National function

Bhojpur's Exemplary ELC Experience

ELC at the school and college levels is working in full swing in 213 schools and six colleges of Bhojpur.

The Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) is a unique and effective initiative of the Election Commission of India to promote electoral literacy in all age groups through a plethora of engaging activities and hands-on experiences. The age-old saying, ‘Tell me and I forget; Teach me and I remember; Involve me and I learn’ is being followed in letter and spirit through ELCs across India.

365 Days of Electoral ABC

A consistent, round-the-year effort is being made in Bhojpur District of Bihar to promote electoral literacy in every nook and corner of society. Chunav Pathshalas, the basic and most important stage of the ELC, has been set up at 1,289 polling station locations, covering 2,162 polling stations of Bhojpur District. More than 100 master trainers have been trained at the district level to facilitate the smooth conduct of Chunav Pathshalas. Regular

activities are being carried out, following a fixed roster made at each Assembly Constituency level.

Challenges Overcome

In the beginning, it was difficult to convince people to participate in electoral literacy activities. Nonetheless, with the persistent effort of all BLOs and master trainers, the scenario has

Training for conveners at D.K. Carmel School, Ara





**Chunav
Pathshala in
Sahar Block,
Bhojpur**

changed a lot. The Block Development Officer of Sahar Block of 196 Tarari Assembly Constituency found a way to increase the participation of the people. He started awarding winners of the floor games with simple, inexpensive items like a pen, a notebook or a book, and it worked wonders. The same has been followed by others to make the club activities engaging for the largest number of people possible. The elders of the village are very enthusiastic about the Chunav Pathshala and are making a big effort to inform the villagers about ethical electoral processes and voting rights.

The ELC at the school and college levels is working in full swing in 213 schools and six colleges of Bhojpur. To make the club a real success, a workshop at the district level was organised for all the principals and one Nodal teacher nominated by them (from both Government and private schools). All the schools displayed an overwhelming response and are conducting regular activities in the club. The creativity of children is being well depicted on the Democracy Wall.

NVD 2020: A Celebration of ELC

On the occasion of National Voters' Day (NVD) 2020, an interschool quiz competition based on the ELC activities was organised at the district-level. It

was heartening to see the participants beaming with confidence at the event. They performed well, thus proving the worth and efficacy of the club. Songs to promote voting along with a puppet dance was a great hit on the occasion of the district-level function of NVD 2020. The election of school prefects was organised on the pattern of the general elections in a few schools. ELC has given a competitive platform to both government and private schools to give wings to the creativity of their teachers and students.

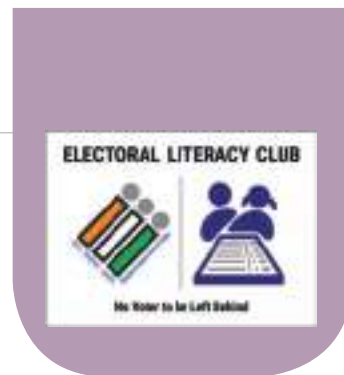
Inclusive Dimensions

Through ELC, at both the school and college levels, special camps were organised to increase the enrolment of females and the gender ratio in the electoral roll. Students managed to get the female members of their family enrolled in a mission mode. The results were noteworthy, as about 29,574 females were enrolled in the special summary revision 2020. The campaign for the enrolment of females is being carried out with all sincerity and dedication.

In keeping with the aim of the ELC to promote inclusion and sensitise the members, the activities of the club are also conducted in Buniyad Kendra, which focuses on PwDs. Nirvachitra and special camps for enrolment are organised at Buniyad Kendra to educate PwDs about their voting rights and the facilities extended to them by the Election Commission of India during elections.

Yearlong activities and ongoing persuasion by ELC members is expected to yield a fruitful and unprecedented result in achieving the aim of the Election Commission of India to educate the masses about voter registration and the electoral process, while developing a culture of electoral participation and maximising informed and ethical voting.

—Nivedita Sinha, Deputy Election Officer,
Bhojpur, Ara



Electoral Literacy: Transforming Young Citizens into Empowered Voters

The ELC Corner was established as a 'See and Show Centre' with interesting displays, photographs and symbolic representations of various aspects and facets of the national democratic endeavour.

In keeping with the current theme of the 10th NVD, 2020 – 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy' – the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya, undertook many proactive steps. One of these was the establishment of the State Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) Corner, Meghalaya, at the premises of the State

Headquarters of the Meghalaya Bharat Scouts & Guides, the state's leading youth organisation and also an active State-level ELC stakeholder and partner for the promotion of electoral literacy in the State. The State ELC Corner was inaugurated by the Chief Secretary, Meghalaya, on January 25, 2020 to



Glimpses of the inauguration of the State ELC Corner on the occasion of NVD 2020



Display of plantable seed pens utilised by polling officials in the recently held Green Elections with various Election paraphernalia



SVEEP
Installation
made by ELC
members

coincide with NVD 2020.

The State ELC Corner was set up to meet the State's objective of promoting electoral literacy by means of engaging visitors in interesting activities, while also offering hands-on experience on various electoral aspects. This venue works as a display centre for best practices in electoral management undertaken in the State so far, and will also function as a continuous training and activity centre for ELCs, Nodal Officers and mentors.

The ELC Corner was established as a 'See and Show Centre' with interesting displays, photographs and symbolic

(Above left) The Chief Secretary hands over an EPIC Card to a newly enrolled voter who recently turned 18; (right top and left) Youth Ambassador and Miss Shillong 2019 receives an EPIC Card on having enrolled and being eligible as a voter

representations of various aspects and facets of the national democratic endeavour. Some of the interesting displays are:

- Voters' pledge;
- Models of EVM/VVPAT machines;
- Various polling materials/ paraphernalia/indelible ink displayed on the Democracy Tree;
- A representative polling booth, polling station and hands-on EVM/VVPAT static centre;
- Various pictorial displays and awards;
- Audio-visual facilities displaying election music videos, among other audio-visual material;
- Selfie booths; and
- Election memorabilia.

A Centre for Election Education

The State ELC Centre is an important hub for learning ethical electoral practices, especially for the young new electorate that joins the electoral roll every year. This Centre's responsibilities include the following:

- To educate young and future voters about voter registration, sensitise them to the entire electoral process by engaging them with well-designed and attractive resources and hands-on

experience for registration and voting;

- To aid in EVM and VVPAT familiarisation and education, with a special focus on the robustness and integrity of electoral technology;
- Capacity building for generating and locating information on the what, when, where and how of elections and the electoral process, right from the ages of 14 years to 18 years plus, with messages of #GoRegister, #GoVerify, #GoCall and #GoVote with the objective of ensuring that 'No Voter to be Left Behind';
- To enable the target audience to understand the value of their vote, and to facilitate them to exercise their suffrage in a confident, comfortable and ethical manner;
- To facilitate in-depth understanding of constitutional, legislative and legal provisions, besides various technological innovations used elections;
- To understand the nature and role of the Election Commission of India, the courts, the media and other stakeholders vis-a-vis elections and democracy; and
- To harness the potential of ELC members to carry out electoral literacy in communities.

The State ELC Corner, housed in the State MBSG Centre, aims to attract many young students and ELC members in order to meet the objective of ensuring that all young and future voters will have a meaningful opportunity to engage themselves in learning electoral activities through interesting exercises and hands-on experiences. These engagements will inform them on electoral rights, and familiarise them with electoral processes and ethical voting. The State ELC Corner is therefore expected to help create awareness on both the registration and voting processes in particular, while also sensitizing schools and colleges to the value of the vote and the importance of exercising adult franchise, in general. Exposure visits and excursions to the State ELC Corner will help provide a deeper and wider understanding of how democracy works, by exposing school and college students to electoral and democratic processes, through an experiential mode. In the coming years, the State ELC Corner promises to emerge as a valuable resource centre for young and future voters in all aspects related to nation-building and democracy.

—Office of CEO, Meghalaya



Vignettes of young ELC members as they participate enthusiastically in the NVD, 2020 activities on the occasion of the inauguration of State ELC Corner in Shillong, Meghalaya



NVD THEME KARNATAKA



Prize distribution



Prize ceremony for taluk-level essay contest

NVD THEME TAMIL NADU



Spreading electoral awareness through traditional folk arts



Activity – Snake and ladder game

NVD THEME HIMACHAL PRADESH

ELC, Ramshahar (Nalagarh)

In the Solan District in Himachal Pradesh, seminars, an essay writing competition, a slogan writing competition and different rallies were organised.



NVD THEME ODISHA



Spreading message on ELC

Social Media

f @ECI



Follow our other Social Media handles

@ECI @ECISVEEP @ECISVEEP



Electoral Verification Programme: Eliminating Errors, Creating Accuracy

The EVP SVEEP action plan for citizens, political parties and other stakeholders was formulated to ensure the active partnership of all the participating stakeholders.

H.R. SRINIVASA
CEO, BIHAR

EVP
sensitisation
among women
voters in a
rural area of
Bihar

The Election Commission of India launched its Electoral Verification Programme (EVP) keeping in mind that an accurate electoral roll is essential for a fair and transparent electoral process. The EVP was implemented in the State of Bihar from September 1 to November 30, 2019.

This programme was pinned on the active participation of electors – the facility was provided at various levels for them to check their own and their family's entries in the electoral roll. Electors had access to the Voter Helpline Mobile App, the National Voter Service Portal (NVSP), and the Common Service Centre or the Voter Facilitation Centre (VFC) to get their information in the

voters' list. An online facility was available to update the entries in the electoral roll. Besides, they had the option of verifying their entries by submitting offline Form-8 at the offices of the BLO, AERO and ERO.

Further, in case of any discrepancy in a voter's information, a system was implemented to automatically generate Form-8 and upload it again with the correct information through the NVSP portal and the Voter Helpline app. Along with this, door-to-door verification of electors was ensured through BLOs and, subsequently, the data entry of verified electors was done through the BLO Net app.

In the EVP, the verification of the registered voter in the electoral roll





was done on the basis of identity proof options, such as passport, driving licence, Aadhaar card, ration card, government/ non-governmental identity card, bank passbook, farmer identity card and other documents approved by the Election Commission of India.

Effective Implementation of EVP

Pre-revision activities were conducted in all Bihar ACs just before the implementation of EVP. The programme was started only after verifying DSE (Demographically Similar Entries), removing logical error and improving voter photo quality. For support, the CEO, Bihar office conducted training for all district-level master trainers and Deputy Election Officers.

VFCs were established at each ERO office and District Election Office. Training was imparted to the coordinators of the Common Service Centres with VFCs, besides ensuring the availability of Internet and computers.

SVEEP Action Plan

The EVP SVEEP action plan for citizens, political parties and other stakeholders was formulated, for two phases, to ensure the active partnership of all the participating stakeholders. The first



Door-to-door verification by BLOs

part was aimed at the active inclusion of all segments of voters before the commencement of the EVP, and the second was for all the stakeholders during the effective implementation of the EVP till its end.

The plan included print, electronic and social media as well as public relations initiatives. Public meetings with door-to-door connectivity were ensured by BLOs and the district-level election machinery. Radio jingles, posters, newspapers and frequent advertisements were used to publicise the EVP widely. Electors were linked on a regular basis to the EVP through an Election Literacy Club and Chunaav Pathshala.

Action Stations

Public meetings were organized for active participation at the levels of the Electoral Registration Officer and Assistant Electoral Registration Officer. Coordinators of the Election Literacy Club and the Chunaav Pathshala, and campus ambassadors were actively involved. District-level and block-level organisations of political parties were requested to appoint their representatives and BLA for booth-level participation in the EVP.

Information collection and verification work was digitally edited for accurate consolidation during the EVP by selected technologically efficient BLOs.



EVP
sensitization
among NCC
cadets in
Rohtas District



BLONET
training
among BLOs



Overcoming Challenges

The biggest challenge during the implementation of the EVP arose when some districts of Bihar had to cope with severe floods. In these difficult circumstances, every effort was made by election officials to keep the EVP up and running successfully in the flood-affected constituencies of Bihar, where Internet and mobile connectivity was affected, and neither the Common Service Centre nor the VFC was available. In such areas, the voters' information was collected and the verification of electors was done by the BLOs. The District Contact Centre-1950 was made fully effective with VFCs.

Resounding Results

During the EVP, a total of 55.96% of individual electors in Bihar used the Voter Facilitation Centre, the NVSP, the

Voter Helpline-1950 and the Common Service Centre to correct their entries. The verification of 44.04% electors was done through the BLO Net app. In this way, the complete verification of 7,07,78,201 electors in the state was done successfully before the stipulated period.

The District Election Officers of Sitamarhi, Munger and Muzaffarpur, who have been effectively implementing the EVP, were identified as EVP Champions, and the District Election Officers of Sheohar, Gaya, Saran, East Champaran and Nawada were identified as EVP Achievers by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar. Undoubtedly, in the preparation for the Bihar Assembly General Elections 2020, the EVP has proven to be very effective in achieving an error-free electoral roll as the pillar of a fair election process.





Delhi Assembly Elections 2020 New Benchmarks in Accessibility

Nodal officers were appointed in all eleven districts of Delhi to assist PwD voters. The names and contact details of these nodal officers were widely shared.

SHARAT CHANDER
DIRECTOR, SVEEP

Special efforts were made for ensuring participation of centenarian voters, voters aged over 80, and Persons with Disability, during the Assembly Elections in Delhi, in February 20 20.

In the run-up to polling day, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer reached out to all differently-abled voters, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80 years through various media and outreach avenues, informing them of the facilities and administrative arrangements being made to assist them in casting their vote.

Many of these measures have, of course, been part of the Election Commission of India's accessibility initiatives earlier as well, and were used extensively during the Lok Sabha elections of 2019. They include the following:

- Voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80 are to be given priority for entering the polling station, without having to wait in the queue. If necessary, a separate queue will be made for them.
- Seamless access for wheelchairs by providing ramps of adequate slope, wherever required, and clear space for movement within the polling room till the voting compartment.
- Transport facility to be provided for Persons with Disability (PwDs), centenarian voters, and electors aged

more than 80 years, upto Polling Station and back.

- If due to disabilities, an elector is unable to vote on his/her own; the Presiding Officer shall permit the elector to take a companion of not less than 18 years of age to the voting compartment (preferably a relative) for recording the vote on his/her behalf and in accordance with his/her wishes.
- Staff on polling duty including Police personnel, are trained/sensitized about the special needs of the voters with disabilities, courteous behaviour, and for providing necessary support to them. Volunteers are to be deployed at polling locations to assist the voters with disabilities.
- Wheelchairs to be provided at polling stations for the convenience of PwD electors, centenarian voters, and voters above 80 years.

Nodal officers were appointed in all eleven districts of Delhi to assist such voters. The names and contact details of these nodal officers were widely shared.

