

ELECTION/URGENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER,
KERALA

Election (General) Department
19-03-2026, Thiruvananthapuram

No-EL3/65/2026-ELEC-Part(2)

From
Chief Electoral Officer

To
All District Election Officers & District Collectors

Sir,

Sub: Election Department- General Election to Kerala Legislative Assembly, 2026- **Carrying of mobile phone by Returning Officers/ Assistant Returning Officers inside the Counting hall-reg**

Ref: (1) Instruction No.464/Counting Arrangements/2023/EPS dated 18/07/2023

(2) The Election Commission of India's letter No.464/INST/ETPBMS/2026/EPS dated 16/03/2026

Kind attention is invited to the captioned subject and to apprise that the Hon'ble Election Commission of India has announced the General Elections to Kerala Legislative Assembly, 2026 vide Press Note No. ECI/PN/029/2026 dated 15.03.2026 available on the Commission's website under URL <https://www.eci.gov.in/issue-details-page/press-releases>. The date of Counting of Votes in the State has been fixed on **04.05.2026(Monday)**.

2. In this regard, your attention is invited to the Commission's

instruction cited under reference (1) and to state that in view of inception of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Management System (ETPBMS) wherein One-Time Password (OTP) is received on the Returning Officer's mobile phones, the Commission has directed that on the day of counting: -

a) Only that mobile phone of the RO/ ARO/ Counting Supervisor (s), linked to ETPBMS, be used to receive 'OTP' to log into ETPBMS to start counting thereof shall be brought inside the counting hall;

b) The mobile handset will be switched on only to receive 'OTP' and be switched off once the system is logged in to ETPBMS;

c) Inside the counting hall, such mobile handset is to be kept in the custody of ARO/RO/Observer, whosoever is the senior most officer in the Counting Hall for ETPBMS counting, in switch off mode till the counting is over.

d) In case the login is closed for some reasons, Counting Supervisor can get the mobile from the officer to whom the mobile set was submitted to receive OTP once again for enabling him to re login. After re login, he shall return the mobile to the same officer in switched off mode.

e) A declaration is to be signed by all users separately about Do's and Don'ts for mobile usage.

f) Specific approval must be obtained from the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) for the number of users in each instance, along with the necessary mobile phone numbers being used. Mobile phones are to be

allowed inside the Counting hall for all such users.

The above instructions shall be brought to the notice of all concerned for strict compliance.

Yours Faithfully,
KRISHNADASAN P
ADDITIONAL SECRETARY & ADDITIONAL CHIEF
ELECTORAL OFFICER
For Chief Electoral Officer.

Approved for Issue,
Signed by
Shivlal R V
Date: 19-03-2026 14:55:37
Section Officer.

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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निर्वाचन सदन,
अशोक रोड, नई दिल्ली-110001-
Nirvachan Sadan,
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.
Dated: 18th July, 2023

No 464/Counting Arrangements/2023-EPS

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
all States and Union Territories

**Subject: Arrangements of Counting Centers for counting of votes for
General/Bye Election to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies- reg.**

**Reference: Commission's Instructions issued vide letters and dates
mentioned below-**

	Instruction Number	Date
1.	470/2007/PLN-I	11.01.2007
2.	464/UP-LA/2007	08.05.2007
3.	470/2007/PLN-I	29.08.2007
4.	470/GJ-LA/2007	21.12.2007
5.	470/2008/EPS	19.01.2009
6.	470/2008/EPS	19.01.2009
7.	470/2009/EPS	22.01.2009
8.	470/2009/EPS	22.01.2009
9.	464/INST/2009-EPS	18.03.2009
10.	464/INST/2009-EPS	07.05.2009
11.	464/INST/2009/EPS	13.05.2009
12.	464/INST/2010/EPS	28.07.2010
13.	470/BR-LA/2010	22.11.2010
14.	470/BR-LA/2010	22.11.2010
15.	470/INST/2011/EPS	04.03.2011
16.	464/INST/2011/EPS	19.03.2011
17.	470/TN-LA/2011 /SS-I	05.05.2011
18.	470/INST/2012-EPS	01.03.2012
19.	470/INST/2012-EPS	03.03.2012
20.	470/INST/2012-EPS	03.01.2013

21.	470/INST/2013-EPS	02.05.2013
22.	464/L&O/EPS/2014	05.04.2014
23.	464/L&O/EPS/2014	10.04.2014
24.	470/INST/2014-EPS	30.04.2014
25.	464/INST/2014/EPS	09.05.2014
26.	464/INST/2014/EPS	10.05.2014
27.	470/INST/2014-EPS	12.05.2014
28.	470/INST/2014-EPS	13.05.2014
29.	470/INST/2017- EPS	09.03.2017
30.	464/INST/2019/EPS	28.03.2019
31.	464/INST/EPS-2019	21.05.2019
32.	470/INST/2019/EPS	21.05.2019

