

By e-mail/Speed Post

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

**No.23/Roll Observer/2009-ERS
2009.**

Dated: 6th January,

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
all States and Union Territories.

Subject: Revision of Electoral Rolls – Appointment of Roll Observers – Regarding

Sir/Madam,

The preparation and revision of rolls is pivotal to the whole electoral system. To ensure that the rolls are prepared with due diligence and rigor, the Commission has been nominating senior officers of the State Government as Roll Observers to oversee the work of preparation of electoral roll and evaluate the quality of electoral roll regularly within the State itself. The Commission also issued instructions to appoint Divisional Commissioners (where in vogue) as Observers during roll revision period in respect of the districts within their jurisdiction.

2. The Commission has since decided to make the practice of appointing Divisional Commissioners and other senior State Govt. Officers as roll observers as a permanent feature. The decision of the Commission was also made known during the last Conference of Chief Electoral Officers held in December 2008. To implement the above decision, the Commission in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Article 324 of the Constitution of India, has decided to appoint the Divisional Commissioners, wherever applicable, as electoral roll observers during the period of revision of electoral roll in any of the Constituencies in the districts within their jurisdiction. They will act as Electoral Roll Observer in addition to such other observers who may be deputed by the ECI additionally where the number of districts with a Divisional Commissioner is more than what can be comfortably handled.

3. The jurisdiction of additional observer need not be confined to a division and can cut across divisions to optimize number of roll observers. The exact deployment of such additional Roll Observers, where needed will be worked out by the Chief Electoral

Officer in consultation with the State Government and a proposal submitted to the ECI for approval.

4. The Chief Electoral Officer will keep the Divisional Commissioners/other observers abreast of the Commission's revision schedules. Under Section 13CC of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, the Divisional Commissioners/other Officers will be deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission during the period they function as Observer, subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission.

5. An indicative check list outlining the points to be observed is enclosed as general guidelines. The list is only indicative and not exhaustive. Specific observations on the roll etc. may be made by the Observers (in addition to the points mentioned in the list) depending on the ground situation as assessed by them. The report shall be submitted direct to the Commission with copy to the Chief Electoral Officer concerned.

6. As observer of the Commission, they are entitled for TA/DA as admissible on tour and will draw the same from their office. The expenditure will be debited to the Budget grant of their office.

7. Please brief all the Divisional Commissioners/other senior State Govt. Officers nominated as Roll Observers. Kindly treat this as the standing instructions of the Commission to be followed during every revision.

Kindly acknowledge the receipt by fax/e-mail.

Yours faithfully,

(Ritvik Pandey)
Secretary

Standard distribution

Indicative List outlining the points to be checked by electoral roll observers

(A) ELECTORAL ROLLS

- Whether helplines to facilitate a voter to identify his particulars are in place. Do they work?
- Is the CEO/DEO website provided with search facility? Name wise or AC wise? Is it user friendly?
- What is the status of electoral roll preparation?
- Control tables are the tables in which the basic information and details of the rolls are kept so that electoral roll can be properly generated through computerized means. What is the status of control tables? Have they been populated? All the prescribed tables or a few?
- Whether BLOs are in place? Further check whether they are maintaining records of their field visits. Crosscheck, on random basis, to assess quality and veracity of field works done by them.
- Whether copies of published electoral roll have been shared with political parties? Check for acknowledgement receipts obtained from them.
- Whether involvement of political parties and NGOs, etc. is there. If so, when a meeting with them was called and their views ascertained. Check for the minutes of such meetings.
- What is the revision schedule for revision of electoral roll? Is it keeping in time schedule decided by the Commission?
- To assess fidelity of the electoral roll and grievances level, please check for complaints received directly or forwarded from CEOs office, in this regard? Whether the complaints also include newspaper / media reports. How the complaints have been verified by EROs and the DEO?
- Whether proper record is maintained of the complaints received? Get from the DEO a tabular statement mentioning, *inter-alia*, whether the complaints are inquired into, if so what are the findings. Do a random check of a few complaints on a random basis and record your views/findings.
- Whether the roll been checked to see that names of MPs/MLAs, and other, leading personalities are in the electoral roll?
- Whether multi-layered checking by DEO, ERO, AERO and BLO has been carried out on the quality of rolls? (BLOs are to 100% verify the additions/deletions; The EROs 3% and the DEOs 1%)
- Whether statistical inputs (in eight tabular statements in Annexures 2.2 to 2.9 to the handbook for Electoral Registration Officers, 2008 edition) on existing electoral roll's health have been prepared for each district, constituency and polling stations levels. These inputs need to be analyzed statistically for each constituency with the district data and the State data, (wherever needed at polling station levels also). Certain abnormal figures/trends may come to your notice. Get them examined and record your findings.

