

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110 001

No.ECI/PN/17 /2011

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PRESS NOTE

Subject: Schedule for the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry.

The terms of the Legislative Assemblies of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal will expire as follows:

Tamil Nadu	16.05.2011
Kerala	23.05.2011
Puducherry	28.05.2011
Assam	28.05.2011
West Bengal	11.06.2011

As per the established practice, the Election Commission holds the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of the States and Union Territories, whose terms expire almost at the same time, together. By virtue of its powers, duties and functions under Article 324 read with Article 172(1) of the Constitution of India, Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and section 5 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Commission is required to hold elections to constitute the new Legislative Assemblies in the said States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT of Puducherry before expiry of their present terms.

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES

The total number of Assembly Constituencies in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal and the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, as determined by the Delimitation Commission under the Delimitation Act, 2002, are as under:

State	Total No. of ACs	Reserved for SC	Reserved for ST
Tamil Nadu	234	44	02
Kerala	140	14	02
Puducherry	30	05	--
West Bengal	294	68	16

In Assam, territorial determination of Assembly Constituencies is as per Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1976. Out of 126 ACs of Assam, 08 ACs are reserved for SC and 16 ACs are reserved for ST.

ELECTORAL ROLLS

The electoral rolls of all the existing Assembly Constituencies in the States/UT of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal have been revised, with reference to 1.1.2011 as the qualifying date, and have been finally published. As per the final rolls, the number of electors in these States/UT are as following:

State	Date of Publication	Total No. of Electors
Tamil Nadu	10.01.2011	4,59,50,620
Kerala	05.01.2011	2,29,40,408
Puducherry	05.01.2011	8,05,124
Assam	05.01.2011	1,81,45,914
West Bengal	05.01.2011	5,60,91,973

NRI VOTERS

In these elections, for the first time, in accordance with the recent amendment to the RP Act, overseas Indian citizens have been enabled to be enrolled as voters and would be able to vote in person. Election Officials have been suitably instructed to facilitate the process of their registration as voters.

PHOTO ELECTORAL ROLLS

Photo electoral rolls will be used during the forthcoming general elections (except Assam) Photo percentages in Photo electoral rolls of three States and UT of Puducherry are as follows:

Tamil Nadu	99.85%
Kerala	100%
Puducherry	100%
West Bengal	94.5%

Efforts are continuing to increase the photo coverage in Photo electoral rolls of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. All residual electors without photograph in the rolls are advised to contact their nearest Designated Photography Location (DPL) or the Electoral Registration Officer of their AC for inclusion of Photographs in the roll against their names. In case of Assam, there are only text-rolls and no photo Electoral rolls.

Identification of Voters and Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPIC)

Identification of the voters at the polling booth at the time of poll shall be mandatory. Electors who have been provided with EPIC shall be identified through EPIC only. As mentioned above, presently, the EPIC coverage in the poll going States/UT are :

Tamil Nadu	99.9%
Kerala	100%
Puducherry	100%
West Bengal	95.54%

All the residual electors are advised to obtain their Elector Photo Identity Cards from the Electoral Registration Officers of their Assembly Constituency. In the state of Assam, EPIC programme could not be started due to various reasons.

In order to ensure that no voter is deprived of his/her franchise, if his/her name figures in the Electoral Rolls, separate instructions will be issued to allow additional documents for identification of voters.

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

The poll in all the 4 (Four) States and the UT of Puducherry will be conducted at all polling stations using EVMs. The Commission has already made arrangements to ensure availability of adequate number of EVMs for smooth conduct of elections. The Commission has issued a new set of instructions with regard to the First Level Check of EVMs, that will be used in the polls in these States/UT. The first level check of such EVMs have been done in the presence of representatives of political parties. A two-stage randomization of EVMs will be made. In the first stage, all the EVMs stored in the District storage center will be randomized by the District Election Officer (DEO) in the presence of the representatives of the recognized political parties for allocation, assembly constituency-wise. EVMs will be prepared and set for elections after the candidates are finalized in presence of candidates. At this stage also candidates or their agents/representatives will be allowed to check and satisfy themselves in every manner about the functionality of the EVMs. After the EVMs in a constituency are prepared for poll by the Returning Officer and the ballot units are fitted with ballot papers, the EVMs will again be randomized to decide the actual polling stations in which they will be ultimately used. The second stage randomization will be done in the presence of General Observers and candidates or their election agents.