Madam/Sir,

The Commission has issued various instructions, from time to time, on arrangements for counting of votes in EVMs, VVPATs and Postal Ballots in Counting Centers. All instructions relating to **counting arrangements** are hereby consolidated and revised instructions, in supersession of all the referred existing instructions, is hereby issued as under:

1. Legal Provisions:

The legal provisions governing counting process are contained in the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. A compilation thereof is enclosed at **Annexure-A**. The Observers, the District Election Officers (DEOs), the Returning Officers (ROs) and all other officers concerned should familiarize themselves with the relevant provisions of the law, rules and instructions issued by the Commission for proper arrangements and smooth conduct of counting process.

2. Preparation of Counting Center/Hall:

- (i) As per Rule 51 of the Conduct of Elections Rules 1961, the Returning Officer shall, at least one week before the date fixed for the poll, intimate in writing to each contesting candidate or his/her Election Agent the date, time and place(s) of counting of votes as per **Annexure-B** or **Annexure-C**, as the case may be, including special cases of counting table arrangements.
- (ii) A proposal for approval of Counting Centre with requisite information in prescribed proforma (**Annexure-D** and **Annexure-E**) shall be sent to the Commission, by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), immediately after the last date of withdrawal of candidatures so that the candidates/Election Agents

may be intimated by the Returning Officer in compliance of the above legal provision. For this purpose, the suitability and location of the Counting Centre shall be identified well in advance.

- (iii) The following should contain in the proposal of Counting Center: -
- a. List Counting Centres with numbers and names of PC/AC/AS to be counted
 - b. Information sheet on Counting Centres
 - c. Layout of each Counting Centre, and
 - d. Layout indicating the location of Counting Centres pertaining to Assembly Constituencies in each district(s)/Parliamentary Constituency(ies) with Assembly Segments falling within it and the district or districts in which it is spread over.
- (iv) The Chief Electoral Officer, on receipt of proposals from all the Returning Officers through respective District Election Officers, shall scrutinize the same and forward a summary of Counting Centres proposed along with his/her recommendations. The CEO should specifically examine the special arrangement cases proposed by the RO and the DEO and send his/her recommendations for approval of the Commission.
- (v) The Observers of the Commission will go for inspection of Counting Centres during their visits and shall ensure compliance of all ECI's instructions/guidelines. They will give their inputs in their reports to the Commission.
- (vi) Counting of votes will be done at Counting Centers comprising of one or more Counting Halls. To the extent possible, Counting Center should be located at District HQs, or in exceptional case at Sub- Division HQs. For Lok Sabha elections, it will be ideal, if votes of all Assembly Segments (ASs), comprised in a Parliamentary Constituency (PC), are counted at one place. However, there is no objection if Assembly Segments are counted at different place(s) owing to large area, long distances or difficult terrain, space constraints and difficulty in transporting election materials etc. of the Parliamentary Constituency or *in case of Parliamentary Constituency is spread over more than one district*. Each Counting Center and each Counting Hall within that Counting Centre will have a distinct identity number.



- (vii) The Observer's presence is essential during counting and he/she is also required to perform certain activities in ensuring fairness of counting of votes and ensure accuracy of compilation of results. It is necessary to rationalize the Counting Centres so that the Observers deployed need not oscillate between two or more Counting Centres. The practice of taking up Assembly Segment wise counting at different locations should be avoided and resorted to only in rare case where there is absolute need due to the reasons mentioned above.
- (viii) So far as practicable, government buildings other than colleges/ educational institutions are to be requisitioned keeping in view the suitability to establish Counting Centre. Care should be taken while selecting the Counting Centres and Strong Rooms so that there are minimal disruptions to the educational activities and other societal interests. Creation of permanent Strong Rooms in such colleges /institutions should be done as a last resort.
- (ix) Primary responsibility to ensure all arrangements for counting of votes, as prescribed in this instruction and otherwise, in a district shall be of the District Election Officer.
- (x) Each Counting Hall shall be a separate room walled on all sides preferably with separate duly guarded exit and entry.
- (xi) Where pre-constructed separate rooms are not available and 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 (Corrugated Galvanized iron) sheets. Where there is no provision to dig holes on the floor, a suitable rigid frame, with CGI sheets fixed on two sides, may be used. The partition should be done in such a way that each hall is an independent room walled on four sides so that the movement of anyone from one hall to another hall is not possible without using exit door of the hall. Further, the partition should be erected in such a way that it is impossible to slip or pass any material from one hall to the other through the partition.
- (xii) Important consideration for deciding the number of counting tables for CU (EVM) would be the number of Polling Stations, size of the room, the



number of contesting candidates, counting agents and counting personnel proposed to be deployed and the security aspects.