Pick-and-Drop Facility

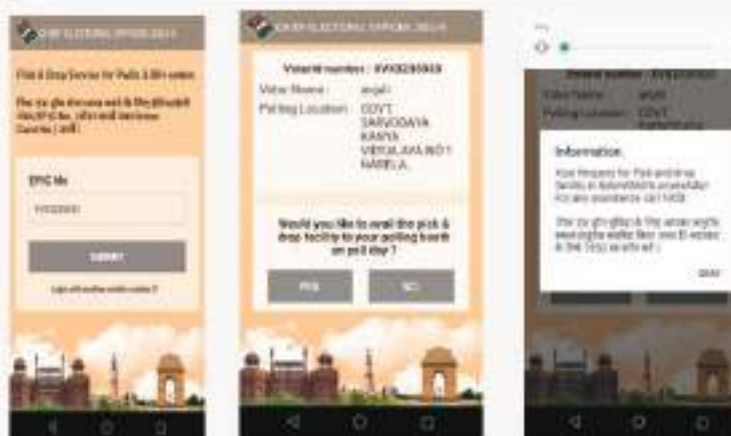
In order to ensure maximum use of the facility of pick and drop being provided to PwD voters, centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, four



REQUEST THROUGH 1950 CALL CENTRE

- On receiving the call, an agent asks the elector for his/her EPIC Number and Mobile Number
- The Agent enters this data on a special link provided on the CEO Website
- An OTP is generated and sent to the elector on his mobile number. The agent asks for this OTP and enters it in the appropriate field
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
 - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950 .Your request ID is....
 - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category

REQUEST THROUGH MOBILE APP



PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Total registered requests	:	719
Facility availed	:	597
Facility refused	:	59
Vote not cast	:	28
Out of station	:	8
Shifted to other places	:	8
Hospitalized	:	4
Expired	:	5
House found locked/untraced	:	10

different mechanisms were put in place to receive such requests. Electors could reach out through:

- The regular call centre number – 1950
- A dedicated pick-drop mobile app
- The website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi
- SMS at a dedicated mobile number

All four channels proved effective in reaching out to the PwDs, centenarian voters and voters aged above 80. A total of 719 requests were received for pick and drop, through the four channels. All those eligible were informed through an SMS alert about the time at which they would be picked up. This SMS alert was sent twice: once, on the eve of polling day, and then, early morning on polling day.

Special App for Monitoring Request Status

A special App was put in place for Block Level Officers and Supervisors to monitor the progress of pick-and-drop on polling day. This enabled them to effectively ensure in real-time that the facility reached the intended beneficiary.

Performance Evaluation

An evaluation of the performance of this facilitation measure reveals a high degree of success, as can be seen from the chart.

Feedback about the facility was taken from 343 voters. As many as 290 voters (nearly 85%), rated it as 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good'.

The arrangements for pick-

and-drop for PwD voters, centenarian voters, and voters above 80 years of age in Delhi, mark the setting of new benchmarks towards Accessible Elections.

Postal Ballots

The Delhi Assembly Elections of 2020 also saw the implementation of a significant facilitation measure in the form of postal ballots. This facility was extended to voters above the age of 80, and PwD electors. All these voters were given the choice of casting votes through postal ballots, at home. Six centenarian voters cast their vote using this facility. In all, 429 PwDs, and 2,257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

Centenarian Voters

An initiative was taken to reach out to, and honour, all centenarian voters. Eighty-two centenarian voters were felicitated during this initiative. They were assigned one Liaison Officer each. The Officer met the centenarian voter before the polling day, and fixed an appointment for polling day. The centenarian was escorted to the polling booth by the Liaison Officer, and assisted for priority voting. Each centenarian voter was felicitated with a bouquet of flowers, and escorted back to his/her residence.

A survey of all centenarian electors – numbering 150 – was undertaken with the help of Bharat Scouts and Guides. Stories were prepared and photographs were taken during the survey. As many as 111 could be successfully reached out to, and 73 of them interacted in detail, recounting their stories in the course of India's journey of democracy.

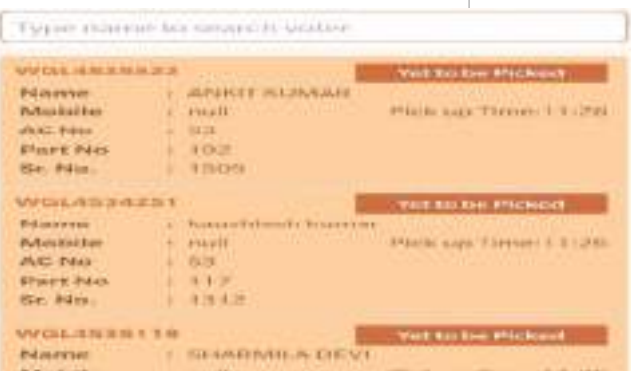
A number of other measures were taken to ensure accessible elections in Delhi. They have been summarised in the table on the facing page.

REQUEST THROUGH CEO WEBSITE



REQUEST THROUGH SMS

- Elector sends an SMS at 7738299899
EPIC <space> EPIC number <space> PICK
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
 - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950. Your request ID is....
 - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category



Civil Society Organisations and State Icons

A number of Civil Society Organisations worked towards making the Delhi elections more accessible.

- The National Association for the Deaf (NAD) played a key role in the preparation of accessible posters, and sensitisation of polling staff.
- The Association of Sign Language Interpreters supported the cause through 80 sign language interpreters on polling day.



- AADI – Action for Ability Development and Inclusion – helped prepare the training material for polling officials, towards conduct of accessible elections.
- The All India Confederation of the Blind prepared several election related documents in Braille, for the benefit of visually impaired voters.
- The Blind Relief Association provided Braille Experts who had verified the Braille Ballot Sheets at the time of printing.
- The Community Empowerment Trust worked towards greater participation of the transgender community in the elections.
- The Centre for Holistic Development helped over 10,000 homeless persons in registration for the elections.
- Sportspersons Rishabh Pant and Manika Batra; para-athletes Ankur Dhama and Neeraj Yadav; radio Jockey Naved Khan, and Kathak dancer Alakananda Dasgupta played a key role in motivating voters through their efforts.

Accessible Election

Election Commission emphasizes that the electoral system be made fully accessible for Persons with Disability (PwD). There are 50471 registered PwD voters in Delhi. Following facilities were provided to PwD voters during Assembly Election-2020 in order to ensure PwD vote in large numbers.

- ◆ **Ramp:-** All the polling station locations were provided with proper ramp facility.
- ◆ **Wheel Chairs:-** 3875 Wheel Chairs were provided for the PwD Electors.
- ◆ **Volunteers:-** Total 9997 volunteers to assist old aged and PwD voters were provided in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, GNCT of Delhi.
- ◆ **Sign Language Interpreters:-** Sign Language Interpreters were provided at the 80 locations with high incidence of Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters. For creating voter awareness amongst the Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters, a video was developed in Indian sign language, and uploaded on social media and website of CEO, Delhi.
- ◆ **Toilet Facility:-** Every location was provided with sufficient toilet facility for male and female voters and accessible toilets for the PwD.
- ◆ **Accessible Posters:-** For Deaf & Hard of Hearing Voters posters in Indian sign language were displayed at all polling stations.
- ◆ **Magnifying Sheet for low vision:-** Magnifying Sheet was made available for low vision voters at each polling station.
- ◆ **Proper Signage:-** Proper signages were put at the polling stations for guidance of the voters.
- ◆ **Braille Facility:-** Braille Voter slips, Braille EPIC, Braille dummy ballot sheet and Braille voter assistance guide were provided to all visually impaired voters.



The Wide Embrace of Electoral Education

Several initiatives were taken by ECI officials in Delhi during the recent elections to build a truly participative democracy in India.

DR. AARTI AGGARWAL
SR CONSULTANT, ECI

Delhi SVEEP Activities

The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation programme, known popularly as SVEEP, is the flagship programme of the Election Commission of India (ECI) for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting electoral literacy in India. In continuing pursuit of its goal to build a truly participative democracy in India by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed electoral choice, several initiatives were taken by ECI officials in Delhi during the recent elections.

TURN AROUND-30

This was an initiative undertaken by the CEO, Delhi, which aimed to turn around the voter turnout in the areas identified

as 'low-voter' turnout areas going into the Lok Sabha election 2019. These included Assembly Constituencies such as Vikaspuri, Matiala, Okhla, Badarpur, Burari, Bawana, Nangloi Jat, Mundka, Rithala, Kirari, Karawal Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Narela, Najafgarh, Deoli, Palam, Badli, Patparganj, Mustafabad, Mehrauli, Dwarka, Ghonda, Laxmi Nagar, Chhatarpur, Kalkaji, Babarpur, Patel Nagar, Timarpur, Rajinder Nagar, and Bijwasan. To achieve maximum awareness in these areas, a plan to organise events on a daily basis in these 30 target spots was put into action from January 11 to February 7, 2020.

Awareness Campaign

The Delhi Election Office conducted several awareness creating methods





including *nukkad natak*, EVM-VVPAT demos, magic shows, quiz shows, motivational slogans, *munadi*, distribution of pamphlets, door-to-door awareness rally, distribution of information on various apps such as PwD App, C-vigil, Voter Helpline App, and Pick & Drop App, among others. Senior election officials also visited these sites for making an appeal to the public to vote in an informed manner.

Morning-walk Demos

Considering the fact that many people go for a morning walk in parks, CEO, Delhi organised EVM/VVPAT awareness and functioning demonstration sessions and voter awareness programmes at various parks in different districts of Delhi on December 20 and December 21, 2019, and succeeded in finding a captive audience. The officers from the Delhi election office visited parks early in the morning and installed their stall with banners and EMM-VVPAT machines. They

also informed the morning walkers about the facilities being provided by the CEO, Delhi to senior citizens and PwD voters during the Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections 2020.

A Patient Hearing

The office of CEO, Delhi, in association with the Director General Health Services (DGHS) of the Government of NCT of Delhi, organised special camps in medical dispensaries, and government and private hospitals. This four-day awareness campaign was conducted between December 27 and December 31, 2019. The prominent hospitals that were a part of this initiative were the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), B.L. Kapur Super Specialty Hospital, Action Balaji Hospital, Max Hospitals and all Delhi Government dispensaries in the capital.

In addition, various banners were installed to sensitise the public in various hospitals and dispensaries in different

“ The officers from the Delhi election office visited parks early in the morning and installed their stall with banners and EMM-VVPAT machines. ”



districts of Delhi. These included N.C. Joshi Hospital, Karol Bagh; Maharishi Valmiki Hospital, Pooth Khurd; the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre; Dada Dev Hospital; and Acharyashree Bhikshu Hospital, among others.

Zoo Logical

A voter awareness campaign was organised at the popular venue – the Delhi Zoo – which included magic shows, children's dance events and various other activities. A group of artists gave a spectacular performance appealing to the spectators to participate actively poll day, i.e., February 8, 2020. The event

was followed by an EVM-VVPAT demo. The public observed the functioning of EVM very minutely and asked various questions that were answered by the election team present at the event.

Making the Most of Malls

On the eve of Christmas, CEO, Delhi aimed to gather the attention of the general public to create awareness for elections. Since the footfall of visitors in malls is high during festivals, various events were organised at the malls in the capital to create awareness amongst the voters and to enrol new voter through registration. Officials, dressed as Santa Claus, were deputed in malls in different areas of Delhi. Games and quizzes were also organised and the Santas distributed gifts to the winners.

The Magic of Democracy

A new initiative for creating voters' awareness was introduced by conducting magic shows in different areas of Central, West and North West districts of Delhi. The District Election Office displayed banners on the theme of elections, while the magician showed tricks, effects and illusions to entertain the public, while appealing to them to cast their vote on February 8, 2020.





Techno-advantages: Webcasting and the Communication App

The synergy between webcasting and the Communication app enabled the CEO and DEOs to better monitor and control the election process on the poll day.

APURV

JT CEO, HARYANA

The benefits of the use of technology in the election process are becoming more and more visible with each passing election. This is exemplified by two technological wonders: 'webcasting' and the Communication app. Here is how they proved crucial during the election process in Haryana.

Webcasting

Webcasting involves live video broadcasting of the polling stations over the Internet. Its objectives include:

- To keep a check on illegal activities such as booth capturing and bogus voting;

- To broadcast and monitor the election process LIVE from a distant polling station; and
- To capture the faces of voters coming to vote at the polling station in a sequence for remote viewing by election officials.

The Communication App

The Communication App is an Android-based mobile app, developed by NIC Hisar, which enables easy communication between various election-related functionaries. Its features include:

- Role-based access to contact numbers of various functionaries.
- Contact information of CEO, DEOs, ROs, AROs, Field Officers, etc.
- Direct calling feature to the concerned officer from mobile app.
- Easy search facility in the mobile app.

Utility in Haryana Assembly Elections 2019

In the recently held General Election to the Haryana Vidhan Sabha 2019, the synergy between webcasting and the Communication app enabled the CEO and DEOs to better monitor and control the election process on the poll day.

Upon detection of any deviation



“ The election process showed clearly how the use of technological innovations can go a long way in strengthening the bedrock of democracy. ”

on the webcast, the CEO/DEOs were able to take immediate corrective steps with the mere push of a button on the Communication app. This allowed them to talk to the concerned Presiding Officer. Subsequently, they could observe remedial action being taken on the webcast in real time.

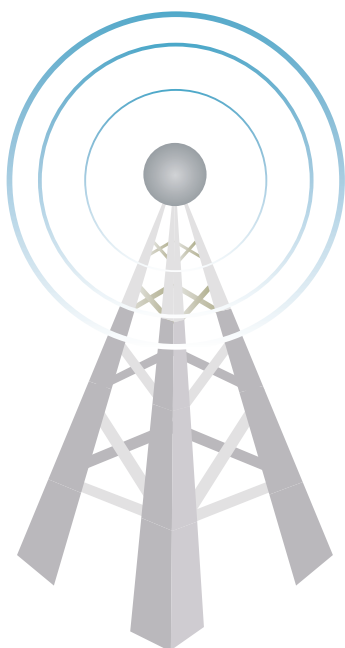
Other significant examples of the invaluable role of these technology initiatives could be seen in the following ways:

- When the Election Commission of India (ECI) visited Chandigarh to review the preparedness for the General Election to the Haryana Vidhan Sabha 2019, some political parties raised the issue of the placement of EVMs (Ballot Units) near the windows of polling stations. The ECI directed that EVMs must not be placed near the windows in polling

stations. Webcasting and the Communication app played an important role in ensuring prompt compliance with these directions. Wherever it was observed on the webcast that the EVM was placed near a window of a polling station, the concerned Presiding Officer was contacted through the Communication app and directed to place EVM away from window. Compliance with such a direction was then viewed on the webcast.

- In one polling station, it was observed through webcasting that there were papers lying on the floor of the polling station. The concerned Presiding Officer was asked, through the Communication app, to remove these, and real-time compliance was monitored through the webcast.
- In a few polling stations, it was observed on the webcast that some person(s) were going along with the voters to the voting compartment and thus violating the secrecy of the vote and maybe even influencing voting. This was viewed very seriously by the higher authorities and the concerned election-related functionaries were immediately admonished. A report was sought from the District Election Machinery and consequently re-poll was ordered by the ECI in such cases.

Thus, the election process showed clearly how the use of technological innovations can go a long way in strengthening the bedrock of democracy, i.e., free and fair elections.





An Unusual Ropeway Of Democracy

With sheer trust and faith, the exercise of hauling the polling officer commenced, with perspiration slowly trickling down the faces at both ends of the ropeway.

F.R. KHARKONGOR
CEO, MEGHALAYA

Electoral democracy is an E2E (Enrolment to Elections) process and effectively culminates on poll day, through a dynamic interplay between the voter and the ballot, a process made wholly possible by the polling team at ground zero – the polling station.

In effect, the polling team acquires an unquestionable centrality and indispensability in elections. You might have seen this in the recent Bollywood movie *Newton*, which positions the polling officer as its chief protagonist, who goes to great lengths and faces insurmountable challenges to ensure that a credible electoral process is in no way undermined or subverted. The polling team is the face, the anchor and the nucleus of elections on the poll day,

and makes it possible for the voter to meaningfully affirm and renew his faith in democracy.

