



COMMISSIONERATE

Health & Family Welfare Services

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GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS/ BYE-ELECTIONS DURING COVID- 19 IN KARNATAKA

Broad guidelines for conduct of elections / bye elections are issued by the Election Commission of India, Document No: 324.6. EPS. OT.001.2020, Dated: August 2020, In view of the current COVID situation the following comprehensive guidelines for conducting Elections/ Bye elections are issued herewith, for strict adherence in the State of Karnataka.

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED DURING ENTIRE ELECTION PROCESSES FOR ALL PERSONS

- Every person shall wear face mask during every election related activity.
- At the entry of hall/ room/ premises used for election purposes:
 - Thermal Scanning of all persons shall be carried out;
 - Sanitizer, soap and water shall be made available.
- Physical distancing of 2 Mtrs (6 Feet) shall be maintained at all times.
- As far as practicable, large halls should be identified and utilized to ensure physical distancing norms.
- Adequate number of vehicles shall be mobilized for movement of polling personnel, security personnel to ensure compliance of COVID-19 guidelines.

2. NODAL HEALTH OFFICER

Nodal Health Officer shall be designated for the District and the Assembly Constituency to oversee COVID-19 related arrangements and, preventive measures during entire electoral process.

3. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- As far as practicable, training of election officials will be organized in decentralized manner at large halls.
- Training for election officials may be organized through online mode.
- All PPTs, training materials, relevant documents, topic wise video clips, question papers for self- assessment may be uploaded in app/ portal so that any election official can access it as per requirement.
- Sufficient number of Polling/Counting/Poll related staffs shall also be kept in reserve by DEO/RO, to replace in case any polling personnel displays COVID-19 symptoms.

4. NOMINATION PROCESS

- Following additional options to facilitate online mode are hereby provided:
 - Nomination form will also be available online on the website of CEO/ DEO. An intending candidate may fill in it online and its print may be taken for submitting before the Returning Officer as specified in Form-1 (Rule-3 of Conduct of Election Rules 1961).

- (b) Affidavit may also be filled in online on the website of CEO/DEO and its print can be taken and after notarization it may be submitted along with the nomination form before the Returning Officer.
- (c) Candidate may deposit security money through online mode at the designated platform. However, a candidate will continue to have the option of deposit in cash in the treasury.
- (d) Candidate may have the option to seek his/her elector certification for the purpose of nomination online.

II. Further:

- (a) Number of persons to accompany candidate for submission of Nomination is restricted to two (2). (This is in supersession of existing Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019).
- (b) Number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to two (2). (This is in supersession of existing Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019).
- (c) Returning Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation following physical distancing norms.
- (d) Returning Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates.
- (e) Large space for waiting for candidate(s) should be arranged.
- (f) All steps required to be taken for the submission of nomination form and affidavit shall continue to operate as per the provisions contained in the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

5. ELECTION MATERIAL PREPARATION

Election Material Kit will be prepared in a spacious and sufficiently large hall following all safety, sanitation and physical distancing measures.

6. DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION OF ELECTION MATERIAL (MUSTERING & DEMUSTERING)

- (a) Large halls/spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material.
- (b) As far as practicable, it should be organized in decentralized manner.
- (c) Prior staggered time should be allocated to the polling teams for distribution/collection of election material.
- (d) Sanitizer de-contamination with Sodium Hypochlorite and Soap & Water will be provided at all Mustering & De-mustering Centres by concerned ULB.

7. NO. OF ELECTORS IN POLLING STATION

There shall be maximum 1000 electors instead of 1500 electors in a polling station. (Commission's Instruction No.23/SEC/2020-ERS, dated 23rd July, 2020)

8. POLLING STATION ARRANGEMENTS

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:

- (a) Mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, preferably, a day before the poll will be done by concerned ULB or GP.
- (b) Thermal Scanner at the entry point of every polling station location will be provided by Nodal Health Officer.
- (c) Thermal Checking of electors at entry point of polling station location/ Polling station, either by polling staff or Para Medical staff or Asha worker .
- (d) Proposed Protocol: If temperature is above the set norms of MOHFW at first reading, then it will be checked twice and if it remains, Pulse Oximeter will be used for checking oxygen saturation (after sanitizing PO) 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 toll owing COVID-19 related preventive measures. During last hour of poll all Poll related officials will be provided with PPE kit and Face Shield. Pulse Oximeter and PPE kits where required will be provided by Nodal Health Officer. Voting will happen under supervision of Sector Health Regulator.

(e) The last one hour of the polling shall be utilized for allowing the following persons to vote in

this order of priority.

- i. Persons from containment zones (compulsory wearing of facemask)
- ii. Contacts in home quarantine (compulsory wearing of facemask)
- iii. Persons having COVID-19 like symptoms (symptomatic)-cough, cold, fever, throat pain, etc. Following voting they shall be advised to seek immediate medical consultation.(compulsory wearing of facemask)
- iv. COVID-19 positive persons wearing full PPE kit and arrive in a dedicated ambulance.

During this hour the polling staff shall be very meticulous in complying with COVID-19 standard safety precautions.

(f) Help Desk for distribution of token to the electors of first come first basis so that they do not wait in the queue. Help desk will be manned by BLO. Help Desk will provide three layer Mask to those not carrying it.

(g) Marker to demonstrate physical distancing {6 feet apart} for queue using Chalk Powder in large quantity. This will be supervised by BLO and checked by Sector Health Regulator & Sector Officer.