- A comparison of the data for elector / population ratio for ascertaining under or over enrollment will be helpful;
- Age cohort wise ratio similarly will reveal the quality of enrollment process and focus area for further cleansing of voter rolls;
- Gender Ratio should be checked, where needed, polling station wise. Ask BLOs to re-visit and verify the female electors if sex ratio in any polling station is significantly high. Also check if Patwari or any other village authority maintains marriage registers and see whether females who got married to different villagers have been properly accounted for.
- Check for in-migration out-migration patterns. That may have bearing on all these;
- Similarly a study of addition (By Form 6), deletions (By Form 7 or done suo-moto) etc may also be done. In all such cases if the same cannot be justified with a proper explanatory notes, necessary remedial actions by EROs should be ensured.
- For **inclusions by Form 6**, check for districts with +1% variation from state average and also for such LAC with +1% variation from district average. In all such cases, necessary scrutiny at polling station levels should be done.
- In each constituency, test-check the inclusions in the first 20 polling stations with highest inclusions and get them re-verified by BLOs.
- Check the quality of disposal of claim forms.
- Check whether in the inclusion form (Form – 6) of voters above 25 years of age, the previous address has been mentioned or not?
- Check whether EROs of the area concerned where the applicant of Form 6 was earlier residing has been intimated that by the ERO of the present AC so as to eliminate any chance of double registration at two places.
- Check the documents accepted for inclusion of new voters (18-25 age-group)
- In border areas with other states, check that there is no double enumeration of voters in two states.
- Are there households with more than 10 voters? They should be test checked.
- In case of deletions, check for districts with +1% variation from state average and also for such LAC with +1% variation from district average. In all such cases, necessary scrutiny of at polling station levels should be done. In each constituency, test-check the inclusions in the first 20 polling stations with highest deletions and get them re-verified by BLOs.
- Whether the de-duplication has been carried out using computer software? Check with lists generated. How the lists have been acted upon?
- Check deletions due to death, shifted or duplicated entries. Are suo-moto deletions done? Have the procedures been followed? (Please verify by checking records that notices were served in all cases of deletions except in confirmed death cases)
- Check how many shifted electors with family linkage and how many without family linkage have been deleted?
- How many EPIC holding voters have been deleted? Can they be listed and test verified?

- All records pertaining to electoral roll revision and continuous updating of the roll have to be maintained till next intensive revision. Are they properly kept for easy retrieval?
- The roll published should be compared, on random basis, with manuscripts, and serious mistakes pointed out.
- Check for figures of service electors how many requests (claims form) were received, how many were acknowledged, how many actually enrolled. Whether intimation to concerned service electors have been sent.

(B) ELECTORAL PHOTO IDENTITY CARD (EPIC)

- What is the EPIC coverage in each AC comprised in the district, constituency? Check up the EPIC coverage polling station wise. Is any pattern emerging? Is there any certain category of areas left out? Is certain class of people falling under the left out category?
- What is the programme for EPIC maximization? Is it an online or offline programme? Does the EPIC campaign take into account and concentrates on EPIC maximization in polling station area that has less than 70% EPIC coverage?
- Whether preparatory activities like vendor finalization, contract signing, orientation and training of staff have been done?
- Whether necessary budget provisions for the purpose of EPIC campaign been made?
- Is the software for EPIC preparation tested? Is it vendor generated or a standard software provided by the CEO? Whether training of vendor has taken place?
- What is the coordination arrangement between vendor, DEO and the SLA?
- Whether due diligence and care has been taken in ensuring that the photographs collected from residual electors are being properly stored with correct name and address?
- Which database is being used for EPIC preparation? Is it the latest elector database? If the database is not the latest then how the link with new and latest modifications in elector database is being maintained?
- Who is custodian of the database of electors? If it is with the vendor, what control and check the CEO has on the database against its manipulation by vendors/data entry operators?
- Who keeps the holograms for EPICs? Is it accounted for properly? When was the last physical verification done? Was there any difference/gap or it tallied with the account maintained?
- What is the EPIC related grievance redressal mechanism in the district? What are the complaints received in relation to EPICs? A tabulated statement may be furnished.

(C) PHOTO ELECTORAL ROLLS:

- What is the image availability in the database? A tabulated statement for each of the AC should be furnished.
- What is the image availability in the actual photo rolls (if and where already published)
- What preparatory activities have been completed for photo maximization -
 - Whether sufficient budget provisions have been made?
 - Whether terms and conditions of tender for vendors finalized?
 - Whether tenders for vendor selection called?
 - Whether software for photo-roll preparation finalized after due testing?
 - Whether training and orientation of staff on photo-roll database done or not?
- Who has the control of the image linking software? Is it uniform for entire state?
- What arrangements have been made for verification of working sheets by BLOs. Check for quality of the verification work done by the BLOs.
- Also check for arrangements made for correction of image/electors database, which become necessary after field verification of working sheets by BLOs.
- Which database of electors is being used? Is it same as the EPIC and the latest published roll? If not, what links are maintained? Is the software's robustness tested on this account?
- With whom is the database of electors? Is it with the vendor? What control and check the CEO has on the database against its manipulation by vendors/data entry operators?

(D) REORGANIZATION OF POLLING STATIONS

- Do the electoral roll of polling stations have sections for each clearly identifiable area/locality.