- (xiii) Counting Centre premises should have adequate parking space, open space, fire-fighting arrangements, good speed internet facility, drinking water facility, food and refreshment, separate toilets for both male and female and uninterrupted power supply with power backup and other required infrastructural facility for smooth conduct of counting and maintenance of law and order.
- (xiv) Each Counting Hall, in general, shall have a minimum of 7 and maximum of 14 counting tables for counting of votes in CU (EVM). In addition, one table will be set up for counting of votes in postal ballots subject to provision in **para 2(xxii)**. In case the number of tables proposed to be set up is lower or higher than the prescribed number, the specific approval of the Commission shall be obtained through CEO. The CEO should specifically mention this aspect in the report/recommendation to be provided as described at Para **2(ii) and (iv)**. Sample layouts of the Counting Hall are enclosed at **Annexure-F** and **Annexure-G**.
- (xv) Each hall, without exception, be used for counting for **only one AC/AS** at a given point of time. However, if sufficiently big hall is not available i.e., size of the hall doesn't allow placing of 14 tables for counting of votes in CU (EVM) and one table for counting of votes in Postal ballots in that Hall then counting of one AC/ AS may be taken up in two halls, with prior approval of the Commission. In such case both the Halls should be adjacent to each other or on the same floor.
- (xvi) In cases where number of polling stations in an AC/AS is large, counting may be taken up in two halls with a maximum of 14 tables in each hall (excluding the table(s) in which postal ballots are counted). All such cases shall be personally scrutinized by the Returning Officer and the District Election Officer, considering all factors such as number of candidates, number of Counting Agents etc. before sending a proposal for approval of the Counting Centre through CEO to the Commission.
- (xvii) In all such cases as mentioned at **Para 2(xvi)** above, Polling Station numbers will be pre-allotted to these two halls (each room being one separate Hall) for counting of votes in CU (EVM). This allotment, along with

the location of the table(s) on which postal ballots shall be counted, should be made known to all candidates and other stakeholders, in advance. It must be ensured that the table(s) for counting of votes in postal ballots shall be set up in the Hall where RO is sitting. In the other Hall the counting of votes in CU (EVM) shall be supervised by the ARO under overall control and supervision of the Returning Officer.

(xviii) ***In exceptional cases*** where one Hall is being used to count more than one Assembly Constituency/Assembly Segment, the Counting of votes has to be taken up in a sequential order starting from AC/AS with lower number e.g., if AC-23, AC-25 and AC-34 are to be counted in one Counting Hall then counting shall start from counting of AC-23. In such case, the ROs will need to intimate in advance different time of commencement of counting, by making a reasonable assessment, to the candidates/counting staff concerned and other stakeholders.

(xix) For the counting of votes in a simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly, the following scenarios may be considered in the context of Returning Officer of Assembly Constituency and Assistant Returning Officer of Assembly Segment of Parliamentary Constituency are normally same:

- a) If separate Counting Halls for Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly are available, same can be used for counting of Assembly Constituency and Assembly Segment of Parliamentary Constituency. The Returning Officers for AC/ARO of AS may conduct counting of votes for Assembly Segment and ARO of AC may conduct counting of Votes for AC.
- b) However, if no separate Halls are available half of the counting tables in a counting hall shall be allotted for PC and half tables for AC. In such case, the Counting Agents will sit accordingly for representing candidates for PC and AC respectively. Since the Strong Rooms for PC and AC are separate, the path to take the CUs and VVPATs and other materials from the Strong Rooms to the Counting Halls and back should be kept separate. The Hall shall also be bifurcated into two partitions with wire-mesh.

