

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

NIRVACHAN SADAN, ASHOKA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110001

K.N.BHAR
UNDER SECRETARY

No: 470/2007/PLN-I

Date: 29th August 2007

To,

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States and Union Territories

Subject: Counting of votes for General/Bye-elections to the House of People/State
Legislative Assembly-ensuring transparency –regarding

Sir/Madam,

The Commission has issued detailed instructions regarding the arrangements for counting centers and management of counting process including the security arrangements vide its order number 470/2007/PLN-I dated 11th January 2007.

In order to ensure a higher level of transparency in the counting process, the following arrangements would also be put in place by all District Election Officers and Returning Officers. A copy of these instructions should be given to all the Observers immediately on their arrival so that they have time to familiarize themselves with this and to take action accordingly.

Randomization of counting officials

1. The posting of Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants must be done randomly in such a way that the counting official come to know of the Assembly Constituency and the table assigned to them only at the time of their arrival at the Counting Center on the day of the counting.
2. The District Election Officers shall issue photo-identity cards to all counting staff . After the Randomization, explained in the following paragraphs is over, the reserve staff would be seated separately in an enclosure within the counting centre campus.
3. The District Election Officer must keep a pool of well trained officials (including the reserved pool) available for counting purposes. The counting officials be directed to reach the counting center at 6 am on the date of counting. As already mentioned in Para 1 above, these officials would not be allotted the Assembly Constituency or the Table number in advance.
4. The Observers and the District Election Officer would assemble at one place for carrying out the randomization at 5 am on the day of the counting. This place may be the NIC center, Counting Center or any other office where the process can be conveniently carried out. The list of trained officials would be provided by the District Election officer to the Observers. There would be

two lists, one of Counting Supervisors and another of Counting Assistants and each counting official would be assigned a unique serial or code number which would be so labeled as to indicate clearly the category to which he belongs i.e. whether he is a Counting Supervisor or a Counting Assistant.

5. The randomization would be carried out either manually or by using a computer. For manual randomization, the senior most Observer present would randomly assign the Constituency and the table number to the counting officials by the draw of lots. This has to be done with the two lists mentioned above separately and independently so that for each of the tables the name of one Counting Supervisor and one Counting Assistant is generated. The District Election Officer would make all prior arrangements to ensure quick and smooth conduct of this randomization process. This would include preparing chits of the unique serial numbers assigned to counting officials and the constituency/table numbers.
6. Alternatively, the District Election Officer may make arrangements for carrying out the abovementioned randomization with the aid of a computer in consultation with the Observers. However, before using a computer aided method the Observers must fully satisfy themselves that the process is free from all errors and that it truly generates the results in a random manner.
7. The District Election Officers would ensure that Videography of the process of randomization is carried out for record.
8. To illustrate it by a practical example, let us assume a district has 10 Ac's, with 14 counting tables each. For this district 154(including 10% reserve) Counting Supervisors and 154 Counting Assistants would be required. These many officials would have been already trained and given codes while issuing the duty orders. On the date of counting at 5 am, these 154 codes each of Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants, written on individual slips, would be kept in two separate boxes. The senior most Observer, in the presence of District Election Officer and all other Observers would start the randomization process for a particular assembly constituency by randomly picking up one slip each from the two boxes. The Counting Supervisor and the Counting Assistant so picked up on the first set of draws would be assigned table no 1 in that Constituency. This would continue in a similar way till each of the 14 tables are assigned one Counting Supervisor and one Counting Assistant. The same process would then be repeated for other Assembly Constituencies in a similar manner. The officials who are left at the end of this exercise would be treated as part of the reserved pool.
9. Once the randomization process is over, the Constituency wise posting lists, duly signed by the District Election Officer and the Observers would be brought to the Counting Center by the Observers and District Election Officer, in time, to be handed over to the respective Returning Officers and the control room staff by 6 a.m.

10. The counting officials on reaching the control room at the counting center would be provided the posting details and directed to reach the counting hall of the assigned Constituency at the respective table.
11. It must be ensured that the whole process of randomization is over by 6:00 am so that the counting officials are able to reach their assigned position conveniently before the scheduled start of the counting process.

