



**GUIDELINES
FOR
CONDUCT OF
GENERAL ELECTIONS/BYE-ELECTIONS
TO PANCHAYATS AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS
DURING COVID-19**

ELECTION COMMISSIONER FOR UTS
(Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep,
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu),
F Block, M.S. Apartments,
KG Marg, New Delhi - 110 001

BROAD GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF GENERAL ELECTIONS / BYE-ELECTIONS DURING COVID-19



Elections are conducted in different phases spread over a period of time involving a large number of people and a number of venues. The election process is conducted in accordance with the election procedure rules of the government meant for the particular institution of self government (local body).

After onset of COVID-19 pandemic in India, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) have been issuing guidelines/directives from time to time to be followed countrywide. Similarly, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has also issued SOP on disinfection, sanitization, and prevention for containing COVID-19.

The endeavour of the Election Commission for UTs would be to hold the elections in such a manner that is not only free, fair and transparent but is also safe from the health point of view. Accordingly, it has become obligatory on the part of the election managers to organize the whole show in such a manner that all safety measures as advised by the government from time to time are strictly followed so that there is no threat for the spread of corona virus amongst the stakeholders involved in the election process.

Keeping in view the above, following guidelines have been framed with respect to key activities of the conduct of elections, considering the upcoming General Elections and bye-elections to Panchayats and Municipal Councils in the UTs of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu during the period of COVID-19. The responsibility for enforcement of these guidelines and compliance by all concerned primarily lies with the Returning Officer; however, he may designate either an independent officer to supervise and monitor its implementation.

Sl. No.	Guidelines to be followed
1.	<p>GENERAL GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED DURING ENTIRE ELECTION PROCESSES FOR ALL PERSONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every person shall wear face mask during every election related activity. 2. At the entry of hall/-room/ premises used for election purposes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Thermal Scanning of all persons shall be carried out; b. Sanitizer, soap and water shall be made available. c. Social distancing shall be maintained as per the extant COVID-19 guidelines of the State Govt. and Ministry of Home Affairs. 3. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting of any illness at the earliest to the appropriate authority shall be ensured. 4. As far as practicable, large halls should be identified and utilized to ensure social distancing norms. 5. Adequate number of vehicles shall be mobilized for movement of polling personnel, security personnel to ensure compliance of COVID-19 guidelines. 6. Installation and use of Aarogya Setu App by election related personnel will be compulsory.
2.	<p>NODAL HEALTH OFFICER</p> <p>Nodal Health Officer shall be designated for the UT to oversee COVID-19 related arrangements and, preventive measures during entire electoral process.</p>
3.	<p>EVMs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First & Second randomization and preparation of EVMs shall be done in large halls. 2. Sanitizers shall be provided in sufficient quantity for use during the process. 3. Gloves shall be made available to each official handling EVM.

4.	TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As far as practicable, training of election officials will be organized in decentralized manner in large halls. 2. Training for election officials may be organized through online mode. 3. Sufficient number of Polling/Counting/Poll related staffs shall also be kept in reserve by DEO/RO, to replace in case any polling personnel display COVID-19 symptoms.
5.	I: NOMINATION PROCESS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Installation and use of Aarogya Setu App is must while entering in the offices of Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, and other related offices. 2. Number of persons to accompany candidate for submission of Nomination is restricted to two (2). 3. Number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to two (2). 4. Returning Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation following social distancing norms. 5. Returning Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates. 6. Large space for waiting for candidate(s) should be arranged. 7. The entry of the political party representatives who are residing in any containment zone, to any office is strictly prohibited till the containment zone is de-notified.
6.	ELECTION MATERIAL <p>Election Material Kit will be prepared in a spacious and sufficiently large hall following all safety, sanitization and social distancing measures.</p>

7. **DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION OF ELECTION MATERIAL**

1. Large halls/spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material.
2. As far as practicable, it should be organized in decentralized manner.
3. Prior staggered time should be allocated to the polling teams for distribution/ collection of election material.