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- (xx) The Counting Halls, including partitions as planned, should be ready at least three clear days ahead of the date of Counting and a report should be sent by each RO to the Chief Electoral Officer. The CEO shall send a consolidated report to the Commission.
- (xxi) The CEO will also conduct field visits to inspect as many Counting Centre as possible, *but in case of General Election to Legislative Assembly not less than 10*, and review the arrangements made therein.
- (xxii) Ideally not more than 500 Postal Ballots should be counted on one table. The number of tables needed for counting of Postal Ballots should be assessed by the RO, sufficiently in advance, on the basis of number of the Postal Ballots issued and expected to be received, availability of space and number of AROs. Additional tables may be set up after approval. In such case, if there is space constraint, the counting of postal ballots may be arranged in a separate hall adjacent to it or on the same floor.
- (xxiii) If number of Postal Ballots expected to be received are significantly large, the proposal for approval of appointment of additional number of AROs and number of additional tables for such counting may be sent to the Commission, by the CEO, in advance. *Each postal ballot counting table shall have one ARO each to supervise the counting.*
- (xxiv) Counting tables should be placed against the barricade of woodblock and wire-mesh behind which the Counting Agents of Candidates shall sit/stand. The agents shall be prevented from having physical access to the CU/VVPAT or Postal Ballots but must be able to clearly see and note the contents on the CU display or Postal Ballot.
- (xxv) Adequate signage should be prepared and used appropriately for providing guidance to counting staff/candidates/Counting Agents and media personnel.
- (xxvi) The RO/ARO table(s) shall be placed at the demarcated area in the Counting Hall itself and the seating arrangement for Candidates or their Election Agents, inside the hall, shall be made in such a way that they can watch the counting process. However, they shall not be allowed to access the counting tables and also not to cross the demarcated area. The Observer table will be placed alongside the RO/ARO's table.



- (xxvii) Similarly, tables and computer on which the computation and compilation of data from each table is done in **ENCORE** at the conclusion of each round, shall be placed inside Counting Hall alongside the RO's table and not in any other Hall and one Counting Agent, besides a Micro Observer, shall also be allowed to sit on that table. The area of aforesaid table shall be clearly demarcated from the rest of the area. Separate tabulation team and setup shall be provided, in case simultaneous elections, for PC and AC.
- (xxviii) A sufficiently large blackboard/whiteboard/TV in each Counting Hall shall be placed on which the candidates' name and round number will be pre-written/displayed. The round-wise results should be written/displayed on the board/TV after the Observer has certified the result of that round followed by declaration of the result of that particular round by the Returning Officer. The Control Units for the next round shall be brought from the Strong Room to the Counting Hall only after this exercise is completed.
- (xxix) A system should be set up for receiving counting related information and complaints in the DEO's Office and CEO's Office. For this purpose, the staff of DEO/CEO Control Room (helpline number 1950) should be properly briefed and activated 72 hours in advance. Due publicity of these arrangements should be given through all media.
- (xxx) If due to any unavoidable reason, RO is unable to conduct the counting of votes on the appointed date, time or place, he can postpone the counting **with prior approval of the Commission** and fix a fresh date, time or place. RO shall give notice of any change, in writing, to each candidate / Election Agent.

3. Security arrangements in and around Counting Center-

- (i) There should be smooth flow of CU/VVPAT between the designated Strong Rooms, where polled EVMs/VVPATs of a particular AC/AS are kept and the respective Counting Halls. A proper barricading and colour coding (if need be) of the path used for this purpose should be done so that the transportation from Strong Room to Counting Hall is not interrupted by any person. Trespassing through the barricade by any unauthorized person

should be duly eliminated. No crisscross movement across the paths of two different ACs/ASs is permissible.

- (ii) Three-tier cordoning system should be set up in all counting premises to prevent the entry of unauthorized persons inside the counting premises. **1st tier of security ring** shall start from 100-meter periphery around the Counting premise/campus, which should be demarcated as pedestrian zone. No vehicles shall be allowed within this perimeter. Proper barricading of this demarcated zone should be done and the alighting point (same as the pedestrian entry point) clearly made out by providing an entry gate into the premise. If a public road cuts across such sanitized zone, then proper traffic diversion plan should be prepared in advance for the counting day. Adequate local police force should be stationed at the entry point to check the identity of the persons seeking entry. Identification of candidates/counting agents and counting officials should also be thoroughly verified at the 1st tier itself. No person without duly issued authority letter of ECI or photo I-Card issued by the concerned DEO/RO or the Media Pass, duly displayed by such media person, shall be allowed to pass the 1st tier of security ring. An Executive Magistrate shall be posted at the entrance to control crowd and regulate entry.
- (iii) The **2nd tier** and the middle cordon will be at the gate of the counting premises. This will be manned by the State Armed Police of the State concerned. Before allowing the entry of persons into the 2nd cordon, proper frisking should be done by the State Police Personnel to ensure that no prohibited items like matchbox, arms and other inflammable articles etc. are carried inside. The frisking shall be done by State Police force personnel only. Women shall be frisked only by Female Police Personnel/Female Home Guards. They should also ensure that mobiles/I-pad, laptop and similar electronic devices or any recording devices are not carried inside the counting hall. All such items shall be kept in the Media Room/Public Communication Room. The forces deployed at **2nd tier** will also ensure that no one is loitering outside the Counting Hall. Mobile phones or other communication equipment can only be used from designated rooms at the Counting Centers.