A polling team comprises the Presiding Officer, the First Polling Officer, Second Polling Officer, Third Polling Officer and Fourth Polling Officer. All four polling officers have critical duties to ensure that the essential protocols of voting, such as confirming an elector's name in the voters' list, inking a voter's finger with indelible ink, and releasing the ballot on a Control Unit to enable a voter to exercise his choice by pressing his preferred button on the Ballot Unit, all remain sacrosanct exercises to be fulfilled in a flawless and time-bound manner that cannot be compromised.

First polling officer transported across the precipice



One Poll Day in Meghalaya

Polling Party Welfare was evident in substantial measure in the recent 2019 Parliamentary Elections in Meghalaya. Elections at the best of times in Meghalaya remains an arduous and challenging exercise due to the difficult terrain, twisty footpaths, deep gorges, narrow hill passes, slippery slopes, tricky streams, deep jungles, torrential rain and

adverse stony paths that are not for the faint-hearted.

One instance of triumph against such trials occurred in the Rangphang Polling Station under the Mawkyntse Assembly Constituency in East Khasi Hills District under the Shillong Parliamentary Constituency. The polling station is located at a sheer drop, at a descent hundreds of feet below, and overlooked by a series of steep, jagged cliffs. The last motorable point at the summit perches as a formidable overhang over the polling station. The only access to the village is through an undulating, slippery and rocky track strewn with sharp stones and rubble that challenge and deplete both stamina and morale, involving a foot march and a trek of not less than four hours to and fro, while carrying essential election-related materials and the precious EVMs.

It was amid these conditions that the First Polling Officer, LumlangTyngshain, a relatively young man, though an experienced veteran of previous elections, and an avid trekker, suffered a sudden bout of life-threatening palpitations and fever that could not be ignored. Seconds later, an SOS alert about his medical condition was received via the Police VHF set, by the Zonal Officer, who had all the while kept a steady eye on the polling party from above as they negotiated their way down, faded from sight and disappeared into the enveloping mist below.

How the Day Was Saved

Springing into action, with not a moment to lose in case of possible complications, the Zonal Officer quickly spotted a long unused ropeway carrier line that was intermittently used by the village residents to ferry goods from their village below to the hills above. A message was urgently transmitted to the polling team below via the police VHF, with clear instructions to gently place the ailing polling officer on the rickety ropeway and attempt to



A news clipping about the incident

quickly transport him across on it to the waiting zonal team above, precarious and impossible though it appeared.

With nothing but sheer trust and faith, the exercise of hauling the polling officer commenced, with beads of perspiration and trepidation slowly trickling down the faces at both ends of the ropeway. The mist added to the growing uncertainty. Moments passed, which seemed like hours, and finally to everyone's collective relief, the ropeway with the sick polling officer appeared. Instantly, it was guided to the landing station where the zonal officer quickly supervised the delicate onward dispatch of the officer to the Civil Hospital in Shillong, a few hours' drive away. Without wasting time, a replacement quickly jumped into the dangling ropeway, which descended into the gathering mist to join the anxious polling team waiting below to ensure that the 346 (169 male and 177 female) voters of Rangphlang were not kept waiting in the exercise of their franchise, come what may...

Undoubtedly, it is through such dedicated acts that the often fearless torchbearers of democracy soldier on in many remote, unnamed corners and from the margins, despite untold challenges on adverse frontiers, and provide the literal connecting thread to democracy.





Puducherry: Celebrating 70 Years of Indian Elections

Puducherry was the first and only Union Territory to be born with a Legislative Assembly, until 1992, when the NCT of Delhi was provided with a Legislative Assembly.

SHURBIR SINGH
CEO, PUDUCHERRY

While India celebrates its 70 years of Indian Elections, a small town on the Coromandel coast, about 140 kilometres to the south of Chennai celebrates 56 years of its elections as a part of India.

A Peep into the Past

Pondicherry was colonised by France during the last quarter of the 17th century. In 1674, Francois Martin was appointed as the first Governor of Puducherry and built Puducherry into a flourishing port-town. Subsequently, Karaikal on the Coromandel coast, Mahe on the Malabar coast, Yanam at the mouth of the River Godavari and Chandannagar (earlier Chandranagore) near Kolkata were brought under the French colonial rule in India.

After almost 300 years of French occupation, consequent to referendum,

Chandranagore was ceded to India in 1951. Soon after, based on another referendum that took place at Khizur village on October 18, 1954, Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam were united with the rest of India following an agreement reached between the Governments of India and France vide the De Facto Merger on November 1, 1954. Subsequently, these regions were ceded to the Indian Union by the Treaty of Cession signed at New Delhi on May 28, 1956 by the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, and His Excellency Count Ostorog on behalf of the Republic of France.

However, it was 1962 that was a landmark year in the history of this Territory. The Treaty of Cession was ratified by the French Parliament on July 27 that year. On August 16, 1962 (De Jure Transfer), the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Jean



Paul Garnier, French Ambassador in India, exchanged the Instruments of Ratification under which France ceded to India full sovereignty of the Territory. Subsequently, Pondicherry was included as a Union Territory in the first schedule to the Constitution, by the Constitution (14th Amendment) Act, 1962. The Parliament enacted the Government of Union Territories Act 1963 which provided for a thirty-member Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers to the Union Territory of Puducherry. By subsequent Constitutional Amendments, Puducherry was allotted one seat each in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.

The Union Territory Puducherry has the unique distinction of being born with a legislative assembly and was the only UT in India to have had this distinction till the NCT of Delhi was provided with a Legislative Assembly, after three decades, in 1992.

The coastal town of Puducherry with its enclaves of Karaikal (in Tamil Nadu), Mahe (in Kerala) and Yanam (in Andhra Pradesh), together with French influence, symbolises a cultural fusion.

Even in ancient India, there are examples of a democratic way of living although political democracy did not exist in its full form. The Uttaramerur Inscription dating back to 920 CE during the reign of Parantaka Chola, details the election rules and processes of the early medieval Indian 'Kudavolai system'. Elections were a part of Indian culture from long ago.

The Colours of Democracy

Fast-forward to celebrating 70 years of Indian elections, numerous competitions were held as a part of awareness activities in Puducherry. A painting competition was held exclusively to motivate two groups: one was the students of schools and colleges (of the Electoral Literacy Clubs), and the other for the Persons with

Disabilities (PwDs), who constitute a special section of the society.

The competition for the students was held in the central park of the town, known as 'Bharathi Poonga', a very popular location close to the beach. An extended painting canvas of about 150 metres was tied around the fence of the park and slots were allocated to the participants. About 60 teams took part in this painting contest. The competition commenced at 10 in the morning and went on till 4 in the evening. The themes which had to be depicted in paintings included 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy', 'Getting Registered', 'Accessible Elections: Every Vote Counts the Same', 'Integrity of the Electoral Process through the Use of EVM & VVPAT' and 'Ethical and Informed Voting'. The event, complemented by the big, lush green trees of the park, was a huge success as it attracted large crowds including tourists.

The competition for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) was held in Fathima Higher Secondary School on the same day. Around 200 PwDs participated in the contest. The objective of the competition was to bring a far-reaching awareness among the public. The participation of the PwDs was an added highlight to emphasise the idea of inclusiveness. The prizewinners were felicitated at the State-level function of the National Voters' Day 2020.

These initiatives helped to enhance people's appreciation of the world's largest democracy and the motivation to preserve it by making informed choices in voting, ultimately culminating in a robust democracy.



Painting competition for PwDs





PollStar: A New Star in the Universe of Election Management

An online portal has been developed for polling personnel to go through all important aspects of conducting elections at the polling station.

DR. AARIZ AFTAB
CEO, WEST BENGAL

Conducting elections is always fraught with challenges. Be it the Returning Officer at the Constituency level, or the Assistant Returning Officer or the Sector Officer or even the Presiding and Polling Officer, everyone has to work under tremendous pressure to give one's best. Nothing can be left to circumstances; nothing can be kept pending. All the issues are to be addressed, meticulously and on time. The most challenging assignment, albeit for a brief period, is at the polling station. The voters are there in queue, polling agents of the candidates are keeping vigil over what all are being done by the polling team. There is no room for complacency; there is no room for mistakes.

The Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers for a polling station work as members of a unified team and they have to be extremely cautious so that no impurity creeps in during the course of discharge of their duties. The Returning Officers put a team of trainers in place to train the large group of polling personnel mobilised for conduct of election at the

polling stations. With time there have been substantial changes in the training delivery system. There was a time when people in large numbers used to be trained together in auditoria and cinema halls in a one-way delivery mode. With introduction of the Electronic Voting Machines this has changed. Nowadays training programmes for polling personnel are conducted in smaller batches, keeping space for hands-on sessions on the voting machines. However, election processes do have a rigour of details. We now have the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines to provide an opportunity for the voters to personally know that the vote they have cast has gone to the candidate of their choice. Operations of VVPAT machines have to be clearly understood, not just theoretically but also by knowing how they work in practice.

Despite all the premonitions of facing serious difficulties at the polling stations if due exposure is not given, the training sessions often become a difficult place to learn. The trainers try their level best



Training programmes for polling personnel are conducted in smaller batches, keeping space for hands-on sessions on the voting machines.



and usually the delivery is good. But due to paucity of time and a lot of things to do and learn within a short span of time, learning often remains incomplete. The Handbook for the Presiding Officers is available for the Presiding Officers and the First Polling Officers only. Even those who have the handbook, often do not read the book due to its sheer volume.

To address all these issues, this online course has been designed. One can do the course in multiple sessions and sitting in one's drawing room or study. This is available to the mobile phone users as well. The most important feature of this course is its availability for repeated use. It works as a repository. One can go back to the resources from time to time and refresh one's memory. One will find brief descriptions of the processes associated with the conduct of election at the polling stations and the preparatory activities. It features such a way that one can have the basic training materials for the training of the Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers with supporting texts, resources and video documents. The course has been designed in seven modules covering the essentials from the date of receiving the appointment as a Presiding/ Polling Officer to the delivery of polled EVM and other materials at the distribution centre. The modules have texts, video, reference materials and a set of multiple-choice type questions. One has to complete one module and respond to the questions correctly before moving to the next module. The course can be taken at any place where one can access the Internet.

The primary target group for this course consists of the Presiding and Polling Officers. Although the Sector Officers and other senior officers associated with elections have their umpteen other responsibilities, on the poll day everything revolves around the polling stations. Naturally, this course is important for those officers as well. Then there are the Master Trainers. On them lies the responsibility of taking the Presiding and Polling Officers through the

On April 8, 2019, Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal, Dr. Aariz Aftab formally launched PollStar, an online portal developed by the DEO, Kolkata North for polling personnel to go through all important aspects of conducting elections at the polling station.

Available online for all intending users, the website is an interesting innovation of the district. Training content is organised in 7 different modules and after each module there are multiple questions to check the progress of the learner. As additional support, video and print resources have been provided. The books can also be downloaded for reference.

labyrinth of poll-day activities. The course is meant for them as well. They should be able to refresh their memories, hone their skills in training delivery and fall back upon the resources from time to time as reference. Finally, the polling agents set up by the candidates are supposed to keep watch over the voting process at the polling stations. They can also use this course for better understanding. The portal was launched by Dr. Aariz Aftab, the Chief Electoral Officer of the State, and widely used by the polling personnel, not only of the district but also all over the State.

In addition to supporting training, the portal has a specific web-GIS section where geo-tagged information on all the polling station locations is provided. One can identify the polling station on the map, get some basic electoral information and locate the building by following Google Maps. When one accesses this, a formal route chart becomes somewhat redundant.





Journey of Indian Elections since Independence (3)

Story of Third General Elections in India, 1962

S.D. SHARMA

SENIOR FELLOW, ECI

Journey of Indian Elections since Independence'

aims at sharing with the readers this rich experience through a series of articles to cover the seventeen General Elections to the Lok Sabha, the evolution of the Indian electoral system to match the emerging issues and challenges that have contributed to democratic consolidation in a sustained manner in the largest democracy of the world. Experience of the First and Second General Elections was shared with the readers in the last two issues of 'My Vote Matters'. In this article I propose to share with the readers the experiences of the Third General Election.

For the third time in the history of independent India, General Elections were simultaneously held all over the country for reconstituting the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of States and were completed according to plan. The mammoth

electorate comprising 21.8 crore voters was called upon to go to the polls to elect their representatives to the legislatures between the February 16 and 25, 1962. The fact that it did so in a peaceful and orderly fashion and that the elections were brought to a successful completion, without any serious hitch anywhere, is sufficient testimony not only to the political stability of India and the efficiency of its electoral system, but even more significantly to the faith it has in parliamentary democracy and free elections.

► The Constituencies

The interregnum between the Second and Third General Elections did not witness any major changes of the scale that preceded the Second General Elections in the political map of India. The changes included the bifurcation of Gujarat and Maharashtra, representation for Goa, Daman and Diu besides Dadra and Nagar Haveli and the abolition of multimember constituencies.

The Bombay Reorganization Act was passed by the

Parliament in April 1960 and the two new States, Maharashtra and Gujarat, came into existence on the first of May. Representation of the two states to the House of the People was fixed by the Act at 44 and 22 respectively. There were changes in the strength of Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council also in these States.

Another constitutional change which affected the strength of a Legislative Assembly and the House of the People came as a result of The Naga Hills—Tuensang Area Act, 1957. Consequently, special representation was provided for the new Part B tribal area by an amendment of the First Schedule to the Representation of the People Act, 1950. In place of one seat allotted to the North East Frontier Tract and the Naga Tribal Area in the House of the People, two seats were allotted; one to the North East Frontier Tract and the other to the Naga Hills—Tuensang Area, and both these seats were to be filled through nomination by the President.

Accession of the former

Portuguese territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli to the Union of India on August 11, 1961 and the integration of Goa, Daman and Diu on December 20, 1961 were respectively provided for in the Tenth and Twelfth Amendments of the Constitution as Union Territories (UTs). Due representation to each of these UTs was given in the House of the People provisionally by nomination of the President.

► **Managing Two-member Constituencies: Challenges**

Managing two-member constituencies posed problems both for the candidates as well as the Administration. The candidates, irrespective of the fact whether they contested election on a party ticket or as independents, had to cover double the area, canvass twice the number of electors and incur twice the expense in the process, as compared to the candidates contesting single-member constituencies. While in case of party candidates, these difficulties were to some extent mitigated by the fact of there being two of them working jointly in the field, independent candidates in a two-member constituency were always worse off. With about 8 lakh voters on an average, a two-member parliamentary constituency spread over two to three districts posed serious challenges in managing campaign expenditure and as such appeared to be against the concept of level playing field and fairness in elections.

Administratively also, the two-member constituencies were difficult to manage. The law did not permit cumulative

voting but nothing prevented a voter from putting both the ballot papers given to him (under the then balloting system) in the ballot box of the same candidate instead of two different candidates of his choice. As per extant law, in such cases the two ballot

though the matter was set at rest by the Supreme Court through a constitution bench judgment in *V. V. Giri v. Sridhar Dora*, 21 E.L.R.188. However, the final position was settled after abolition of two-member constituencies, extension of reservations under the

The mammoth electorate comprising 21.8 crore voters was called upon to go to the polls to elect their representatives to the legislatures between the February 16 and 25, 1962. The fact that it did so in a peaceful and orderly fashion and that the elections were brought to a successful completion, without any serious hitch anywhere, is sufficient testimony not only to the political stability of India and the efficiency of its electoral system, but even more significantly, to the faith it has in parliamentary democracy and free elections.

papers would count as only one valid vote with the result that the Returning Officer's task increased substantially. He had to meticulously scrutinise the serial number of every single ballot paper in every ballot box and reject one ballot paper out of the two with the same serial number. Further, in many places the candidates were deliberately misleading the electors by asking them to waste their precious votes in this manner. Reservations also posed a challenge in two-member constituencies

constitutional provisions and finalizing the arrangements under the new dispensation.