Law and Order and Deployment of Forces

Based on the assessment of the ground situation, Central Police Forces (CPF) and State Armed Police (SAP) drawn from other States will be deployed during the ensuing general elections. The CPF and SAP will be used generally for safeguarding the polling stations, the electors, poll-material and the polling personnel. Besides, these forces will be used for securing the strong rooms where the EVMs are stored pending counting and for securing the counting centers.

The Commission has been issuing instructions from time to time with regard to the advance preventive measures to be taken by the District Magistrates and Police authorities to maintain Law & Order and to create atmosphere conducive for conduct of free and fair elections. The Commission will be constantly monitoring the ground situation closely and will take appropriate measures to ensure peaceful, free and fair polls in these States/UT.

General Observers

The Commission will deploy General Observers in adequate number to ensure smooth conduct of elections. The Observers will be asked to keep a close watch on every stage of the electoral process to ensure free and fair elections. Their names, addresses within the district/constituency and their telephone numbers will be publicized in local newspapers so that the general public can quickly approach them for any grievance redressal. The Observers will be given a detailed briefing by the Commission before their deployment.

Expenditure Observers

The Commission has also decided to appoint adequate number of Expenditure Observers and Assistant Expenditure Observers who will exclusively monitor the election expenditure of the contesting candidates. For Greater transparency and for ease of monitoring of Election Expenses, Candidates would be required to open a bank account and incur their election expenses from

that very account. Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been separately issued by the Commission and are available at ECI website < www.eci.nic.in >.

Micro Observers

In addition to General Observers, the Commission will also deploy Micro-observers to observe the poll proceedings in the polling stations on the poll day in selected critical polling stations. They will be chosen from Central Government/Central PSUs officials. Micro-Observers will observe the proceedings at the polling stations on the poll day right from the mock poll to the completion of poll and the process of sealing of EVMs and other documents to ensure that all instructions of the Commission are complied with by the Polling Parties and the Polling Agents. These Micro-Observers will work directly under the control and supervision of the General Observer. They will be tasked to ensure purity of polling process and will report to the General Observers directly about any vitiation of the poll proceedings in their allotted polling stations.

Conduct of Officials

The Commission expects all officials engaged in the conduct of elections to discharge their duties in an impartial manner without any fear or favour. They are deemed to be on deputation to the Commission and shall be subject to its control, supervision and discipline. Several instructions have been issued from time to time to ensure impartiality of officials who are engaged in the conduct of elections. The conduct of all Government officials who have been entrusted with election related responsibilities and duties would remain under constant scrutiny of the Commission and strict action shall be taken against those officials who are found wanting on any account. The Commission has already given instructions that no election related official or Police officer of the rank of Sub Inspector and above shall be allowed to continue in his home district. Besides, instructions

have also been issued that election related officials including police officials who have completed three years in a district during last four years should be transferred out of that district. The State Governments and the UT Administration of Puducherry have also been asked to transfer all those officers against whom the Commission has recommended disciplinary action or who have been charged for any lapse during previous elections or for any election related work, from positions entailing any election work. The State Governments/ UT Administration of Puducherry have been instructed to ensure that those who stand transferred shall move out physically from their last place of posting and shall not remain there on any pretext including leave. The Commission has also instructed the State Governments/ UT Administration of Puducherry not to associate any officer with the electoral process against whom charges have been framed in a court of law in any case.

Protection to SC/ST Electors

As per Section 3 (1) (vii) of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, whoever, not being a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, forces or intimidates a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe not to vote or to vote to a particular candidate or to vote in a manner other than that provided by law shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to five years and with fine. The Commission has asked the State Governments/UT Administration of Puducherry to bring these provisions to the notice of all concerned for prompt action.