- (iv) **The 3rd tier** and the innermost cordon shall be at the door of the Counting Hall. This will be manned by Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). There will be proper frisking arrangements at this stage too so as to ensure that no mobile phones and other prohibited items are carried inside the Counting Hall.
- (v) No still or video cameras except official video camera for official recording are allowed inside the counting hall. Hand-held cameras, without stand, can be allowed inside the counting hall by press persons carrying media pass issued by the ECI. Further, while taking audio-visual coverage of the counting process with hand held cameras by the media persons/journalists, the actual votes recorded on an individual CU/VVPAT or ballot papers should not be photographed or covered by audio-visual coverage under any circumstances. The officials on duty at Media Centre shall escort the media groups in small manageable numbers to visit the Counting Halls at regular intervals for short duration only. The exact boundary, up to which the still/video cameras of the media person/journalists can move, should be indicated, by the Returning Officer in advance. It may be marked by a coloured line or by a string for guidance of all concerned.
- (vi) The entry into the Counting Centre, at all times is subject to the over-all requirement of maintenance of law and order, proper decorum and the conduct of peaceful counting.

4. Counting Staff-

- (i) Unlike polling staff, counting staff is to be appointed by the Returning Officer concerned. From the available database of Counting personnel, as provided by the District Election Officer, the Returning Officer should appoint required number of Counting Assistants and Counting Supervisors (with some reserves in both categories), and such other officials as the Returning Officer may require for assisting him/her in the Counting. The Returning Officer should also appoint sufficient number of MTS/Group D Government employees as Counting Staff for transporting the CUs/VVPATs from Strong Room to pre-decided counting tables in the designated counting hall and vice-versa and to assist Returning Officer in sealing of EVMs, VVPAT paper slips transfer in black thick envelope and other related papers/material after declaration of result.

- (ii) The requirement of Counting staff is assessed on the basis of number of Counting halls, number of postal ballots expected to be received and number of Counting tables.
- (iii) For each table earmarked for counting of votes in EVM, the Returning Officer shall appoint-
 - a. One Counting Supervisor (Gazetted Officer or equivalent)
 - b. One Counting Assistant
 - c. Counting staff from MTS/Group D employees
 - d. One Micro Observer
- (iv) For each table earmarked for counting of Postal Ballots, the Returning Officer shall appoint-
 - a. One Assistant Returning Officer
 - b. One Counting Supervisor (Gazetted or equivalent)
 - c. Two Counting Assistants (Gazetted Officer or equivalent)
 - d. One Micro Observer
- (v) In addition to the above, the RO shall appoint two Micro Observers and one additional counting staff to assist the Observer.
 - a. The first Micro Observer to assist Observer in checking the compilation sheet of round wise results.
 - b. The second Micro Observer to watch over the data entry being made in the computer and round-wise compilation of votes recorded for each candidate.
 - c. One additional counting staff for each AC for assisting the Observer in parallel counting of two randomly selected CUs.
- (vi) Each table for pre-counting of ETPBS (**Para 13**) following staff shall be appointed:
 - a. one Supervisor
 - b. one Assistant
 - c. One ARO for up to 10 tables for ETPBS pre-counting
- (vii) For simultaneous election, there shall be additional set of officials in each category with clear cut assignment of duties. They should have a very clear understanding of the layout of the Counting Hall as well as the tables meant for counting of votes of Assembly Election and Lok Sabha Election. Under no circumstances CU, VVPATs and postal ballots relating to

Assembly Election, shall be supplied to the table meant for counting of votes for Lok-Sabha elections and vice-versa. A senior officer should monitor distribution of relevant materials to the respective tables.

- (viii) Returning Officer should not appoint any such person as Counting Staff who has been employed by or on behalf of, or has otherwise been working for a candidate in an election. Similarly, the staff of local bodies should also not be appointed for Counting of votes.
- (ix) Counting staff appointments should be made in the form given in **Annexure- H**. Counting supervisors should preferably be Gazetted officers (Group B or above), Counting Assistants should also be Group B or at least Group C officials of the Central or State Government or officers of comparable status from Central/State Government undertakings.
- (x) All Counting staff, including Micro Observers, should be given two intensive training for both counting of votes in CU, VVPAT slip counting (*using dummy symbols*) and Postal Ballots/pre-counting of ETPBS including legal and practical aspects of counting procedure sufficiently in advance. The first training shall be imparted immediately after the first randomisation. The second round of training shall be completed at least one day prior to the day fixed for counting.
- (xi) 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 Returning Officer has the liberty of replacing officials in case of any exigency, but this replacement would also be done randomly from the pool of officials in reserve after consulting the Observer concerned.