Reserved Pool

12. The officials who have not been assigned any Constituency/table would form a reserved pool.
13. There would be no deployment of officials in shifts as the counting process would normally not take more than 6 to 8 hours. However, the District Election Officers would have the liberty of replacing officials in case such an exigency arises, but this replacement would also be done randomly from the pool of officials in reserve after consulting the Observer of the constituency concerned

Cross checking by the Observers at random

14. As per the instructions issued earlier, after each round of counting, the Returning Officer would do the tabulation of the round based on the table wise result provided by the Counting Supervisors. The table wise result of the round is to be countersigned by the Observer before the Returning Officer announces the result of the round.
15. A system is now being introduced through the present instructions by which there would be a random checking by the Observers, in the manner indicated below, of the table wise results provided by the counting officials.
16. During the course of counting (for a round) the observer shall keep oscillating between counting tables and closely observe the counting process.
17. At the closure of each round, the Observer would randomly select any two EVM control units from amongst the Control units of the concerned round which has been counted. He would then direct the counting staff specifically deployed for this purpose by the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officer through **random selection** to independently note down from the Control units selected, the details of the votes polled as indicated by the machine. These details he would then compare with the details provided by the officials in the table wise result to check for any discrepancy between the two. Care must be taken that the staff assigned for random checking is not aware of the details provided in the table wise result.
18. The District Election Officer/Returning Officers would ensure that there is a separate and sufficient space earmarked in the same counting hall for this

random cross-checking so that the normal counting of vote for subsequent round continues without any hindrance.

19. The staff to assist the Observer for this cross checking would be randomly selected from the reserved pool. If required, after a few rounds, fresh staff from the reserved pool should replace this staff.
20. Only after being satisfied that the result displayed by the Control Unit and that shown in the round wise result sheet and Form 17C match would the Observer countersign the result sheet of the round. The Observers would ensure that this exercise is carried out in each round and the selection of the two control units is absolutely random.
21. If any discrepancy is found between the result obtained from the table and that ascertained through the random checking by the observer as mentioned above, then:
 - (i) The result of that round for each table shall be reverified from the EVMs.
 - (ii) Such staff as is found to be wrongly noted the counting result would be taken off and replaced by another set of staff. Severe disciplinary action should then follow on the erring staff for their omissions and commissions.
 - (iii) The result provided by such staff (and table) in the preceding rounds would be checked again in presence of observer and corrected sheets prepared wherever necessary.
22. The counting officials as well as candidates and their counting agents would be informed about this provision of random cross checking to be carried out by the Observers. It would also be informed that any discrepancy found during this randomized cross checking would be viewed seriously by the Commission and could result in serious disciplinary action and prosecution of the responsible officials.
23. The Observers would continuously maintain their presence in the counting hall and periodically inspect the counting tables to ensure that counting is going on according to the instructions of the Commission in a transparent and systematic way.
24. The Observers, in their final report after the counting would specifically mention that the randomization of personnel and the random checking of Control Unit details was carried out as per the instructions of the Commission
25. All District Election Officers and Returning Officers would ensure that these instructions are strictly followed and would make all necessary arrangements for the same.
26. Apart from one Counting Supervisor and one Counting Assistant for each counting Table, one additional staff would be seated in each of the 14 counting tables. The additional staff will invariably be a Central Govt./ Central Govt. PSU employee. This additional staff will note down the details

of votes exhibited by the EVMs being counted in each round in that Table. These additional counting staff would be provided with a pre-printed statement on which there will be space for noting down the CU No., Round No., Table No., Polling Station Number and thereafter the names of all the contesting candidates as they appear in the ballot paper. They will put their signature at the end of the statement and shall hand over the statement to the Observer after each round.

27. The Observer/Returning Officer will cross check the figures noted in Part-II of Form 17C as submitted by the Counting staff with the additional statement submitted by the additional staff.
28. Wherever adequate number of Central Govt. staff are not available, the shortfall will be made good by the Divisional Commissioner by mobilizing the required number of staff from the neighbouring districts within the Division. The additional staff will be given a brief orientation training before being deployed at the counting center as above. The additional staff also will be provided a ID Card by the District Election Officer. The constituency-wise and subsequently Table-wise deployment of such additional staff shall also be done randomly by the Observer.
29. All District Election Officers would ensure that these instructions are given wide publicity amongst the general public, the political parties, candidates, counting officials and other election related officials. It is repeated that a copy of these instructions would be provided to each election Observers immediately upon their arrival in the district.

All concerned will also strictly follow the other existing instructions of the ECI regarding the counting process. A confirmation report shall be submitted by all District Election Officers through Chief Electoral Officers by 5 p.m. of the date, one day prior to the date of counting that all necessary steps have been taken for strict implementation of the above instructions.

Yours faithfully,

(K.N.BHAR)

PROFORMA FOR RECORDING OF VOTES BY ADDITIONAL COUNTING STAFF

No. and Name of A.C. -

Round No.-

Table No.-

C U Number:

Polling Station Number:

Sl. No.	Name of Candidate (Pre-printed)	No. of votes recorded

Date:

Signature of Addl. Counting staff (With full name)

* To be handed over to the Observer only.