► **Abolition of Two-member Constituencies: Reshaping of Political Map of India**

The Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act in January 1961 was a major step that altered the shape of a number of constituencies in the country, both for the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. Consequent to the legislation, each such constituency was

divided into two single-member constituencies. The decision also meant, as a consequence, a change in the pattern of filling the reserved seats. The task of dividing each one of these constituencies into two compact and convenient single-member constituencies and deciding in which of them the seat should be reserved for the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes was entrusted to the Election Commission. The delimitation work which the Election Commission was thus required to do in 1960 and 1961 practically on the eve of the general elections was quite considerable and took much of its time. The Election Commission's proposals for the division of constituencies were formulated separately for each State and published in the *Gazette of India*, the official gazette of the State and two newspapers in the regional language of the State. Along with the proposals, the Commission also published a notice inviting objections and suggestions in relation to those proposals by a specified date. The publication was done on the following dates between March 15 and June 2, 1961. The task of subsequent public hearings, formal revision and the Authenticated copies of the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1961 sent by the Commission to the Central and State Governments on December 7 and the Order was laid before the House of the People on December 8, 1961. The completion of the gigantic exercise was marked by a clear political map of India in

terms of a total of 494 single-member constituencies for the House of People or the Lok Sabha with 387 General, 76 reserved for Scheduled Castes and 31 reserved for the Scheduled Tribes.

► Electoral Machinery

The electoral machinery for preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of General Election 1962 was practically the same as in case of the second General Election. The Election Commission of India was assisted by three Deputy Election Commissioners at the Headquarters. Each State had a Chief Electoral Officer, appointed by the ECI in consultation with the respective State government, as head of the electoral machinery. Subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the ECI, he was charged with the responsibility of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections in the State. Every Chief Electoral Officer is assisted by

a deputy and provided with a secretariat staff the strength of that varied from State to State. Prior to every general election, the staff was augmented on a temporary basis.

For each assembly constituency, there is an electoral registration officer (ERO) for preparation and revision of the electoral roll for the constituency. Until 1959, the claims for inclusion of names and objections to names already included in the draft electoral rolls were disposed of by the specially appointed revising authorities. The law was amended in that year and the work of deciding claims and objections was entrusted to the registration officers themselves unless the work relating to claims and objections was heavy. In all 1,017 EROs and 1958 AEROs were appointed in 1962, as against 1,130 and 1,116 respectively in 1957. Further, there were in all 1,602 Returning Officers and 4,499 Assistant Returning Officers

The Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act in January 1961 was a major step that altered the shape of a number of constituencies in the country, both, for the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. Consequent to the legislation, each of such constituencies was divided into two single-member constituencies. The decision also meant, as a consequence, a change in the pattern of filling the reserved seats.

in 1962 as against 1,003 Returning Officers and 1,260 Assistant Returning Officers in 1957.

► Electoral Roll

The law relating to registration of electors was amended in 1958 and again in 1960. These amendments of the RP Act, 1950 were aimed at improving the procedure for the registration of electors and to facilitate proper maintenance of electoral rolls. Following are the salient amendments:

- The liberal definition of 'ordinary residence' as originally provided in the Act was exploited by many electors to get registered at two or three places. Therefore the law was amended providing that mere ownership or possession of a dwelling house in a constituency would not be sufficient to constitute ordinary residence in that constituency.
- The qualifying reference date for revision of electoral rolls was changed from March 1 to January 1. This expedited the revision of electoral rolls in most States and made it possible for the electoral registration officers to complete the revision and reprinting of rolls well before the end of the calendar year.
- The scope of the law was broadened to empower the ERO to the effect on an application or on his own motion to delete entries relating to persons who were either dead or had left the constituency during the currency of the roll.

- A new section 31 was inserted in 1958, and its scope enlarged in 1960. This amendment made it a punishable offence for any person to make a false statement or declaration in connection with the preparation, revision or correction of an electoral roll, or in connection with the inclusion or exclusion of any entry in a roll.
- The system of separate authorities for inclusion of names and disposal of claims and objections was done away with. The ERO was authorised to perform both functions by amending Section 28 of the Act and the rules.
- ECI designated sub-divisional officers as EROs.
- Provision for Appellate Authorities was made under the 1960 Amendment to the Act.
- Consequent to the amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 as mentioned above, the Representation of People (Preparation of Electoral Rolls), 1956 was thoroughly revised and replaced by the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Preparation and maintenance of complete and accurate electoral rolls are essential pre-requisites for conduct of elections. After the general elections of 1957, the Commission directed that electoral rolls should be intensively revised with H2H survey in a phased manner and as such the task was taken up

in a planned manner. It was also stipulated that during 1961, the year immediately preceding general elections of 1962, revision would be non-intensive in respect of the entire rural area but intensive in respect of (a) urban areas, (b) areas where there was a floating labour population or where displaced persons were congregated, (c) areas to or from where migration was known to have taken place, and (d) service voters.

In 1961, however, it was felt that the electoral rolls revised intensively in 1958 and summarily in subsequent years were not sufficiently accurate for use during the forthcoming elections and it was accordingly decided that, wherever practicable, some of those rolls also should be intensively revised during 1961.

To facilitate intensive revision, the Commission devised a special form for enumeration of the electors in each dwelling house or tenement. These forms provided the basic record for the preparation of electoral rolls and were useful to the registration officers in exercising a proper check over the enumerators and looking into complaints from the public. The exercise had its own issues and challenges that included voter apathy, and time factor versus volume in disposal of claims and objections. Section 23 of the RP Act permits filing of application for inclusion of names even after notification of elections, but such applications had to be filed before the CEO of the state. The Commission noted that, as a matter of

finality, the last date for inclusion should be the last date of filing of nominations and the applications could be filed only before the ERO, The Commission also laid down the guidelines for the frequency and the nature of the revision of rolls, depending on necessity and obliterating avoidable expenditure.

As per Rule 4 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, the Roll is prepared in the language decided by the Commission. Under the general directions of the Commission, Rolls should be prepared in regional language. However,

Polling stations should be set up in a manner that ordinarily no voter has to travel more than 3 miles to cast his or her vote.

depending on the local needs, the Roll was printed in a second language also as decided by the Commission. Accordingly, Rolls for some constituencies in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Mysore and West Bengal were printed only in English. In the UT of Delhi, the Roll was prepared in three languages: Hindi, Urdu and English.

Rolls for the members of the Armed Forces, including their wives, was prepared de novo on the basis of fresh declarations in respect of the constituency in which he would be residing if he were not in

service; or on the basis of the contingent place of residence.

The total number of electors stood at 21,82,16,585 at the end of the exercise. This was 49.91% of the total population that stood at a massive total of 43,72,25,459

Political Parties and the Symbols

In the absence of requisite data bases, the Commission had taken a liberal view of the recognition of political parties, their status and allotment of symbols. However, by the time of the Second General Election, sufficient data was available on party-wise votes polled. The Commission evolved and adopted a yardstick that the party's candidates must have polled at least 3 per cent of the total valid votes at the parliamentary elections to secure recognition as a national party, and the same criterion was used at the assembly elections in a State for recognition as a State-level party. The logic was further examined especially in the wake of performance at the Second General Elections. The Commission felt that it would be more realistic and rational to recognise parties on a statewide basis after taking into account the electoral support each party had in a State in parliamentary elections as well as assembly elections. It was found that the various political parties that contested those elections would have been entitled to recognition for the purpose of reservation of symbol in the States and Union Territories. Finally, 16 parties were recognised for the

purpose of allotting reserved symbols to their candidates at the Parliamentary and Legislative Assembly elections. Nine free symbols were also provided. (See Annexure I). The Commission issued a circular to all recognised political parties on December 16, 1961 followed by a press note, detailing the manner of sponsoring candidates.

Polling Stations

The Commission revised and consolidated its previous instructions and issued them in September, 1960 with a view to completing the task of finalizing the list of polling stations well on time. The Commission suggested that the optimum number of polling stations to be provided for a constituency should be arrived at by dividing the total number of electors in the constituency by 900. However, in the larger cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai), Delhi and Madras (now Chennai), the average was reduced to 800. The general instruction was given that the number of electors assigned to a polling station should not exceed 1,200. Comprehensive guidelines were issued on the subject. Some of the important guidelines are as below:

- Polling stations should be set up in a manner that ordinarily no voter has to travel more than 3 miles to cast his or her vote.
- In urban areas not more than four polling stations, and in rural areas not more than two polling stations, should be located in the same building in order

to avoid overcrowding and confusion, and to maintain peace and order.

- Where a separate polling station has to be set up for women, the polling station for men voters of a particular polling area should be located in the same building. Where two polling stations are set up in the same compound or building and the numbers of men and women voters are more or less equal, there should be no objection to allotting one of them for men and the other for women.
- As far as possible polling stations should be located in schools (Government or aided) and other Government or semi-Government institutions. The location of polling stations in private buildings or premises should be avoided, but where this becomes unavoidable, the consent of the owner should be obtained in writing. It should also be ensured after the filing of nominations at the election that the owner is not a candidate nor a known sympathiser or worker of any of the candidates at the election.
- No polling station should be located in police stations, hospitals, temples or places of religious significance.

Draft lists of the polling stations were published for inviting objections and/or comments by a specific date.

GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1962: DESIGNS OF SYMBOLS

Annexure I



Copies were also provided to the political parties for the purpose. A copy of the list was supplied to each of the recognised political parties in the State and to sitting members concerned. Thereafter, the concerned Returning Officers discussed his proposals with party representatives and the sitting members at a meeting, amended the provisional list of polling stations where necessary and sent it through the Chief Electoral Officer to

the Election Commission for approval under the law. The finally approved list was then published in the constituency and copies were supplied free of cost to all the contesting candidates. The Returning Officer for a parliamentary constituency was not required to prepare a separate list of polling stations. He/she merely put together the approved lists for the several assembly constituencies comprising the parliamentary constituency and

notified it as the approved list.

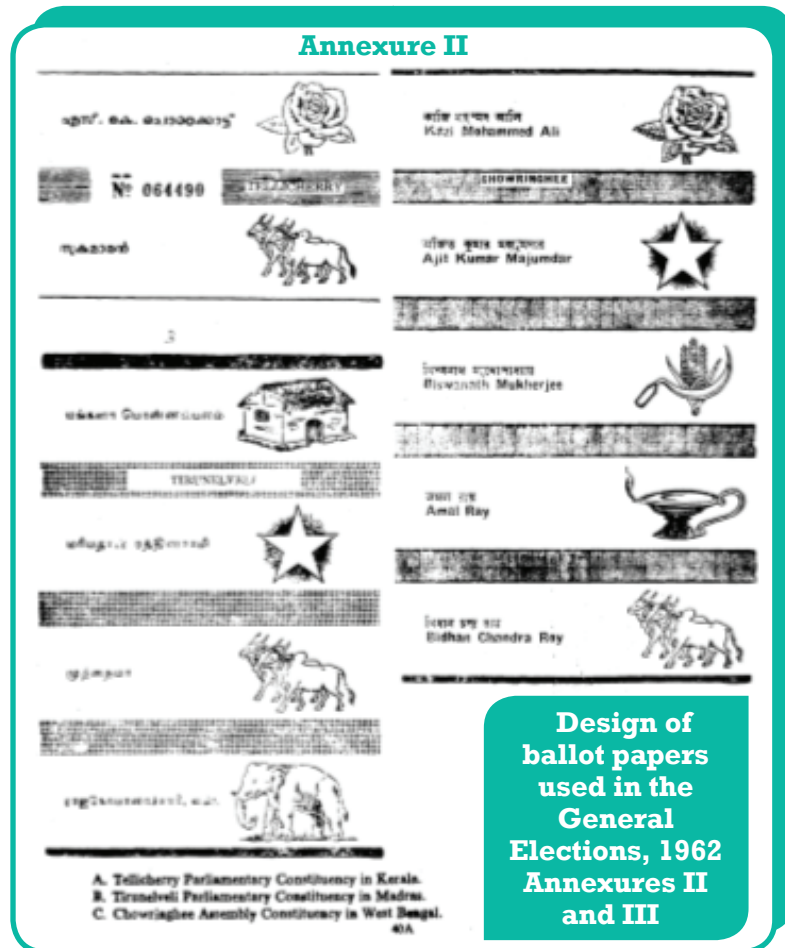
The total number of polling stations set up for the 1962 General Elections for all the constituencies, both for parliamentary and assembly constituencies in India (excluding Jammu and Kashmir) for the Third General Elections was 238,031 as against 220,478 provided in 1957. In all, 15,115 temporary structures at a cost of Rs 6,29,433 were erected as polling stations. In the 1957 Elections 27,985 temporary structures were erected, at a cost of Rs 17,85,435.

Election Materials

Procurement and distribution of materials and equipment for the conduct of the poll is one of the key components of the electoral process. A wide variety of articles, all essential, have to be collected in requisite quantities, made up into parcels for the use of each polling party and kept ready for distribution at the designated point. In many States the same polling party conducted the poll at two or even three polling stations in succession. The most important of the materials include ballot boxes, ballot papers, paper seals and indelible ink.

Ballot Boxes

The existing stock of ballot boxes was sufficient except in Manipur, where the balloting system of voting was continued. 2,100 ballot boxes were transferred from Tripura where the marking system of voting had been adopted. However, during the course of the elections, it came to the notice of the Commission



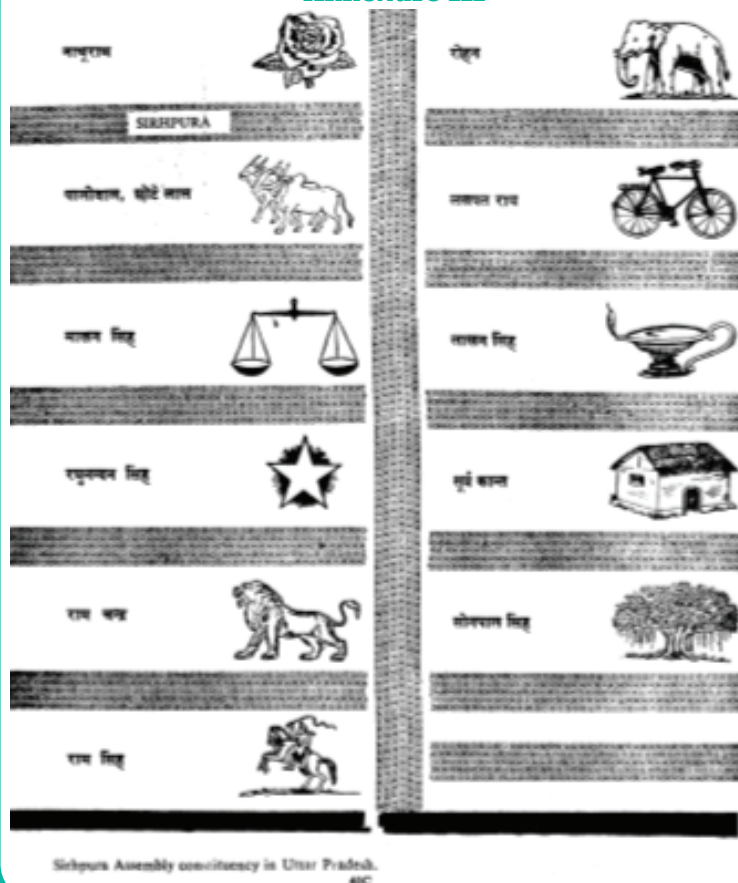
that the Allwyn type of ballot boxes had a mechanical defect and could be opened without breaking the seal by treating the box in a special way. The Commission recommended to the Government of India and the States concerned that the Allwyn type of ballot boxes should be replaced by the transfer of Godrej boxes from the surplus States.