5. Micro-Observers for counting of votes-

- (i) Each Counting table including tables for Counting of Postal Ballots, shall have one Micro-Observer (not below group 'C' officials of Central Government or Central PSUs). The Observer should properly train the Micro Observer. The Micro Observer shall be responsible for the purity of counting process on his/her respective table. Wherever adequate number of Central Govt. staff is not available for appointment as Micro Observer, the shortfall shall be met by the Chief Electoral Officer by mobilizing the required number of staffs from the neighboring districts within the Division in coordination with Divisional Commissioner. The additional staff will be given a brief orientation

training before being deployed at the Counting Center. The additional staff also will be provided ID Cards by the DEO of the district, where counting is taking place.

- (ii) The Observers may appoint Micro Observers as per the format given in **Annexure-I**.
- (iii) The Micro Observers will note down the details of votes displayed by the CUs being counted in each round on the table assigned to them. Micro Observers would be provided with a pre-printed statement on which there will be space for noting down the CU Number, Round Number, Table Number, Polling Station Number and thereafter the names of all the contesting candidates, including NOTA, as they appear in the Ballot Paper (**Annexure-J**). Micro Observers shall put their signatures at the end of the statement and shall hand over the statement to the Observer after completion of each round.
- (iv) In cases where the Observer is assigned to look after Counting in more than one Hall/AC, the Micro Observers attached to the Observer in each Hall and who are preparing the round-wise tabulation format of randomly selected two CUs, should sign the round-wise tabulation format on behalf of the Observer in absence of the Observer. The Observer will countersign the same when he/she returns/visits the Counting Hall.
- (v) The two Micro Observers, attached with the Observer, should be entrusted with the following responsibilities: -
 - a) One of these two Micro Observers shall keep a watch over the data entry in the computer placed in the Counting Hall for round-wise compilation of the votes recorded for each candidate. He/she should ensure that the entries of the Part II of the Form 17C are correctly entered in the computer by the data entry operator.
 - b) The second Micro-Observer shall assist the Observer. He/ She shall by obtaining a print-out of the data entry done in the computer and verifying the entries with the statement handed over by the Micro-Observers, present on Counting tables, after each round of Counting.
- (vi) In addition to the above, One Counting Assistant for each AC shall be appointed for assisting the Observer in parallel counting of two randomly selected CUs.

6. Randomization of Counting Officials for EVM and Postal Ballot Counting



- (i) The arrangements for randomization of counting official shall be done by the District Election Officer, where the Counting Centre(s) is located.
- (ii) The randomization of counting staff is to be done in three stages. For this purpose, the DEO should prepare a data base of more than 120% of employees in each category of counting official (Counting Supervisors/Counting Assistants/Micro Observers).
- (iii) The randomization of above-mentioned counting staff shall be done using the software centrally developed by the Chief Electoral Officer.
- (iv) **First Randomization of Counting Officials:**
 - (a) The first randomization of counting officials shall be done only for randomly drawing 120% of the required number of officials for each category of counting officials (Counting Supervisors/Counting Assistants/Micro Observers).
 - (b) It shall be done under direct supervision of the DEO using the software, one week prior to the date of counting.
 - (c) It shall be done invariably in the presence of the Returning Officer(s). In case of Parliamentary Constituency, where Returning Officer Headquarters is not located, the Assistant Returning Officer(s) concerned shall be present.
 - (d) The presence of Observer is not required at this stage.
 - (e) The DEO shall issue Photo Identity Cards and intimation letter for counting duty.
- (v) **Second Randomization of Counting Officials:**
 - (a) The second randomization of counting officials shall be done for randomly allocating counting officials to Assembly Constituency/Assembly Segment wise.
 - (b) It shall be done by the District Election Officer using the software 24 hours prior to the commencement of Counting of Votes.
 - (c) It shall be done invariably in the presence of the Returning Officer(s).
 - (d) In the case of Counting of votes for Parliamentary Constituency, where the Counting locations for any Assembly Segment is far away from the headquarters of the RO, the second randomization of Counting staff shall be done by the DEO, as per above norms, and prepare a separate set of such counting officials for that Assembly Segment, up to **48 hours** before

commencement of Counting. The DEO shall intimate the ARO concerned accordingly. In such case, prior approval shall be taken from the CEO.