(h) Earmarking circle for 15-20 persons of 2 Meters (6 feet) distance for electors standing in the queue depending on the availability of space. There shall be three queues each, for male, female, and PWD/ Senior citizen electors.

(i) One shaded waiting areas with chairs, dari etc. will be provided, for male and female separately, within the polling station premises so that electors can participate in voting without safety concerns.

(j) Wherever possible, Booth App shall be used at the polling station.

(k) Soap and Water shall be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station by concerned ULB / GP.

(l) Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.

(m) New Face Masks in reserves for those electors who are not carrying the mask will be kept at help desk and be distributed by BLO.

(n) Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations by BLO and monitored by Sector Health Regulator & Sector Officer.

(o) Sitting arrangement in polling station for the polling personnel and polling agents shall be made as per the norms of physical distancing {6 ft apart} by concerned VA I R I PDO and BLO.

(p) Polling Agents will be checked every time they enter the PS and be provided with mask and sanitizer usage facility. 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.

(q) During the process of identification of elector, the electors will require to lower the facemask for identification, when required.

(r) At any given time, only (one) elector shall be allowed to stand in front of each polling official maintaining physical distance (Hence not more than 3 electors should be inside the PS at any time).

(s) The voters are encouraged to bring their own pens to the polling stations. If the person doesn't have a pen the polling officer may sanitize the violet sketch pen provided with sanitizer/2.5% Lysol/1% sodium hypochlorite solution (commercially available in the

- market) before providing it to the voter for signature. Multiple pens are not needed.
- Ⓒ) Sanitizers shall be kept inside the booth at appropriate locations with clear direction for the use by electors before application of indelible ink and after completing voting procedure.
 - Ⓓ) Food packets containing freshly prepared items shall be provided to those posted for training, polling and counting. Due COVID-19 precautions shall be taken like those serving the food packets wear facemask, face shield and gloves. The drinking water shall be provided in dispensing cans with paper glasses for single use and easy disposal.

9. KIT FOR POLLING OFFICER

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:

- 1) Mask - N95
- 2) Sanitizer- 80%+ Ethyl I Isopropyl Alcohol with an emollient.
- 3) Gloves - Purple Nitrile Rubber

Protocol for all Polling Officials: Must use sanitizer every hour during poll process

10. POSTAL BALLOT

- Ⓐ) Option of Postal Ballot facility has been extended to the electors of following categories:
 - i. Electors, who are marked as Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
 - ii. Electors above the age of 80 years
 - iii. Electors employed in notified Essential services
- Ⓑ) Guidelines for each of these categories are being issued separately.

11. CAMPAIGN BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES/CONTESTING CANDIDATES

- Ⓐ) 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.
- Ⓑ) 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 instead of gap of 100 meters. (In supersession of Para 5.8.1 of Returning Officer's Handbook 2019)
- Ⓒ) 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:
 - i. District Election Officer should, in advance, identify dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked Entry/Exit points.
 - ii. In all such identified grounds, the District Election Officer should, in advance, put markers to ensure PHYSICAL distancing norms by the attendees.
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. District Election Officer and District Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings , 200 attendees only in closed spaces. Campaign by the
 - v. political parties/contesting candidates: The maximum number of persons
 - vi. allowable in open spaces/areas shall be 15 persons per gunta.
 - vii. DEO should depute Sector Officers and Sector Health Regulators to oversee that COVID-19 instructions/guidelines are being followed during these meetings.
 - viii. 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.
 - ix. Non-compliance of Instructions - Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19

measures will be liable to be 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. To ensure this, DEO will issue an order and make it public through press and also inform contesting candidates and political parties in writing.

- Ⓒ Allocation of public spaces must be done using Suvidha app in the manner already prescribed by Commission.

12. STRONG-ROOM ARRANGEMENT

- Ⓐ Strong room should be sanitized after completion of poll day by concerned ULB.
Ⓑ Physical distancing and other safety norms shall be followed for each activity.

13. COUNTING OF VOTES

- (a) Not more than 7 counting tables should be allowed in a counting hall. Hence, counting of votes of a constituency may be considered at 3-4 halls by appointing additional Assistant Returning Officers. (In supersession of instructions dated 30th April, 2014)
(b) Candidates, Agents, etc will be tested for temperature and using Pulse Oximeter and if found having temperature, will be isolated in a separate room where they can watch counting through live video display seated at gap of 4 to 6 feet. They will be provided masks if they have not brought any and sanitization facilities and hand washing facilities.
(c) There will be ambulance, doctors, nurses and ANMs present in PPE kit and Face Shields at Counting Place.
(d) All Counting and Security Staff will use Sanitizer every hour and wear mask and gloves.
(e) De-sealing of Ballot Boxes should be done by one official on each table wearing gloves.
(f) The counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.
(g) For counting of Postal Ballots, additional number of AROs will be required. Postal Ballots will be counted in a separate hall under the supervision officer Returning Officer/Assistant Returning officer.



COMMISSIONER

Health & Family Welfare Services.

To,

1. The Regional Commissioners, Bengaluru, Mysore, Kalaburagi & Belagavi
2. The Deputy Commissioners, All Districts
3. The Chief Executive Officers, Zilla Panchayath, All Districts
4. The District Health Officer & District Surgeons – All Districts

Copy for information to:

1. The Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka
2. The Additional Chief Secretary, Dept. of Health & Family Welfare
3. The Secretary, State Election Commission, Karnataka.
4. The Commissioner, BBMP
5. Dr. Vishal R, IAS, State Nodal Officer
6. The Director, Health & Family Welfare Services