8. **POLLING STATION ARRANGEMENTS**

1. Commission has issued detailed instructions for assured minimum facilities at each polling station. Now, in view of COVID-19 situation, following additional facilities/steps should be taken:
2. Mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, preferably, a day before the poll.
3. Thermal Scanner at the entry point of every polling station location.
4. Thermal checking of voters at entry point of polling station location/ Polling station, either by polling staff or Para Medical staff or Asha worker.
5. If temperature is above the set norms of MoHFW at first reading, then it will be checked twice and if it remains, then the elector shall be provided with token/certificate and will be asked to come for voting at the last hour of poll. At the last hour of poll, such electors shall be facilitated voting, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures.
6. Help Desk for distribution of token to the voters of first come first basis so that they do not wait in the queue.
7. Marker to demonstrate social distancing for queue.
8. Earmarking circle for 15-20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) distance for voters standing in the queue depending on the availability of space. There shall be three queues each, for male, female, and PwD/

Senior citizen voters.

9. The services of BLOs, volunteers etc may be engaged to monitor and regulate social distancing norms strictly.
10. Soap and Water shall be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
11. Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
12. Face Masks in reserves for those electors who are not carrying the mask will be kept.
13. Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations.
14. Sitting arrangement in polling station for the polling personnel and polling agents shall be made as per the norms of social distancing.
15. If polling agent or counting agent is having temperature above the prescribed limit, then their reliever shall be allowed by Presiding Officer, who will keep a record accordingly.
16. During the process of identification of voter, the voters will require to lower the facemask for identification, when required.
17. At any given time, only 1(one) voter shall be allowed to stand in front of each polling official maintaining social distance.
18. Hand gloves shall be provided to the voter, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.
19. Sanitizers shall be kept inside the booth at appropriate locations with clear direction for the use by voters.
20. COVID-19 patients who are quarantined will be allowed to cast their vote at the last hour of the poll day at their respective Polling Stations, under the supervision of health authorities, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures. Sector Magistrates shall coordinate this in their allocated polling stations.
21. In case of those voters who are residing in the area notified as

	<p>Containment Zone, guidelines shall be issued by the ECI which will be followed by EC (UTs).</p> <p>22. A Gazetted officer may be designated for dealing with the election staff who may develop Covid-19 symptoms during election duty to coordinate with the Health authorities and the RO.</p>
9.	<p>KIT FOR POLLING OFFICER</p> <p>The following items shall be provided to every polling official and security personnel (Other than those where PPEs are needed) in addition to other prescribed items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mask 2. Sanitizer 3. Face-Shield 4. Gloves
10.	<p>POSTAL BALLOT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Option of Postal Ballot facility has been extended to the electors of following categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Electors, who are marked as Persons with Disabilities (PwD) b. Electors above the age of 80 years c. Electors employed in notified Essential Services/Polling Staff 2) Electors who are COVID- 19 positive/suspect and in quarantine (home/ institutional) <p>Guidelines for each of these categories will be issued by the ECI which will be followed by EC (UTs).</p>
11.	<p>CAMPAIGN BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES/CONTESTING CANDIDATES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political parties and the contesting candidates should strictly adhere to the advisory issued by MHA, Govt. of India from time to time. 2. Door to Door Campaign- Subject to any other restriction(s) including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 (five) persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, is

allowed to do door to door campaigning.

3. Road Shows - The convoy of vehicles should be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour.
4. Posters/standees/AV media on preventive measures about COVID-19 to be displayed prominently at suitable places.
5. Election Meetings - Public gatherings/ rallies may be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. District Election Officer should take following steps for this purpose:
 - a. Nodal District Health Officer should be involved in the process to ensure that all COVID-19 related guidelines are adhered to by all concerned in the district.
 - b. District Election Officer and District Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by UT/State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings.
 - c. DEO should depute Sector Health Regulators to oversee that COVID-19 instructions/guidelines are being followed during these meetings.
 - d. As far as possible virtual meetings may be arranged.
 - e. The political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities.
 - f. Anybody showing Covid symptoms should be referred to the health authorities.
 - g. Non-compliance of Instructions - Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60

	of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable, as specified in Order No.40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29th July, 2020 of Ministry of Home Affairs. District Election Officer should bring this to the notice of all concerned.
12.	STRONG-ROOM ARRANGEMENT <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Room should be sanitized after completion of poll day. 2. Social Distancing and other safety norms shall be followed for each activity.
13.	COUNTING OF VOTES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carrying cases of CUs should be sanitized before placing over counting tables. 2. De-sealing of CUs and displaying Result on CU should be done by one official on each table. 3. The counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.

Based on these guidelines, detailed COVID-19 related comprehensive plan will be prepared for General Elections and Bye-Elections to Panchayats and Municipal Council at the UT Administration level, taking local conditions into account.

Any other guideline issued by the Election Commission (UTs) from time to time during the Election process shall also be followed strictly.
