

Election Commission of India

Press Note

PN- ECI/PN/25/2017

Dated: 9th March, 2017

Subject: Security arrangement for strong rooms and counting centres

Polling for State Assembly elections of 5 states have recently concluded and counting will take place on 11th March, 2017. In its endeavour to conduct free, fair and transparent polls, ECI have initiated innumerable measures, set up different mechanisms and practices along with issuing of various instructions and guidelines to tackle various security issues related to storage of EVMs in the strong room and during the counting process. Further in this regard, the Commission has also issued the following instructions to strengthen the overall electoral process which includes:

Security arrangements for Storage of EVMs and relevant documents in the Strong rooms after the completion of polls

The Control Units and Ballot Units meant for use at the election shall be separately taken to R.O's strong room under proper escort and will be guarded 24 X 7. At the time of sealing the strong room, the representatives of political parties can remain present and they can also affix their seal on the lock. For this purpose recognized National and State level political parties should be intimated in writing in advance.

The strong rooms should have only one entry point and double lock system. One key should be kept with Returning Officer and the other with Assistant Returning Officer of concerned assembly constituency. Other entry points of the strong rooms (including windows) should be sealed in such a way that no one has access inside the strong rooms.

The entry point of strong room having EVMs shall have CCTV coverage round the clock.

A log book shall be maintained by the security personnel in which entry should be made about date, time, duration and name(s) of anyone entering near the strong rooms. This includes visits by the Observers or DEOs or SPs or Political Parties/ Candidates or their agents or any other person.

PREPARATION OF COUNTING CENTRE/ HALL:

The counting of votes will be done at Counting Centers comprising of one or more counting halls. Each counting hall shall be a separate room walled on all sides preferably with separate exit and entry facilities. Each Counting Center will have a distinct identity number and within that, each counting hall will also have a distinct Identity number.

Each counting hall shall have separate entry as well as exit doors, duly guarded. Where pre-constructed separate rooms are not available but large rooms are proposed to be divided for creating Halls, each part constituting a Hall will be separated by temporary partitions using strong material, preferably CGI sheets. Where the owners of the building have objections to dig holes on the floor, a suitable rigid frame, with CGI sheets fixed on two sides, may be used. The point to be ensured is that after the necessary partitioning, each Hall is an independent room walled on all four sides. It should not be possible for anybody either to move from one hall to another without coming out of the hall. Further, the partition should be so erected that it should be impossible to slip any material from one hall to the other through the partitions.