Polling Stations

Polling Stations in the poll going States/UT of Puducherry are as follows:

Tamil Nadu	54016
Kerala	20758
Assam	23813

West Bengal	51919
Puducherry	851

For the facility of physically challenged persons, instructions have been issued to ensure that all polling stations are located at ground floor and ramps are provided. Facilitation shall also be provided for locating electors' names in a polling station or a group of polling stations through help lines and facilitation centers.

Polling Parties and Randomization

Polling parties shall be formed randomly, through special application software. Three-stage randomization will be adopted. First, from a wider district database of eligible officials, a shortlist of a minimum 120% of the required numbers will be randomly picked up. This group will be trained for polling duties. In the second stage, from this trained manpower, actual polling parties as required shall be formed by random selection software in the presence of General Observers. In the third randomization, the polling stations will be allocated randomly just before the polling party's departure.

District Election Plan

The District Election Officers have been asked to prepare a comprehensive district election plan in consultation with SPs and sector Officers including the route plan and communication plan for conduct of elections. These plans will be vetted by the Observers taking into account vulnerability mapping exercise and mapping of critical polling station in accordance with Election Commission of India's extant instructions.

Videography

All critical events will be video-graphed. District Election Officers will arrange sufficient number of video and digital cameras and camera teams for the purpose. The events for videography will include filing of nomination, scrutiny

thereof and allotment of symbols, First Level Checking, preparations and storage of Electronic Voting Machines, important public meetings, processions etc. during campaign, process of dispatching of postal ballot papers, polling process in identified vulnerable polling stations, storage of polled EVMs, counting of votes etc. Digital cameras will also be deployed inside polling booths wherever needed and inside all counting centers. CDs of video recordings will be available on payment to anyone who wishes to obtain a copy of the same.

Model Code of Conduct

The Model Code of Conduct comes into effect immediately from now onwards. All the provisions of the Model Code will apply to the whole of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal and will be applicable to all candidates, political parties, the State Governments of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and UT Administration of Puducherry and the Union Government from today itself. Attention of the political parties and candidates is particularly invited to the following provisions of the Model Code:-

*“There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, Temples or other places of worship shall **not** be used as forum for election propaganda.”*

Voter Slips

To facilitate the voters to know where he/she is enrolled as a voter at a particular polling station and what is his/her serial number in the Electoral roll, the Commission has directed that voter slip including photograph of the voters, where available in the photo roll, will be distributed to all enrolled voters by the District Election Officer. It has also been directed that the said voter slip should be in the languages in which electoral roll is published for that Assembly Constituency.

Application of innovative practices

Election Commission is applying certain innovative practices for the benefit of voters and better election management in the elections to the five States/Union Territory. These best practices were successfully implemented by district election authorities in various elections held recently. Commission has decided to apply innovative practices viz **GIS Mapping in election management, On-line payment to polling staff, Security management and Voters education and awareness creation** in different States during these elections.

Complaint redressal mechanism – Call Center and Website based.

Every poll going state shall have a complaint redressal mechanism based on website and call center. The number of call center is **1965** which is a toll free number. The URL of the complaint registration website will be announced for each state by the respective Chief Electoral Officer separately. Complaints can be registered by making calls to the toll free call center numbers or on the web site. Action will be taken within time limit on all complaints. Complainants will also be informed of the action taken by SMS and by the call center. Complainants can also see the details of the action taken on their complaints on the website.

Schedule of election.

The Commission has prepared the schedule for holding General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and West Bengal after taking into consideration all relevant aspects, like the climatic conditions, academic schedules, festivals, prevailing law and order situation in the State, availability of Central Police Forces, time needed for movement and proper deployment of forces, and assessment of other ground realities. The Commission after considering all relevant aspects has decided to recommend to the respective Governors/Lt. Governor to issue notifications for the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of these states/UT under the relevant

provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 as per the schedule annexed.

All Instructions/Guidelines of the Commission regarding these elections can also be seen by visiting Commission's website “ www.eci.nic.in “

(Yashvir Singh)
Director