

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110001

K.N.Bhar
Under Secretary

No.51/8/2009-EMS

Dated: 12th February, 2009

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States and Union Territories.

Subject: Introduction of Braille Signage Features in Electronic Voting Machines.

Sir,

The Commission has been receiving representation from the various Associations of Visually impaired person for introduction of Braille signage features in the EVMs to facilitate the visually impaired voters to cast their votes without the help of attendant. The Commission considered the proposal in detail and tried the Braille signage feature in the EVMs during the bye-election to the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh from 123-Asfnagar Assembly Constituency held during September-October, 2004. In 2005, it was tried in one of the constituency during the Assembly elections of Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana. In 2006, it was tried in one of the constituency of the States of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala during Assembly elections. In 2008, it was tried in all the assembly constituencies of NCT of Delhi during Assembly election.

The Commission has decided to introduce similar Braille signage features on the Electronic Voting Machines to be used during the ensuing General Election to Lok Sabha 2009 and simultaneous Assembly elections in some States. The Commission has directed that the following additional arrangements will be made to facilitates visually imparted electors to exercise their franchise:-

- (i) The numeric stickers in Braille denoting the serial numbers of the candidates will be prepared by the Chief Electoral Officers with the assistance of the manufacturers of EVM i.e. Bharat Electronics Limited, Bangalore and Electronics Corporation of India Limited, Hyderabad, as the case may be or Devnar School for Blind/National Association for Blind or from any other source available for this purpose. The States and Union Territories having new version EVMs (2006 + models) are not required to prepare such numeric stickers, as new version EVMs have embedded such serial numbers of the candidates at the right of the blue button (voting button) on the Balloting Units.
- (ii) These stickers will be pasted to the right of the blue button (voting button) on the Balloting Unit by the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officer, in the presence of the candidates or their authorized agents.

- (iii) The Returning Officer will send the list of contesting candidates to the Devnar Foundation for Blind/National Blind Association or to any other source available for this purpose immediately after the last date of withdrawal of candidatures for preparation of Dummy Ballot Sheets which will contain the serial numbers of the contesting candidates, names of the candidates arranged in the same serial order in which their names will appear on the ballot paper on the Balloting Unit. The party affiliation of each of the candidates will be indicated by printing the name of the political party concerned against the name of the candidate. In the case of independent candidates, the word “Independent” will be printed. These Dummy Ballot Sheets will be prepared in English only and one copy of the sheets will be supplied to each of the polling stations.
- (iv) The Dummy Ballot Sheets mentioned in (iii) above will be printed in Braille signage by Devnar School for Blind/National Association or by any other source available for this purpose for Blind under the supervision of one responsible officer of the office of Chief Electoral Officer of the concerned State/Union Territory for which the Chief Electoral Officer of the State/Union Territory will liase with the Devnar School for Blind/National Association or any other source available for this purpose and the manufacturers of EVM i.e. Bharat Electronics Limited, Bangalore, as the case may be. The Dummy Sheets will have the name of the constituency written in normal script also at the top. The language “English” will also be written in normal script to distinguish the language version of the Dummy Ballot Sheet.
- (v) Each such sheet prepared for every polling station will be certified by the Commissioner of Disabilities of concerned State or his authorized representative who will be an official knowing Braille.
- (vi) The concerned District Election Officer and the Returning Officer will hold detailed training and briefing sessions for the Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers to explain to them these measures as they are being introduced for the first time in all the polling stations in your State/Union Territory for the visually impaired electors.
- (vii) The Chief Electoral Officer will also arrange for wide publicity of these measures through advertisements in newspapers and TV etc. to inform the visually impaired voters of the arrangements being made for them.
- (viii) At the polling station, the visually impaired persons will also be allowed the facility of a companion as provided for in Rule 49N of Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, regardless of the new facility being introduced.
- (ix) Inside the polling station the visually impaired voter will be given the Dummy Ballot Sheet in Braille by the Presiding Officer on his/her request if he/she prefers to cast his/her vote with the help of same. After he/she has studied the contents of Dummy

Sheet he/she will be allowed to proceed to the voting compartment to cast his/her vote. Such electors after reading the Dummy Ballot Sheet will be able to cast their vote by reading the serial number of the candidate of their choice on the numeric sticker fixed on the EVM. If the elector so desires, the companion will be allowed to accompany the voter to the voting compartment as provided in Rule 49N of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

- (x) After the voter has cast his/her vote, the Presiding Officer will ensure that the Dummy Sheet delivered to the voter is returned to the Presiding Officer.
 - (xi) After the close of Poll, the Dummy Ballot Sheet shall be sealed in separate cover superscribed "Dummy Ballot Sheets" for the visually impaired and sent to the Returning Officer along with other Non-Statutory forms.
 - (xii) The Presiding Officer shall keep a record of all such voters (who avail of the facility of Braille Sheet) in the enclosed proforma and will submit the same to the Returning Officer along with the EVM. These details will be kept separately in the office of Returning Officer. The Returning Officer will consolidate all the information supplied by the Presiding Officers in this regard and submit the same to the Commission through the Chief Electoral Officer after declaration of result.
2. You are requested to kindly take all appropriate steps for the implementation of above directions of the Commission. The concerned District Election Officers and Returning Officers should be informed of the above directions of the Commission immediately. All political parties and contesting candidates may also be called by the District Election Officers and briefed about the measures to be taken in this regard.
3. Kindly acknowledge the receipt.

Yours faithfully,

(K.N.Bhar)

By Speed Post

Copy for information and necessary action to: -

- 1. The National Association for the Blind, Sector-5, R.K.Puram, New Delhi.**
- 2. Devnar Foundation for the Blind, Plot No.185, Road No.1, West Marredpally, Secundderabad-500026, Andhra Pradesh.**
- 3. Bharat Electronics Limited, Nagavara, Outer Ring Road, Bangalore-560045, Karnataka.**
- 4. Electronics Corporation of India Limited, MCU Complex, Phase-II, IDA Cherapalli, PO. HCL, Hyderabad-500051, Andhra Pradesh.**

PROFORMA FOR

REPORT ON THE VOTING BY THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED VOTERS

No. and the Name of the Assembly/Parliamentary Constituency.....

No. and Name of the Polling Station.....

Name of the Presiding Officer.....

S.No.	Number of visually impaired voters turned up for voting	Number of such voters who used dummy ballot sheet in Braille	Number of such voters who did not use dummy ballot sheet and preferred to vote using the provision of Rule 49N	Number of voters who used both the facilities.

(Signature of the Presiding Officer)