Ballot Paper

As a result of the introduction of the marking system of voting adopted in the country except in the Union Territory of Manipur and a few other constituencies, the ballot paper showing

the names of the contesting candidates and the symbol allotted to each of them had to be printed within the short period between the withdrawal of candidatures and the date of poll. Reliable private presses willing to undertake the work were very few and one could not be absolutely sure of timely delivery. It was decided that the work should be handled by the State printing presses in spite of the centralisation of work involved. Zonal meetings were held by the CEC with concerned officials and the job explained properly to the concerned people. Numbering of the ballot papers was a difficult area.

Annexure III



The ECI had to intervene and arrange the machines for needy States with the help of DGS & D. The machines were airlifted and the task completed on time.

A vast amount of if paper was required and that too well on time. The Commission obtained the estimates from all the States and placed the consolidated order with Titagarh Paper Mills through the Chief Controller of Printing and Stationery. As the Lok Sabha and State Legislature elections were to be held simultaneously, two different shades of the paper were used: white for the Lok Sabha and pink for elections to the State Assemblies. There was

a general complaint that the quality of paper was not up to the mark. The Commission directed that the quality of paper should improve before the next general election. A total quantity of 710 tonnes of paper was purchased at a cost of Rs 11,55,800.

The design, size, specifications and appearance of the ballot paper were prescribed by the Commission. The size of the ballot paper varied directly in proportion to the number of contestants. In case the number of candidates was more than 10, the candidates were accommodated in two rows. Annexures II and III carry images of the ballot papers. Most of the States were able to manage this unusually 'heavy and unaccustomed' work well within the time. Difficulties were faced in UP with more than 7.5 crore papers to be printed at a single Government Press at Lucknow. Distribution of the ballot papers was achieved well in time.

The paper seals were printed afresh with serial numbers. Old unnumbered paper seals were also utilized as a measure of avoiding wastage, but only after numbering with hand machines. Marking of the left forefinger with indelible ink, a statutory requirement, was carried out in previous elections by making a mark on the base of the forefinger. However, in the General Elections of 1962, the mark was made just above the root of the nail on the skin. In all, 372,923 phials of indelible ink were supplied to the various States at a total cost of Rs 2,94,607.

Nomination of Candidates and Uncontested Returns

There were in all 2,763 candidates who filed nominations for 494 parliamentary seats. 35 nominations were rejected, 744 candidates withdrew from the contest. Three candidates were elected unopposed. Consequently, there were 1,985 candidates left in the contest as compared to 1,507 candidates in 1957 elections to the Lok Sabha.

► Election Programme

The election programme was scheduled for states other than Kerala, Punjab, the then UTs of Manipur and Tripura from January 13 to March 31 in the states of Punjab and Kerala and from January 20 to March 31 in the then UTs of Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. This programme reflected a considerable improvement, both in respect of the overall time taken for the elections and the number of days taken in each State or Union Territory for poll. By March 2, the date fixed for the completion of assembly elections and all results except those for two constituencies in Punjab, were declared, and by March 3, the results of the elections in 485 out of 494 parliamentary constituencies were announced. Simultaneous general elections were thus completed in seven weeks' time. The week commencing on Sunday – February 18, and ending on Sunday – February 25, was the polling week throughout the country and during this period provision was made for more than 98% of the entire electorate to go to their assigned polling stations to exercise their franchise.

► Election Campaigning

In November, 1961 the Commission evolved a scheme of broadcasting a roster to political parties during the campaign period in consultation with All India Radio. Slots for central broadcast and state broadcasts were developed to provide equitable timeframe level of recognition of the parties. However, in the absence of agreement among

the political parties, the scheme had to be abandoned.

Most candidates managed their election campaign only after completion of the initial formalities of nomination etc. Campaigns usually comprised public meetings, processions, village to village campaigning in rural areas, posters, pamphlets etc. Systematic appeal to electors to vote or refrain, on the grounds of caste, race, community or religion was interpreted as a corrupt practice under the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The 1961 amendment of the RP Act further enlarged the scope of this corrupt practice and undesirable methods of canvassing were discouraged. Anonymous posters and pamphlets were also prohibited. Hiring or procuring of vehicles for movement of voters to polling stations was also declared a corrupt practice.

► Code of Conduct: An Innovation in Elections

In Kerala, prior to the General Election in 1960, steps were taken by the administration to evolve a code of conduct for political parties. The code was discussed in a detailed fashion on important aspects of electioneering like meetings and processions, speeches and slogans, posters and placards, and approved by the representatives of the leading parties of the State at a meeting especially convened for the purpose by the Administration. The code was subsequently applied during the 1960 elections in Kerala. The Commission circulated the code to all the political

parties in India and the State Governments for acceptance by all parties. The code was accepted and thereafter, it became an integral part of the elections in India.

► The Poll: Shift from Balloting System to Marking of Ballot Paper

The system of voting followed in the first two general elections was the balloting system, but in the 1962 General Elections the system of marking of the ballot paper was adopted. Under the balloting system followed earlier, a separate ballot box with a pictorial symbol was allotted for each candidate. These ballot boxes were placed in a screened polling compartment where the voter went with his ballot paper and inserted it in the ballot box bearing the symbol of the candidate of his choice, without making any mark whatsoever on the ballot paper. This system was simple and worked well in the first two general elections, but it had its drawbacks. Every polling station had to handle a large number of ballot boxes. Candidates carried an unreasonable suspicion about the possibility of tampering with the ballot boxes. A dishonest voter could even take away the ballot paper given to him instead of inserting it into any of the ballot boxes.

The Commission therefore carried out experiments and pilot runs with the 'marking system' of voting at a number of bye-elections held after 1957. It was successfully tried out on an extensive scale at the general election to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala in 1960.

Voter Photo Identity Cards

The practice was started, after the 1957 General Election, as an experimental measure in Calcutta South- West Parliamentary Constituency. Provision was made in Section 61 of the RP Act and the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. However, there were serious constraints and challenges the project faced. The following factors are noteworthy:

- An appreciable number of women electors refused to be photographed even by women photographers.
- A Substantial number of persons were not available at residence when the officials visited households.
- The project is time-consuming; only 2,13,600 electors were photographed in 10 months' time;
- In Calcutta alone, it would carry enormous costs of Rs 25 lakhs and as such not sustainable.
- The Commission, after a careful examination, concluded that it would not be practical to operate the system satisfactorily.

In the light of the above decisions, the project could not be furthered.

The marking system required preparation of a distinct ballot paper for each election, containing the names of the contesting candidates, and (for the benefit of the illiterate voters) the facsimiles of their allotted symbols. The voter had to affix the mark with an inked rubber stamp on or near the symbol of the candidate of his choice inside a screened voting compartment, bring out the ballot paper after folding it, and insert it in the common ballot box kept in full view of the presiding officer and others present at the polling station. This system was an innovation and it eliminated possibilities of malpractices hitherto noted. Old balloting system was allowed certain constituencies especially in backward and

remote areas.

The revised Conduct of Elections Rules promulgated in 1961 provided for the marking system of voting as well as the balloting system.

▶ Polling Parties and Training

Polling parties normally consisted of one presiding officer and five polling officers. One of the polling officers was designated as assistant presiding officer. The presiding officer and assistant presiding officers were generally government servants with a salary of not less than Rs 150 per month such as headmasters, lecturers, supervisors etc. Duties were assigned to each of the polling officers. Training was imparted to all the presiding officers and

assistant presiding officers. They provided guidance to other polling staff at the polling station. Specific duties were assigned to all polling officers for smooth conduct of the poll.

▶ Other important Guidance for Poll Day

The phrase twenty-four hours before the date of commencement of the poll” used in Section 126 of the RP Act was not clear to the layman. The Commission recommended proper interpretation to the following effect:

“No person shall convene, hold or attend any public meeting in any polling area during the period of forty-eight hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll for any election in that polling area.”

▶ Postal Ballot

Service voters, voters on election duty and electors under preventive detention were allowed to cast their vote by postal vote. Ballot papers for service voters were printed either by the Chief Electoral Officers at the headquarters of the States or by the District Officers at their headquarters and sent direct to the voters. Ordinary ballot papers used at polling stations with the words ‘POSTAL BALLOT PAPER’ stamped on the back were used for voters on election duty. These ballot papers were sent by ordinary post and the ballot papers were required to be returned to the Returning Officer ‘Service Unpaid’, the postage being collected from the Returning Officer after delivery of the cover containing the ballot paper. These two

Third General Elections in India 1962 At a Glance

Total Number of Electors: 218,216,585

Votes Cast: 118,583,333

Number of Polling Stations: 2,38,031

Number of Parliament Seats: 494

Number of Legislative Assembly Seats: 3,121

Total Amount Spent on Elections: 731.58 lakhs

Number of Contesting Candidates: Parliamentary elections – 1,985; Assembly elections – 12,646

Amount of Ink used: In all 3,72,923 phials of indelible ink were supplied to the various States at a total cost of Rs 294,607.

Voter Turnout: The total number of electors who voted in the contested parliamentary constituencies was 11,85,83,333, i.e., 54.80% of the total number of electors on the rolls of those constituencies.

Election Period: States other than Kerala and Punjab, and the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura – Date of Poll: February 19-25.
States of Kerala and Punjab and the Union Territories of Delhi and Himachal Pradesh – Date of Poll: February 24.

Number of Women Voted: 47,764,000 women voted, 46.63% of the total electors.

Number of Polling Personnel: EROs: 1,017; AEROs: 1,958; Returning Officers: 1,602; AROs: 4,499

modifications resulted in a considerable saving on postage.

The total number of postal ballot papers sent out at the general elections was 4,95,612. It was however only in Kerala that the bulk of them were returned in time duly marked. Out of 36,561 postal ballot papers issued in this State, 63.1% were validly utilised.

PwD Voters

The rules enabled and required the presiding officer to mark the ballot paper on behalf of a voter who was blind or had some other physical infirmity, in accordance with his wishes. While doing so, the presiding officer had to observe as much secrecy. The procedure worked satisfactorily and as such there

were no complaints. However, the Commission, with a view to improving transparency, recommended to the Government that the procedure should be changed to the effect that any such voter could be helped by a companion of his own choice, provided he was not less than 21 years of age and did not act as a companion for more than one elector at any polling station on the same day. Rule 40 of the Conduct of Elections Rules was subsequently revised providing for this new procedure.

Voter Photo Identity Cards

The practice was started, after the 1957 General Election, as an experimental measure in Calcutta South- West Parliamentary Constituency. Provision was made in Section 61 of the RP Act and the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. However, there were serious constraints and challenges the project faced. The following factors are noteworthy:

- An appreciable number of women electors refused to be photographed even by the women photographers.
- A substantial number of persons were not available at their residence when the officials visited households.
- The project was time-consuming; only 2,13,600 electors were photographed in 10 months time;
- In Calcutta alone, it would carry enormous costs of Rs 25 lakhs and as such was not sustainable.
- The Commission, after a careful examination, concluded that it would not

be practical to operate the system satisfactorily.

In the light of the above decisions, the project could not be furthered.

Voter Turnout

Voter participation in this general election was appreciably more than in the General Election of 1957. The total electorate had increased from 193,652,069 in 1957 to 216,372,215 in 1962.

The total number of electors who voted in the Lok Sabha election stood at 118,583,333 – that means 54.80% of the total number of electors as compared to 47.54% during

in Madras State (Pinnathurai in Virinchipuram assembly constituency, Pudupalapattu in Sankarapuram assembly constituency and Ramanaichenpalayam in Attur assembly constituency) and one polling station in Andhra Pradesh (Erakum in Sullurpet assembly constituency) shared the unenviable distinction of sending away the polling party without a single ballot paper in the ballot box.

Counting of Votes

Counting commenced in Assam on February 24 and in the other States on February 25.

The total electorate had increased from 193,652,069 in 1957 to 216,372,215 in 1962. The total number of electors who voted in the Lok Sabha election stood at 118,583,333 – that means 54.80% of the total number of electors as compared to 47.54% during the 1957 General Elections.

the 1957 General Elections. The proportion of women voters to men was roughly two to three. At the parliamentary elections, about 7,07,03,000 men and 4,77,64,000 women voted, representing respectively 62.05% and 46.63% of the total electors.

The distinction of every single elector on the roll turning up at the assigned polling station goes to Kangkap in outer Manipur parliamentary constituency. At the other extreme, three polling stations

Result of the Elections

Counting commenced in Assam on February 24. The results of voting in only four assembly constituencies were declared on this day. 251 results were announced on February 25; 1,096 on February 26; 1,013 on February 27; 413 on February 28; 55 on March 1 and 2 on March 2, which completed the entire list of assembly constituencies in all the States except the two snow-bound constituencies of Punjab where polling had

been postponed to April 30. As regards parliamentary constituencies, 17 results were declared on February 26; 161 on February 27; 154 on February 28; 102 on March 1; 36 on March 2; 12 on March 3 and one each on March 7, 11, 14 and 18.

Epilogue

The General Election, 1962 was the third simultaneous General Election of the country. It was a mega exercise in the furtherance of democratic consolidation preceded by identification and timely addressing of the various issues and challenges that emerged during the first two General Elections. The shift from two-member to single-member constituencies, division and realignment of some states and Union Territories, introduction of ballot paper and marking of the same, intensive revision of the rolls, introduction of a code of conduct, redefining of the campaign silence period, style of marking of the index finger with indelible ink and reduction in the time span occupied for the conduct of election are a few illustrations of how the Commission carefully looked at each and every aspect of the electoral process and realigned it with a futuristic vision of a sustainable, transparent, robust and efficient electoral system to support the Commission in the fulfilment of its constitutional mandate. In fact many of the practices that we follow today in the electoral process find their roots in what was shaped in 1962 General Elections.

(To be Continued)   

PHOTO CORNER



Eco-friendly jute bags



Electoral Officials who made 'Green Election' a success

Green Elections



*Initiatives for
Green Election*



Proud voters of Green Election



Pink Polling Station

Meghalaya



Creche facility at Pink Booth



Pink Polling Station

Pink Elections



Proud Voter at Pink Polling Station

Mary Kom – A National Icon of the ECI

She has been a National Icon of the Election Commission of India since 2012. She has played a significant role in motivating the women and youth of our country to cast their vote in an informed and ethical manner.

Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom (born on March 1, 1983) is the only woman to become World Amateur Boxing champion for a record six times, the only woman boxer to have won a medal in each one of the first seven World Championships, and the only boxer (male or female) to win eight World Championship medals. Nicknamed 'Magnificent Mary', she is the only Indian woman boxer to have qualified for the 2012 Summer Olympics, competing in the flyweight (51 kg) category and winning the bronze medal. She had also been ranked as No. 1 in the AIBA World Women's Ranking Light Flyweight category. She became the first Indian woman boxer to get a Gold Medal in the Asian Games in 2014 at Incheon, South Korea, and is the first Indian woman boxer to win gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. She is also the only boxer to become Asian Amateur Boxing Champion for a record five times.