(e) Similarly, for counting of votes for Assembly election where the Assembly Constituency is located at a far-flung area and counting is proposed to be taken up in that location and not centrally in district headquarters, the above-mentioned instructions shall apply.

(f) The presence of Observer(s) is required at this stage.

(g) The Returning Officer concerned shall issue the appointment letters to the officials allotted to his/her constituency.

(vi) **Third Randomization of Counting Officials:**

(a) The third randomization of each category of counting officials shall be done for allotment of counting tables to them for counting of votes in CU & VVPAT and Postal Ballots in the Counting hall. No randomization is required for counting officials allocated for pre-counting scanning of ETPBS.

(b) It shall be done by the concerned RO (ARO in case of Parliamentary Constituency, where RO is not located) in the presence of ECI Observer at 5.00 AM on the day of Counting.

(c) It shall preferably be carried out by using software. In special cases, where randomization through software is not feasible, this exercise shall be done manually. In case of manual randomization, the senior most Observer present would randomly assign the table number to the counting officials by the draw of lots i.e., picking up chits of the unique serial numbers assigned to counting officials and the table numbers. The DEO should make all arrangements in advance to ensure quick and smooth conduct of the randomization process. In case, it is done with the aid of a computer, 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.

(d) The Counting officials would be provided with the details of duty assigned on reaching the control room at the Counting Center. Thereafter, they shall be directed to reach their respective tables in the Counting Hall of the assigned Constituency/ Segment.

- (e) It must be ensured that the whole process of randomization is over by 6:00 am on counting day so that the Counting Officials are able to reach their assigned position conveniently before the scheduled start of the Counting process.
- (f) A separate seating arrangement shall be made within the Counting Center/Campus for the reserve staff after third randomization.
- (vii) In special cases, where any deviation from the above-mentioned procedure is required in case of any exigencies or geographical constraints, the prior approval of the Chief Electoral Officer is required with full justification.
- (viii) The DEO would ensure that videography (with date and time stamping) of entire process of all stages of randomization is carried out for record.
- (ix) Summary of randomization process can be perused at **Annexure-K**.

7. Counting Agents of Candidates:

7.1 Eligibility

- (i) The law does not prescribe any qualification for a person to be appointed as a Counting Agent. However, the candidates are advised to appoint persons of the age of 18 years and above as their Counting Agents so that they are appropriately represented during counting of votes.
- (ii) The following persons cannot be appointed as Counting Agent of a Candidate during an election:
 - a. Sitting Minister either of the Union Government or of the State Government, Member of Parliament or State Legislature
 - b. Mayor of a Corporation or Chairperson of Municipality/Zila Parishad/Panchayat Union, etc.
 - c. Chairpersons and Members of Central PSUs/State PSUs, Govt. Bodies/Corporation.
 - d. Persons receiving any honorarium from Government or Persons working on part time in any Govt./ Govt. Aided Institutions.
 - e. Para Medical/Healthcare staff working in Govt./Govt. Aided institutions, Fair Price Shop dealers, Anganwadi Employees.
 - f. Person in the service of the Government [*This is an offence and Under Section 134-A of the R.P. Act 1951 and such appointees are punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 (three) months, or with fine, or with both*].

- (iii) There is no prohibition against appointment of Gram Panchayat Pradhan/Gram Panchayat Sarpanch/Panchayat members, Councilors or Members of Municipal Corporation or Municipality and local persons, who are residents of the constituency, as Counting Agents of Candidates. There is no prohibition in appointing an NRI who is a citizen of India as Counting Agent.
- (iv) Any other person having security cover provided by the State (both Union and State Govts.) shall not be allowed to act as Election Agent or Counting Agent of any candidate during an election even if they surrender or decide to relinquish their security. Further, such person cannot enter the Counting Hall along with or without his security personnel.

7.2 Number of Counting Agents per candidate-

- (i) Each candidate is allowed to appoint as many counting agents as there are counting tables including table meant for counting of postal ballots for his/her constituency. The candidate can appoint one more counting agent to watch the counting process at the Returning Officer's table in absence of himself or his election agent.

7.3 Appointment of Counting Agent-

- (i) Appointment of a Counting Agent is to be made either by the candidate himself or by his election agent in Form 18 appended to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. Any request on a plain paper received from a candidate/election agent should not be accepted by RO. The name and address of the counting agent will be filled up in that Form and the candidate or his election agent will personally sign that Form 18. The Counting Agent will also sign that Form as token of his acceptance of the appointment. Two copies of such Forms together with the photographs of the agents shall be prepared. One copy of that Form is to be forwarded by the candidate/election agent to the Returning Officer latest by 5.00 PM three days prior to the date fixed for counting of votes. The 2nd copy is to be given to the Counting Agent for production before the Returning Officer on the day of counting.

