

## **National Voters' Day -2016**

### **Speech of Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner of India**

***Honourable President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, My fellow Commissioners, Shri Joti and Shri Rawat, Leaders of Political Parties, Distinguished Guests, Honourable CECs, Commissioners from Ten EMBs, Excellencys, Young voters of NCT Delhi, Award Winners, Ladies and Gentlemen***

I am privileged and Honored to stand before this distinguished gathering on the occasion of the "Sixth National Voter" Day

We are privileged to have Honorable President as the Chief Guest who has always been supportive of various initiatives of ECI to conduct free and fair elections in the country and in particular documentation of interesting facets of election since 1952 for current and future generations. We are extremely thankful to you sir.

Today is the founding day of ECI, a precious institution, established on 25th January 1950 just a day before our country became a Constitutional Republic. NVD is dedicated to the empowerment of every adult Indian voter. NVD celebrations mark renewal of our commitment to this cause.

I am very happy to inform the gathering that, 1.8 Crores or 18 million new voters have been registered in our electoral rolls as on 1st January and ahead of NVD. With this addition, the total number of voters in the country has touched about 85 Crores or 850 million mark which is equal to population of some continents on stand alone basis or in combination.

Enrolment of 18 to19 year age group has always been a matter of concern. Commission is pleased to inform that 50% of total voters of this age group have now been enrolled which is a remarkable progress compared with earlier 10 to 15 % a few years ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, You will be happy to know that initially the idea of NVD came from an ordinary voter named Captain Suvas Chand in a meeting of Civil Society at Bhubaneswar in 2010. The then Commission gave that idea the shape of NVD. Since then, NVD has been nurtured by successive Commissions. Several new dimensions such as organization of Voters Festival ahead of NVD have been added from this year. It is heartening to learn that NVD is being emulated by many countries. Such is the power of an ordinary voter!

NVD celebrations are taking place simultaneously in over 7 Lacs locations in the country. Each of 1.8 Crores newly enrolled voter is taking the pledge, receives Photo I Card along with a booklet for the first time highlighting his or her rights and obligations. ***It is an unparalleled operation of its own kind anywhere in the world and we are very proud of it.***

Today, Commission recognize the services of millions of polling personnel including police forces, men and women who have not only conducted elections in free and fair manner but also converted the process into global gold standard overcoming formidable challenges thrown by both geography and demography of a mammoth size.

Commission has great pleasure in documenting human stories of voters and functionaries who have worked behind the scene and are our unsung heroes. Inspiration of this documentation has come from Honourable President and many more such documentations are in the pipeline.

On the occasion of NVD, citizens of this country and all political parties deserve our special gratitude for reposing total trust and confidence in the Commission. We in the Commission have always strived hard to enhance this confidence by our sheer neutrality, fairness, transparency and professionalism in election management.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the year of 2015 saw some significant initiatives in line with Commission's current and vibrant new vision.

- *A National Voters Service Portal was launched to provide six voter - centric electronic services to voters. The Portal receives 50,000 hit per day on an average during election and 1.75 lacs during election time.*
- *A national drive to purify and authenticate electoral rolls was completed successfully.*
- *Commission introduced photographs of candidates on EVM to avoid the confusion of namesake candidates in the minds of voters.*
- *A new symbol of None of the Above option or NOTA has been introduced.*
- *Commission has recommended legislation on electronic postal ballot option for overseas electors.*
- *Construction of iconic building for India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) commences today at the cost of Rs. 121 crores to train millions of polling personnel.*

The Commission congratulate young voters who have become members of our most prestigious electoral registry and all award winners for their outstanding contributions in the election management.

Sir, Commission has launch two themes in the year 2016

**First *"Inclusive and qualitative participation"***

*and*

**Second *"No voter to be left behind"***

***And we will continue to strengthen electoral democracy with fresh resolve on the occasion of NVD.***

With these words, I thank you for patient hearing

Jai Hind!