Mary Kom
Indian Olympic boxer and incumbent
Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

On April 25, 2016 the President of India nominated Kom as a member of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Indian Parliament. In March 2017, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, appointed Mary Kom as national observer for boxing.

After her sixth world title in 2018, the Government of Manipur has conferred on her the title 'Meethoi Leima', loosely translated as great or exceptional lady, in a felicitation ceremony held in Imphal on December 11, 2018. At the function, the then Chief Minister of Manipur also declared that the stretch of road leading to the National Games village in Imphal West District, where Kom currently resides, would be named as

M.C. Mary Kom Road. She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award, in 2020.

“ Today, being the National Icon is a privilege, but the first time I got inked – that was the true mark of my being a responsible citizen of this great nation. ”

Mary Kom's pride in India is evident as she shares her experiences and the importance of voting, in an interview.

Your achievements make our country proud; what makes you proud about the country?

India's rich culture, heritage and diversity make me extremely proud.

When was the first time you cast your vote? Any recollections of that moment?

I cast my first vote in the Manipur Legislative Assembly Election of 2007. It was a wonderful moment where I truly felt like I was a part of building the nation. Today, being the National Icon is a privilege but the first time I got inked – that was the true marker of my being a responsible citizen of this great nation. I am so glad I did not miss casting my vote.

Could you tell us about your motivation to vote?

Being a sports person, I was in a camp and training centre most of the time. Our world was so detached from everything. As athletes, we are always taught to work harder than the day before. I feel, as citizens of India, we get an opportunity to work harder every single day for the betterment of the nation. Casting your vote is a step towards building our nation and that is my motivation to vote.

What would your message be for women? Why do you think voting is important for them?

Women have the same rights and responsibilities in building the nation as men and therefore we should avail every opportunity. Voting is as important, if not more, for women as it is for men. There is no difference in the value of vote based on genders or sects. You vote as a citizen performing their duty to the nation and no woman should hold herself back from this responsibility.

Tell us about your experience in motivating voters across the country.

I am happy that I could, to some extent, represent the Election

Commission of India in reaching out to the public with information and awareness related to ethical and informed voting. If my encouragement makes even a single person come out and vote, it is a personal achievement for me to have that impact.

What are some of the qualities you think the youth of the country should imbibe to inculcate in them the spirit of democracy and service to the nation?

Respect for others of different castes, religion, colour and region as well as a sense of belonging towards the nation our forefathers have strived so hard to build. As youth, we have to take up this responsibility soon and take India to even greater heights.

Would you like to share an experience of a difficult situation of your life which you overcame?

I've come across so many difficult situations that I have forgotten most of them! Life wasn't that easy for me – being from a poor family, being a girl, being the eldest in the family, belonging to a small community, state, and what not.

It was in 2001, when our boxing teams were heading for a camp in Hisar by train. On the way, my briefcase was stolen in the dead of night. It had all my belongings, passport and money. The only purpose of attending that training camp was to be able to participate in the International competition after getting through a trial in the camp, which was very important to me. I was so shattered and cried out loud and for that moment, I wanted to jump off the train – I was devastated!

My coach and friends consoled me saying there would be a way out and that this was not the end of the world. Thank God for that, because without all the lessons I've learnt along the way – I wouldn't have reached where I am today.

What would be your message to people, especially in these times of COVID19?

Stay Home, Stay Safe. Follow the government guidelines.



ECI Welcomes New National Icons

The Election Commission of India is delighted to announce that two great achievers in their respective fields have agreed to partner with the Commission, as National Icons.

Punjabi singer, lyricist, performer and actor, Jasbir Jassi, has been appointed National Icon.

In a musical career spanning over decades, Jassi's work has been appreciated by audiences in India and beyond. His musical talent has a mass appeal that cuts across diverse age groups, and is especially relevant to young voters. Jassi's unique skills were first noticed in the late 1980s, when he made his beginnings by recording songs for Punjabi cinema. A string of successful music albums followed, firmly establishing Jassi as one of the iconic artistes of his generation. Some of his best-known songs remain hugely popular with younger audiences, more than two decades after they were first released.



Jasbir Jassi

The Election Commission of India has been engaging with young voters in a big way, to ensure their participation in the electoral process. Eliminating urban voter apathy, and ensuring sustained interest of the people in elections, is key to a vibrant democracy.

We believe that Jassi's contribution will go a long way in enhancing informed and ethical participation of voters in the forthcoming elections in India. We look forward to partnering with Jassi, and to leveraging his enormous popularity, especially among the younger voters, to drive greater engagement and an even more enthusiastic participation in elections in India. Jassi's instant connect and mass appeal would be immensely useful in this regard.



“

I look forward to this opportunity to engage with the people of India, who have given me so much love, through the success of my music. Enthusiastic electoral participation has been at the heart of India's mature electoral democracy. Sustained interest and involvement by all sections of society is vital to nurture our democratic institutions and processes. I hope to contribute in the best way possible, to this noble cause.

”

A pioneer in the field of Diversity and Inclusion in India, Dr. Niru Kumar has been appointed National Icon.

She has been impacting and transforming individuals and organisations through a unique blend of expertise in fields that include Medicine, Psychology, Diversity and Inclusion, and Gender Sciences. She has worked extensively with thought leaders and transnational corporations. She has trained more than 15,000 professionals across industries. Her areas of expertise include Diversity Strategy, Policies, Assessments and Analytics covering areas of Gender, Generation, LGBTQ, Disability and Bias. As part of her work towards women empowerment, she has travelled to several industrial plant locations across India. Through her various interactions, she has inspired thousands of women entrepreneurs.

Dr. Niru Kumar worked with the Central Government Health Scheme for 28 years, reaching the Senior Administrative Grade before taking voluntary retirement. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards and recognitions. She has been invited to share her thoughts with august gatherings and diversity fora across the

world. She has been a participant in various research projects. Having overcome the challenge of a significant physical disability herself, Dr. Niru Kumar brings enormous passion and inspiration to her work.

The Election Commission of India has been working towards more accessible and inclusive elections. The Commission has been scaling up its efforts to reach out to various marginalised sections, including Persons with Disability (PwD), third gender voters, and other disadvantaged groups. Our outreach and facilitation span the full spectrum of election-related activities, including registration, verification, and the actual casting of votes.

We look forward to working with Dr. Niru Kumar to fine-tune and augment our strategies to engage with underprivileged groups, in our quest to ensure that no voter is left behind. We believe her

vast experience and insights will help strengthen the Commission's efforts towards accessible and inclusive elections in India. Besides helping us in strategic planning for accessible elections, we also seek to leverage Dr. Niru Kumar's rich experience in training and coaching, to develop suitable training pedagogy and modules, to scale up our efforts and implement our vision of accessible elections on the ground in India.



Dr. Niru Kumar

“ Equal opportunity, inclusivity and accessibility are at the soul of democracy. India has a rich and age-old tradition of inclusiveness and compassion towards weaker and marginalized sections of society. I am passionate about this cause and commit to making every effort to help take forward the Election Commission's significant work in this direction. ”





Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture Series Commemorating the First CEC of India



The Election Commission of India organised the first Memorial Lecture Series on January 23, 2020 in memory of the first Election Commissioner of India, Sukumar Sen, at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, New Delhi. The keynote lecture was delivered by Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India. This year, the Commission completed 70 illustrious years in the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections in the largest democratic country of the world. In order to mark this important milestone for the nation, Sukumar Sen was remembered for his successful and commendable conduct of the first two general elections to the Lok Sabha in 1951-52 and 1957. Sukumar Sen had spoken of the first election as ‘the biggest experiment in the history of democracy.’

About Sukumar Sen

Sukumar Sen was born on January 2, 1898. Educated in Presidency College, Kolkata, and University College London, UK, Sen joined the Indian Civil Services in 1922. During his service, he held several important posts, including that of the Chief Secretary of West Bengal (1947-50). He served as the first Chief Election Commissioner of India from March 21, 1950 till his retirement in December 19, 1958. Besides conducting the first two general elections in India, Sen is also credited with managing the Legislative Assembly elections

during his tenure, which were based on universal adult franchise, under challenging circumstances and very little precedence to guide him.

Sen was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1954 for his distinguished contribution to public life. Post-retirement, he became the first Vice Chancellor of Burdwan University (West Bengal), when it started functioning on June 15, 1960. Subsequently, he was made the Chairman of Dandakaranya Development Authority; a non-statutory body set up under the erstwhile Union Ministry of Works, Housing and Rehabilitation, which was aimed at resettling displaced families from East Pakistan, in Dandakaranya.

The Memorial Lecture

The keynote speaker Pranab Mukherjee, who served as the thirteenth President of India, was received at the event by the Chief Election Commissioner of India – Sunil Arora, Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra, and Secretary General Umesh Sinha. Welcoming the guest of honour, Arora said, “There could not be a more harmonious combination of theme and the speaker for this evening.”

Mukherjee congratulated the ECI for instituting the lecture in the name of the first Chief Election Commissioner, as a tribute to his outstanding accomplishment in institutionalising India’s democratic roots. He described Sukumar Sen as

“chosen to play obstetrician and to deliver Indian democracy’s first crop of nearly three thousand elected representatives.”

THE FIRST ELECTION CEMENTED THE UNIFICATION OF DIVERSE INDIA

Speaking about the first general election of independent India led by Sukumar Sen, Mukherjee said, “The foremost achievement lies in the fact that the election cemented the painstakingly brought about unification of India. Despite the complex arrangement of categorisation under parts A, B, C and D of the Provinces, States, Territory and areas, the entire geographical territory of India voted as a singular electorate, electing for themselves a single Union Parliament.” On an important note, he added that the Election Commission was established in independent India, and the seeds of institutionalizing the electoral mechanism were already mooted and deliberated upon.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ADOPTED UNIVERSAL ADULT FRANCHISE AFTER THOROUGH DELIBERATION

Mukherjee also recalled that “The Constituent Assembly of India, which prepared the Constitution, had intensely debated the issue of universal adult franchise. It had unhesitatingly adopted the principle of adult suffrage with the full knowledge of the difficulties involved.”

The Former President of India noted: “It is our founding fathers, the towering women and men who drafted our Constitution, who wanted India’s giant leap of faith in democracy to get truly ingrained and rather swiftly. In an unprecedented move, hitherto not experimented anywhere in the world, we chose to bring about a peaceful political revolution through universal adult franchise. This giant political leap forward was to eventually foster and further the social and economic transformation of the second largest national population of the world. India is one of the rare countries in the world, where political transformation happened more rapidly



than economic or social transformation. A large number of nations that gained freedom around the same time also adopted democratic systems of governance, but India is one of the very few nations that has been able to strengthen its democratic ethos.”

Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa also took to the stage to speak a few words about Sukumar Sen, whom he called the man who transformed the dream of a democracy into an enduring model electoral system that few could have dreamt of at the dawn of freedom.

Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra gave the vote of thanks at the closing of the event. He said that it was a proud moment for the Commission to commemorate the legacy of Sukumar Sen and also thanked Pranab Mukherjee for his enlightening words.

Visiting the Exhibition

An exhibition walk-through on the life of Sukumar Sen and the evolution of the election process in India was curated at the entrance of the lecture hall. Several photographs and facts from the archives of the first General Election, as well as from the latest 17th General Election, were compiled and put on display at the exhibition to draw parallels between the two. A total of thirteen such panels were on display, divided into two sections for the first and latest General Election respectively.

The first section started with a panel carrying an excerpt from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s speech in the Constituent Assembly, rooting for an independent Central Election Commission. The second panel had a unique photograph of a polling station from the first General Election when each contesting candidate had their ballot box. The origin of Indelible Ink was presented on the next panel with two photographs of a polling officer applying ink to a voter’s finger in 1951 and in 2019. Archival

EVENTS

SUKUMAR SEN MEMORIAL LECTURE



pictures of voters walking towards polling stations were displayed on the next panel. The fifth panel explained the rationale behind Election Symbols and displayed the symbols allocated to 14 national parties in 1951. The next panel had the result of the first General Election illustrated on the erstwhile map of India, along with samples of the ballot paper used for voting at that time.

The next panel, which was at the centre of the exhibition, was dedicated to Sukumar Sen, under whose aegis the first General Election was conducted in 1951-52. The adjacent exhibition panel featured members of the current Commission with the strength and structure of permanent staff under their supervision as well as the number of civil, Police and paramilitary personnel who discharged their duty under deputation of the Commission during the 17th Lok Sabha election. The last five panels had selected photographs of Lok Sabha election 2019 from various parts of the country, displayed theme-wise, such as election officials traversing challenging terrains, inclusive elections, women voters, veteran voters and accessible elections. The concluding panel featured the postage stamp launched in memory of Sukumar Sen by the former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee.

In addition to the exhibition panels, the



evolution of the voting process in India was showcased through various versions of ballot boxes used in the years 1951, 1962, 1977, 1984 and 1993. The latest EVM-VVPAT M3 device, which is now used for voting, was also set up and visitors could cast mock votes to understand its functioning.

The exhibition witnessed high footfall from a broad cross-section of invitees from national political parties, members of the academia, civil society organisations, senior civil servants, mediapersons as well as the international delegates who had gathered in New Delhi to attend an International Conference hosted by the ECI on January 24, 2020.



Annual FEMBoSA Meet India Assumes Chairmanship



The Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) is a regional establishment to increase mutual cooperation with respect to the common interests of the EMBs from the SAARC regions. For the year 2020-21, India has assumed Chairmanship of this association. The Outgoing Chair of FEMBoSA, K.M. Nurul Huda, CEC of Bangladesh, handed over the logo of FEMBoSA to the Incoming Chair, Sunil Arora, CEC of India, at the 10th Annual Meeting of FEMBoSA held in New Delhi on January 24, 2020.

Brief History of FEMBoSA

In the year 2010, the Bangladesh Election Commission organised a regional meeting for the first time, titled 'Meeting on Cooperation of Election Commissions in the South Asia Region'. This meeting was later rechristened as 'Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia' (FEMBoSA). After the meeting in 2012, the forum's charter was approved. In 2013, the logo of the designated forum, prepared by the Bangladesh Election Commission, was accepted and the Rules

of Procedure for the meetings of the FEMBoSA were approved.

10th FEMBoSA Meeting

In keeping with the objectives of the forum, Huda stated that members have been sharing experiences and skills and taking steps to enhance cooperation with other EMBs. The Stewardship Report on the activities of FEMBoSA members during the previous working year was presented by EMB Bangladesh.

Accepting the responsibility as Chairperson of the Forum, Arora thanked the delegates for the trust and confidence reposed in the Election Commission of India. He said, "The democratic scaffold and superstructure can be enacted and strengthened on the principle that the political power is validated by the will of the people. In democracy, power is won and legitimised only by regular elections, based on the universal, equal, direct and freely expressed suffrage." Strong participatory and inclusive democracies are better able to ensure good governance and

empowerment of all the citizens, he said. Arora also added that for capacity building, the Election Commission of India established the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) in June 2011.

A New Delhi Resolution was unanimously adopted at the 10th FEMBoSA Annual Meeting by the seven FEMBoSA members present. The members resolved to implement the Work Plan for 2020 as approved by the member EMBs during the 10th Meeting of FEMBoSA:

- Cooperate in capacity building of the member countries;
- Host election visitor programmes in the respective countries as feasible;
- Provide technical assistance to the members as requested and as feasible;
- Actively share best practices and knowledge in ICT tools and modules being used by the member EMBs and to develop standards for sustainable use of ICT in elections;
- Take steps to curb use of money power and muscle power;
- Enhance and ease participation of Persons with Disabilities and senior citizens in the election process;
- Maintain the permanent content management based web portal of FEMBoSA to share information among the EMBs through the www.fembosa.org web portal; and
- Design and implement regional research projects.

The Work Plan for 2020 is 'Use of Technology in Elections'. This calls for members to undertake projects and initiatives on various aspects of use of technology in elections, and present a report on their experiences and challenges faced in this regard, at the next FEMBoSA Meeting.

In this conference, the ECI, apart from taking Chairmanship of the forum, also renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of election management with the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan. This MoU was signed by Hawa Alam Nooristani, Chairwoman, IEC Afghanistan, and by Sunil Arora, CEC India, on behalf of the Election Commission of India. An MoU for cooperation in the field of election management was also signed with the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) of Tunisia. The MoU was signed by Nabil Baffoun, President, ISIE of Tunisia, and by Sunil Arora, CEC India.

Sunil Arora, along with the two Election Commissioners of India – Ashok Lavasa and Chandra – and Secretary General ECI Umesh Sinha, also took the occasion to launch the 10th issue of ECI's quarterly magazine – *VOICE International*. This publication carries articles on the theme of 'Innovative Methods of Voter Registration'.

The event ended on a successful note and was then followed by the participants joining for the International Conference.



International Conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity'



The Election Commission of India organised an international conference with 10 participating countries and several other reputed international organisations working in elections in New Delhi. The theme of this international event which took place on January 24, 2020 was 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity'.

The conference, which was divided into three separate segments, was inaugurated by Sunil Arora, CEC. Taking the stage, he said that the engagement of technologies in all aspects of polling processes is a distinct feature of elections in India. Addressing all the esteemed guests, he added that the ECI, as an institution of credit, has to keep up with the fast-growing pace of the world. For this, it has to constantly reinvent, invent and innovate to strengthen and reinforce electoral practices so as to deliver the ultimate fundamental goal of democracy, i.e., free, fair, participative and collective elections.

The three sessions of the conference were chaired by Mohammad Irfan Abdool Rahman - Electoral Commissioner of Mauritius, and Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra - Election Commissioners of India. Top electoral representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic,

Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia participated in the conference along with officials of international election organisations like IFES, IDEA and A-WEB. All the participants presented their views regarding 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity'.

The first session was chaired by Mohammad Irfan Abdool Rahman, who called it a privilege to hear the historical perspective of India's seven-decade-long journey of conducting elections. He further acknowledged the ECI's role in steering electoral democracy, saying that "the ECI has been playing the role of the path maker, pathfinder and path-breaker".

Growth of Institutional Strengthening: Approach of Nepal

For rising democracies like Nepal, institutional capacity building is a continuous process whereas institutional strengthening through organisational reforms, human resource and infrastructural development is an ongoing process. In this context, the first presentation was given by Dinesh Kumar Thapalia, Chief Election Commissioner of the country. He added that these sessions provide an opportunity to learn more about different

approaches and principles and deeply understand the process of capacity building of institutional reach.

Ahmed Shareef, Chairperson, Election Commission of Maldives, said that strengthening the capacity building of the electoral staffs working in ECMs, polling personnel and other stakeholders is very important in order to conduct a successful electoral process. For Afghanistan, the major point of discussion was on the impact of elections on their governance, security and economy.

Complete Deduplication of Electoral Roll: Steps taken by Bangladesh

In the presentation given by Bangladesh, the interesting task of complete deduplication of the electoral roll was highlighted, which added an immense value to other member countries that face similar challenges. Bhutan brought a unique and interesting structural debriefing system to discussion, which was called 'Lessons Learned from Experience Programme (LEP)'. It was further explained by the presenter that this was a self-assessment of their own elections, adding that LEP is a useful mechanism of feedback from the stakeholders.



Electoral officials participated in the conference along with officials from international election organisations like IFES, IDEA and A-WEB.

Seven Pillars of Elections: India's Insight

The final presentation of the first session was given by Umesh Sinha, Secretary General of the ECI, who discussed the seven pillars of elections, i.e., free, transparent, peaceful, inclusive, accessible, ethical and participative elections, and also acknowledged the three core obstacles, which are muscle power, money power and paid news. He further added that the major function of the Commission is to prepare the electoral roll, and to conduct the elections to the office of the President, Vice President, the two houses of Parliament, the State assemblies and legislative councils.

Electoral Challenges and the Importance of EMBs: Deliberations by Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Kenya

The second session chaired by Ashok Lavasa and co-chaired by representatives from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Kenya led to insightful deliberations on electoral challenges and how EMBs must overcome them. In the opening remarks, given by Hawa Alam Nooristani, IEC

Chairperson, Afghanistan, she lay emphasis on the electoral rules/laws for institutions and people, and further discussed the role of democracy that safeguards the right to vote. The representative of Kenya talked about the role of the EMBs and constitutional laws empowering the electoral institutions, giving importance to staff training, which can result in a robust working environment in the institutions.

Sri Lanka, in their presentation given by Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairperson, Election Commission, discussed various challenges such as building synergies among all election stakeholders and the lack of resources for building capacity, including officers' training. Further, he talked about strategies to be adopted in order to overcome the challenges, like inclusive elections, ensuring public trust and the integrity of elections, and making necessary amendments through the legislature.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity Building: Maldives and Mauritius

Describing the geographical structure of Mauritius, Dharmajai Mulloo, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer of the nation, said that as it is one of the smallest countries of the world, the Election Commission was established as an independent body in 2008. He further added that institutional capacity building and strengthening are two key factors in maintaining the electoral process in Mauritius. He also said that institutional development depends, inter alia, on the credibility and integration of EMBs and asserted that EMBs need supportive members, a result-based framework, training and human resource development.

In the next presentation by Maldives, presenter Ahmed Shareef, Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives, discussed that the country does not have many facilities for their institutional capacity building. Therefore, with the help of other institutions, trainings have been conducted for certain level of skills required in the electoral processes to be conducted. He also highlighted the role that the advisory committee played in the electoral process.

Maintaining the Quality of Voter List: Experience of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz Republic, in their presentation, deliberated that the major challenges faced by their country include the quality of the voter list. Issues of duplication, multiple voting and

false votes, among others, are some of the major challenges faced in the electoral system of the nation. The presenter also talked about information security and the technology of counting optical scanner (TCOS).

Sushil Chandra, Election Commissioner of India, chaired the third session of the conference. In his address, he laid emphasis on the vital role played by elections in a democracy. Anthony Banbury, President and CEO, IEFS, discussed the role of leadership played by EMBs. He said that there are continuous changes in electoral processes, which bring about new challenges that require special attention.

International Perspective to Strengthening of Institutions: IDEA

Parvinder Singh, Senior Program Manager, Intl. IDEA, presented the international perspective to the strengthening of institutions. He said that there is a requirement for training institutes and establishing them globally is the need of the hour, further asserting that political parties, Police, media, observation groups and voters need to have capacity building and training. Ugyen

The primary theme of the conference lay on the tenet of institutional capacity building and cross learning in the same direction.





Chewang, Election Commissioner of Bhutan, said that elections should not only be free and fair but should also be able to maintain the trust of stakeholders and voters. He further said that new problems require new solutions. He elaborated with the example that the campaigns of political parties are changing after the emergence of social media and, in this aspect, EMBs will have to move ahead and come up with mechanisms for do's and don'ts to be imposed on political parties.

The primary emphasis of the conference was on the core theme of institutional capacity building and cross-learning in the same direction. With global electoral officials under one roof, the event was a major success on the path to strengthen capacity building.

A Look at the Exhibition

An exhibition gallery was set up at the conference venue, with a view to sharing experiences, best practices and innovations from the 17th Lok Sabha election. It was this election wherein EVM-VVPAT devices were used nationwide to conduct the exercise. The first exhibit showcased extensive nationwide sensitisation drives on the use of EVM-VVPAT that were conducted before the election, as well as the facts and figures about the technical and administrative safeguards related to the polling device.

An exhibition gallery was set up at the conference venue, with the objective of sharing experiences, best practices and innovations from the 17th Lok Sabha Election.

The flagship programme of the Commission – Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) – was launched in 2010. The objectives and components of the programme, and its evolution over a decade, were showcased in the second exhibit. Photographs of different kinds of SVEEP interventions and the impact of the programme in terms of increased registration, turnout and women's participation were also illustrated as part of the exhibit. For the first time, a nationally coordinated multimedia outreach campaign was designed for a general election before the 17th Lok Sabha election, titled '*Desh ka Mahatyohar*' translating to 'Grand Festival of the Nation'. This exhibit displayed short films on the '*Desh ka Mahatyohar*' campaign along with various photographs, figures and key highlights from the general election.

Targeted initiatives for increasing the participation of women in the electoral process

over the years resulted in the lowest ever gender gap among voters in the 17th Lok Sabha election. The initiatives that were taken for increasing women's participation, photographs of targeted advertisements and events, and facts and figures related to women voters were showcased in the fourth exhibit. With over 1.8 million service electors in the 17th Lok Sabha elections, a separate outreach campaign was developed for reaching out to this sizeable and significant category of voters. The procedure of voting through Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS), dedicated web portal, short films, and images of outreach events for service electors were showcased in the fifth exhibit.

The next exhibit explained the ambitious Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) programme of the Commission. There are four different kinds of interventions under this programme, and different activity-based resource guides and games have been developed for all of them. This exhibit displayed a short film on how to conduct different educational activities designed for these clubs. The Commission's focus has been on making elections more and more inclusive, and especially on maximising accessibility for PwDs and Senior Citizens. The exhibit showcased different initiatives taken for making electoral participation easier for PwDs and senior citizens, such as Assured Minimum Facilities, Postal Ballot etc. To counter prevailing apathy among young voters, the Commission launched various initiatives such as competitions, national elections quiz, social media outreach and digital games,



Informative Interactions with the Voter

To counter prevailing apathy among young voters, the Commission has launched various initiatives such as competitions, National Elections Quiz (NEQ) social media outreach and digital games, among others.

among others. The eighth exhibit listed some of the major recent initiatives of the Commission targeted at motivating young electors to get themselves registered and cast their vote in elections.

The Commission has endeavoured to play a pioneering role in imparting knowledge, and sharing skills and best practices with other EMBs through its robust international cooperation programme. During this conference, the ECI assumed Chairmanship of FEMBoSA for 2020.

Earlier in September 2019, ECI took over as Chair of the 115-member Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) for the 2019-21 term. The ninth exhibit showcased various international associations that the ECI is a part of, and some of its domestic programmes that strengthen its cooperation and interaction with fellow EMBs to spread the march of democracy globally.

The last panel of this exhibition featured the IT-enabled ecosystem of the Commission that facilitates the conduct of elections through advanced online applications at all steps, i.e., from Voter Registration to Voting and from Candidate Nomination to Counting. The specifications and functioning of eleven of these modern apps were on display. As an added attraction, an educational spin-the-wheel game for testing awareness related to the EVM-VVPAT device was placed at the exhibition. Several delegates and participants of the conference were seen playing the game and taking notes from the various kinds of initiatives and best practices showcased in the exhibition.



A Talk on the Credibility of Electronic Voting Machines



have become history and there would be no reconsideration on it.

Speaking about political parties raising doubts over EVMs, Arora clarified, "As far as EVMs are concerned, so many courts have upheld our explanation to them with regard to EVMs. I have participated in several

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) continue to be a major point of political discussion in and around any elections held in India. The reliability of these machines, which replaced the archaic ballot papers, is always debated upon by political and media figures alike. Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora holistically discussed this matter at the Times Now Summit, 2020.

Introduction of EVMs

In 1989, the Parliament amended the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to create a provision for the use of EVMs in the elections. A general consensus on their introduction could be reached only in 1998 and these were used in 25 Legislative Assembly constituencies spread across the three states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Their use was further expanded to Parliamentary Constituencies, Assembly Constituencies and State Assembly elections. In 2004, in the General Election to the Lok Sabha, the EVMs (more than one million) were used in all 543 Parliamentary Constituencies in the country.

'EVMs Cannot Be Tampered With'

At the summit, Sunil Arora reiterated that EVMs can 'malfunction' like any other electronic devices, but they can never be 'tampered with'. Further clearing the air about the reintroduction of ballot papers to conduct elections, he said that they

elections and all had different results. EVMs have been in use since the past two decades and it's not new. Is there any preconceived notion that if X party wins, EVMs are under suspicion, or A, B, C parties or their variants win, then EVMs are fine? The ECI officials who supervise the functioning of EVMs do feel hurt when they hear this kind of criticism. My limited point is please look for news, correct us and criticise us, but don't do it for the sake of it," he said, adding "the voter is the king in a democracy and they can teach anyone a lesson."

Aim to Save 'Lost Votes'

The major issue of 'lost votes' was also addressed by Arora during the summit. Simply put, lost votes are votes that never get cast because the voter is not there in his hometown on voting day. On a very positive note, the Election Commission is close to solving this problem that has vexed a whole generation of migrants who want to vote, but cannot manage to reach their polling booth on voting day. Arora announced that the ECI is working with the Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, to develop a blockchain system that will allow voters registered in any part of the country to exercise their franchise even after they move to any other location.

On a concluding note, CEC Arora heaped praises on the election machinery for their tremendous and continuous efforts to ensure the systematic progress of electoral work.



UPDATES

Election Updates

Important Instructions Issued during Delhi Legislative Assembly Election

Media coverage during the period referred to in Section 126 of the RP Act, 1951

Soon after the announcement of elections to the Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi, the Commission, vide its press note dated January 9, 2020, reiterated the guidelines for media coverage.

All the TV/Radio channels and cable networks/Internet website/social media platforms were asked to ensure that the contents of the programmes telecast/broadcast/ displayed by them during the period of 48 hours were not in violation of Section 126 of the RP Act, 1951. This, among other things, included the display of any opinion poll and of standard debates, analysis, visuals and sound-bites. Attention was also invited to Section 126A, which prohibits exit polls and dissemination of its results during the period mentioned therein, i.e. the hour fixed for commencement of poll and half an hour after the time fixed for close of poll.

All print media and electronic media was asked

to follow the guidelines issued by the Press Council of India and the National Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) respectively for ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

All social media platforms were also asked to observe the 'Voluntary Code of Ethics' adopted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) to ensure free, fair and ethical usage of their platforms to maintain electoral integrity.

Social media violations reported by the ECI

In pursuance of the 'Voluntary Code of Ethics' adopted by all major social media platforms, the Commission reported a total of 50 cases of violations of RP Act, MCC, IPC and other electoral laws to various social media platforms during the Legislative Assembly Election to the NCT of Delhi-2020.

Name of National/State Party	Total time allotted in minutes for broadcast on All India Radio	Total time allotted in minutes for telecast on State Capital Kendras of Doordarshan
All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	45	45
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	50	50
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	179	179
Communist Party of India (CPI)	45	45
Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM)	45	45
Indian National Congress (INC)	85	85
Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	45	4
National People's Party (NPP)	45	45
Aam Aadmi Party (APP)	271	271

‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ is a set of guidelines adopted by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) in consultation with the Election Commission of India (ECI) for all elections including Assembly elections. The Code of ethics provides for a high priority and dedicated grievance redressal channel and a dedicated grievance officer to escalate election related complaints and resolve the issue. The Code has been developed to ensure free, fair and ethical use of social media platforms and to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

The telecasts/ broadcasts on Doordarshan AIR do not permit:

- (a) Criticism of other countries;
- (b) Attack on religions or communities;
- (c) Anything obscene or defamatory;
- (d) Incitement of violence;
- (e) Anything amounting to contempt of court;
- (f) Aspersions against the integrity of the President and Judiciary;
- (g) Anything affecting the unity, sovereignty and integrity of the nation;
- (h) Any criticism by name of any person.

ECI Updates

CEC and ECs contribute to COVID-19 funding through voluntary reduction of their salaries

The Election Commission of India has come forward to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 with Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra pledging voluntary reduction of 30% of their salaries for a period of one

year commencing on April 1, 2020.

As the country grapples with the global pandemic of COVID-19, the Government and civil society organizations require vast resources to control the spread of this pandemic and minimise its impact on public health and the national economy. For this purpose, contributions from all sources including reducing the burden of salaries on the exchequer might be of help.

Additionally, the Commission is ensuring that the salaries of all employees including contractual staff are paid on time.

India A-WEB Centre

An India A-WEB Centre (<http://indiaaawebcentre.org/>) has been established at New Delhi for documentation, research and training for sharing the best practices and capacity building of officials of all A-WEB members. The ECI will provide necessary resources for the India A-WEB Centre, which aims to become a global ‘Knowledge and Resource Centre’ for world-class ‘Documentation, Research and Training’ in pursuit of supporting free, fair, inclusive, accessible, efficient, transparent and credible elections and strengthening electoral democracy worldwide.





Delhi Election Museum visit

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra visited the Delhi Election Museum on March 4, 2020. The Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi, Dr Ranvir Singh, was also present

After the visit, Chandra said he was highly impressed with the way the museum was organised and maintained, and added, "The museum shows the panorama of the history of elections since the first to the recent election. The gallery of Mahatma Gandhi really inspires all visitors."



Trainings for Election Officials from around the Globe

During this quarter, a number of national- and international-level capacity building programmes and various training sessions were organised at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), the advance training and resources wing of the Election Commission of India (ECI) for exchange of research and innovative excellence in the field of election management.



Capacity Building Programme on Voter Education for ITEC Partner Countries:

The ECI organised a six-day Capacity Building programme on Voter Education for the election officials of ITEC Partner Countries at the IIIDEM Campus, Delhi, from February 2 to 7, 2020. The 13 participating countries in the programme were; Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Maldives, Myanmar, Somalia, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vietnam and Zambia.



Programme on 'Election Management' for Officials of the Kingdom of Cambodia:

ECI conducted a Capacity Building Programme on Election Management for the officials of National

Election Committee, Kingdom of Cambodia from February 3-28, 2020. It encompassed training delivery on a complete Electoral cycle as well as experience real time election practices of prepoll, poll day and counting days during Assembly Elections in Delhi, 2020.



Visit of a 7-member delegation from Union Election Commission, Myanmar

ECI hosted a 7-member delegation from UEC Myanmar on February 8, 2020 led by Hla Thein, Chairman, UEC Myanmar. The delegation also witnessed the Delhi Assembly Election 2020.



Programme on 'Poll Preparedness and Conduct of Poll' for officials of Kyrgyzstan:

The ECI organised a five-day Capacity Building Programme for officials of Central Election Commission, Kyrgyzstan from February 10 to 14, 2020. Election Commissioner of India Ashok Lavasa addressed the visiting officers during the inaugural session. During the programme, participants got an opportunity to witness the counting process of the then ongoing Delhi Assembly Elections on February 11, 2020.

Programmes to Train National Election Officials

Training of Officers from Bihar Election Services on Election Related Matters

A 15-day foundational training for 15 Sub-Election Officers from Bihar Election Services on Election Related Matters was conducted from January 7 to 21, 2020. Several key topics were covered during training and the participants also visited the Election Museum of Delhi.

Refresher Course for ROs/AROs/DIOs of Delhi

A training course for ROs/AROs/DIOs was organised from January 10 to 11, 2020. A total of 44 ROs/AROs/DIOs who were newly posted to their positions in Delhi attended the training. The key topics of the training included nomination process, EVM and VVPATs, Postal Ballot and ETPBS, IT Applications and Counting.



Training of Observers (CEOs) for Elections to Council of States

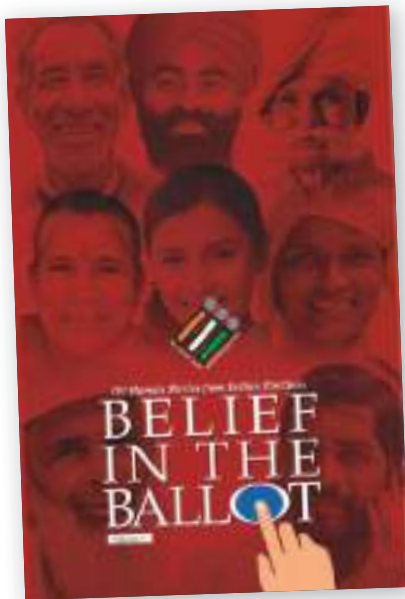
On January 19, 2020 a training of Observers (CEOs) was conducted for the election to the Council of States where around 30 CEOs from respective States participated as Observers. The key areas of training included General Guidelines for Observers, Overview of Nomination, Scrutiny and Voting Process, among other relevant subjects.

Review Meeting of EVM-VVPAT Nodal Officers

A bi-monthly review meeting of EVM-VVPAT Nodal Officers of all States/UTs was held on February 17, 2020 in the premises of Bharat Electronic Limited, Bengaluru, Karnataka. Representatives of the EVM-VVPAT manufacturing companies, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) also participated. Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain, General Manager-EM BEL Shankara Subramanian R., Director (BG CX), BEL Vinay Kumar Katyal addressed the house. In his address Sudeep Jain emphasized the importance of EVM-VVPAT Nodal Officers and sensitivity of EVMs. Elaborate discussion held on agenda points covering constructions of warehouse, Destruction of M-1 EVMs, Physical verification of EVMs, storage and disposal of used power pack & thermal paper roll, Reuse of surplus consumable

items, EVM Management system etc. during the meeting. All participants visited BEL factory for detailed observation of the secure manufacturing facilities of EVMs & VVPATs after concluding the meeting.





Belief in the Ballot- 2

The second volume of *Belief in the Ballot* is an anthology of 101 human stories from across the nation about Indian elections. It brings to you the real and first-hand experiences from the recent elections, which further depict how our nation's perseverance and commitment to democracy stands resolute.

An amalgamation of daring, interesting and inspiring stories of the both election officers and voters, this collection presents stories of courage, sacrifice and dedication of the election personnel as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the voters.

My Vote Matters- Issue 4

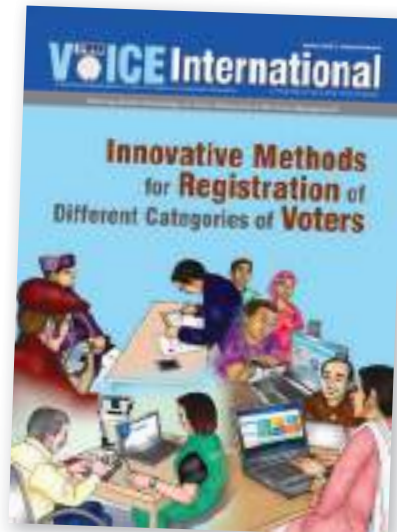
The Election Commission of India has completed seven glorious decades of conducting elections across the nation. During these 70 years, The ECI has successfully delivered 17 General Elections to the Lok Sabha, 15 elections to the office of the President and Vice President of India and 377 state legislative assembly elections, in fulfilment of its constitutional mandate.

In this context, the fourth issue of *My Vote Matters* brings you a timeline of these 70 illustrious years, including a variety of interesting and inspiring articles from senior officers of the Commission about the evolution of the institution and its role in consolidating the democratic polity of our nation. Furthermore, the issue also includes a collection of vibrant stories from the field, which speak volumes about the dedication and passion of the election officials and the voters of the nation alike.

VoICE International- Volume III (Issue 4)

This issue of *VoICE International* marks the completion of the third year of its successful journey in thematic progression. The magazine enriches global knowledge on voter education for enhancing the electoral participation from different categories of voters.

The issue shares with you articles from Australia, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Malawi, international IDEA and Global Perspectives on Innovative Registration Methods for Different Categories of Voters. Alongside, interesting information on events, conferences, training and global election updates from across the world are also included.





The Centenarian Voters: Sentinels of our Democracy

Time and again, the Commission's commitment to make elections more inclusive and accessible for all strata of voters through targeted interventions has resulted in monumental changes. The 17th Lok Sabha Election witnessed some major achievements in terms of overall voter turnout and special attention to the participation of centenarians.

This collection of 51 stories includes the experiences of centenarian voters who braved difficult terrain, poor health and other challenges to come out and vote. Their commitment contributed to achieving the highest voter turnout in history – a feat that encouraged the Commission to introduce the facility

of Postal Ballot for service voters and senior citizens of 80 years and above in the Jharkhand Assembly Election 2019 to make our elections even more inclusive and accessible.

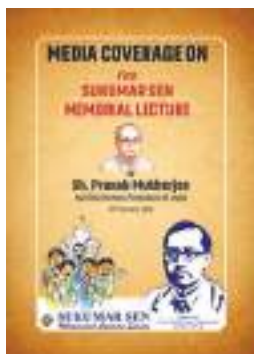


Media Coverage on 10th National Voters Day January 25, 2020

The news of the 10th NVD celebration was covered by leading Print Media, Electronic Media and Online Portals. A comprehensive post event Dossier was prepared including the Speech of President of India, the Message of Chief Election Commissioner, Media Coverage of the event, and the major glimpses of photographs on the occasion such as conferring of National Awards for the year 2019, facilitation of EPIC to some of the new voters, releasing of ECI Publications etc.

Media Coverage on 10th Annual Meeting of (FEMBoSA) & International Conference on Strengthening Institutional Capacity January 24, 2020.

On January 24, 2020 CEC, Sunil Arora assumed Chairmanship of Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) for the year 2020 at the 10th Annual Meeting of (FEMBoSA) and International Conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity' in New Delhi. The document includes media coverage of the news and important photo opportunities during signing of MoUs, release of ECI Publications on the occasion etc.



Media Coverage on First Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture January 23, 2020

The comprehensive post event Dossier of Media coverage document includes complete text of the inaugural speech of 1st Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture delivered by Pranab Mukherjee former President of India, the Media Coverage of the occasion and photo opportunities during unveiling of the commemorative postal stamp and releasing the Reprint of Report on India's First Election.



Report on the First General Elections in India 1951-52

Election Commission of India has reprinted Volume I of the narrative report which was first documented by the first Chief Election Commissioner of India Sukumar Sen. The inspirational document was released on January 23, 2020, by Hon'ble former President of India Pranab Mukherjee marking the 70th foundation year of ECI and on the occasion of first Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture.

Compendium of Instructions on Media Related Matters Edition 3

The third edition of the updated document contains instructions and guidelines of ECI issued to address the various issues that affect media coverage of elections. This document highlights the varied recommendations and updates on matters like Certification of advertisement of political nature, Paid News, Media Monitoring, Use of Social media in Election Campaigning, PCI recommendations, NBSA guidelines, allotment of broadcast times to political parties during elections etc.

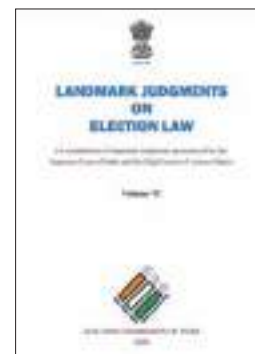


ICT 2020

ICT 2020; a compendium of 20 Apps for Election as the name suggests is a document compiling the 20 user-friendly applications developed by ECI to provide easy and efficient solution covering all phases i.e. Non-Election, Pre-election, In-elections, Post-elections. The Book was released on January 24, 2020 on the occasion of 10th Annual Meeting of FEMBoSA and International Conference on "Strengthening Institutional Capacity"

Landmark Judgments on Election Law- Volume VI

The volume VI of the document is a compilation in continuation of its previous series comprising major landmark judgements pronounced by the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts of various States from January 2017 to May 2019 till the conclusion of General Election 2019.



Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure Monitoring- Edition 5

The updated edition 5 of the document includes brief summary of legal provisions regarding election expenditure, updated instructions issued by the Commission from time to time to be followed by election officers, observers, candidates and political parties for effective monitoring and scrutiny of election expenditure.

Word Search

The Indian democracy is rich and vibrant. Find the enlisted words in the grid – they are all about elections and democracy!

A	D	J	O	U	R	N	M	E	N	T	F	L	C
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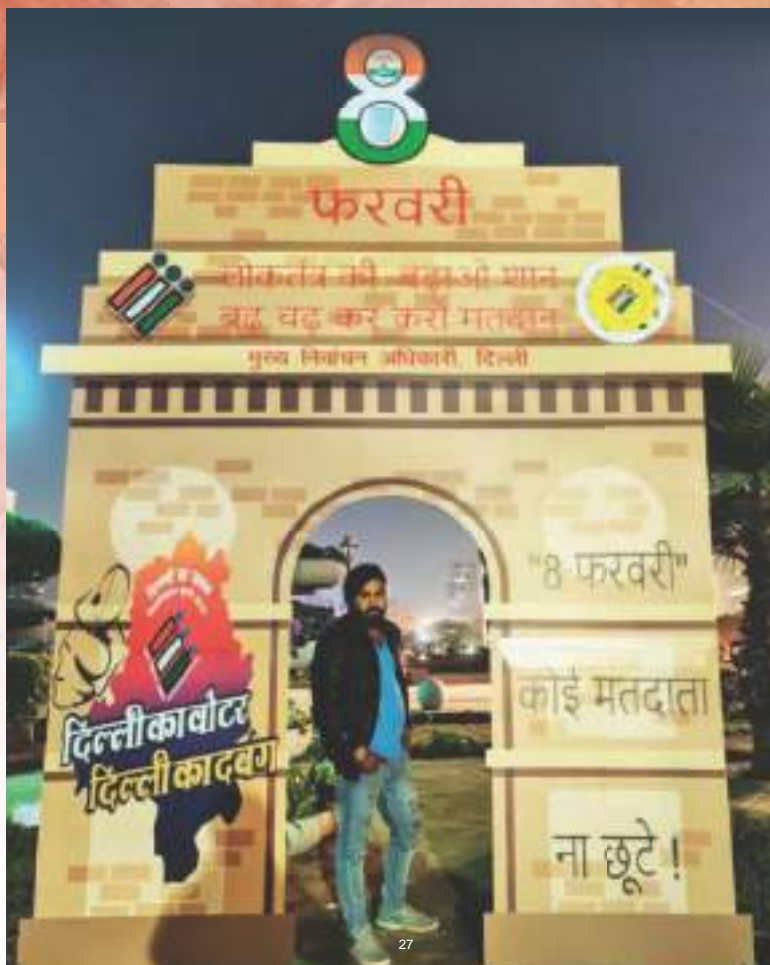
KEY

Adjournment
Amendment
Ballot
Booth
Campaign
Candidate

Constituency
Delimitation
Elect
Enrol
EPIC
EVM
Franchise
Incumbent

Indelible Ink
NOTA
Ordinance
Plurality
Polling
Proxy
Recount
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DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2020



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