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- (ii) On receiving the same, RO will prepare the photo identity cards for the Counting Agents, under his seal and signature, and issue the same, to the Contesting Candidate or his election agent, under acknowledgement.
- (iii) A candidate may appoint all his counting agents by a single letter of appointment in Form 18. In that case, all the counting agents are required to sign that Form 18, in token of having accepted the appointment.
- (iv) Counting Agents shall produce photo identity cards issued by the RO along with the 2nd copy of Form 18 and sign the declaration, contained therein, before the RO on the day of counting, not later than one hour before the time fixed for the counting. The RO shall not accept the appointment letter which is received after the aforesaid time. RO shall inform the Candidates that if the Counting Agents fail to bring the 2nd copy of Form 18 and photo-identity card, they shall be denied entry in the Counting Hall. Similarly, the Election Agents of the Candidates are also required to produce the attested duplicate copy of their appointment letters. Thereafter, the RO shall allow the agents to enter the Counting Hall.

7.4 Revocation of appointment-

- (i) The candidate or his election agent is authorized to revoke the appointment of a Counting Agent in Form 19 appended to the Conduct of Elections Rules 1961.
- (ii) Such revocation becomes operative from the time at which it is lodged with the Returning Officer. In such a case, the candidate is authorized to appoint another counting agent in place of the one whose appointment has been revoked, at any time before the commencement of counting. Once the counting has commenced, no appointment of fresh Counting Agent can be made.
- (iii) Appointment of such fresh counting agent is to be made in Form 18 of Conduct of Election Rules 1961 as mentioned above.

7.5 Counting Agents inside the Counting Hall

- (i) On production of his letter of appointment and the identity card before the Returning Officer, the counting agent will be required to sign the declaration contained in his letter of appointment regarding maintenance of secrecy of voting before the Returning Officer. After verification of the letter of

appointment, identity card and declaration, the Returning Officer will permit the Counting Agent to enter the Counting Hall.

- (ii) The Returning Officer is empowered to order for searching any Counting Agent before his entry into the counting hall.
- (iii) Each Counting Agent will be given a badge by the Returning Officer indicating whose agent he is and showing the serial number of the table at which, he will watch the counting. He should keep sitting/standing at the table allotted to him. He will not be allowed to move about all over the Hall. However, the candidate, his election agent and in their absence, only his Counting Agent at the Returning Officer's table will be allowed to go around all counting tables.

7.6 Seating arrangements for Counting agents-

The counting will be done on the tables arranged in rows. The tables in each row will be serially numbered. On each counting table, the seating arrangement for the counting agents shall be made having regard to the following categories of priority, namely: -

- a. Counting Agents of Candidates of recognized National parties;
- b. Counting Agents of Candidates of recognized State parties;
- c. Counting Agents of Candidates of recognized State parties of other States who have been permitted to use their reserved symbols in the constituency;
- d. Counting Agents of Candidates of registered-unrecognized parties;
- e. Counting Agents of Independent candidates.

8. Maintenance of Secrecy:

- (i) Before the commencement of the counting of votes, the Returning Officer will read out and explain the provisions of the Section 128 of the R.P. Act, 1951 and Rule 54 Conduct of Election Rules 1961 regarding maintenance of secrecy for the information of all present and for compliance on their part.
- (ii) Every person inside the counting hall is required by law to maintain, and to aid in maintaining, the secrecy of vote and should not communicate to any person any information intended to violate such secrecy. Everyone is required to fully cooperate and comply with the instructions of the Returning Officer. Any person contravening the provisions of law in this respect is liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 months

or with fine or with both (Section 128 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951)

- (iii) Counting Agent and others will not be allowed to go outside the Counting Center during counting process. They will ordinarily be allowed to go outside only after the declaration of result. However, Counting Agents other than those allowed to watch counting of VVPAT slips in VCB, may be allowed by the RO to leave the counting hall once counting of votes in CU and PB is over.

9. Maintenance of Discipline and Decorum at Counting Center:

- (i) ROs are only bound by the provisions of law and the instructions of the Election Commission while performance of duties as Returning Officer. ROs are not, thus, to take orders from or show any favor to any superior officer or any political functionary including but not restricted to Ministers.
- (ii) In case RO has a reasonable doubt about the presence of any person in the Counting Hall, he can have him searched, if necessary, even though the person concerned may be in possession of valid authority letter to enter the place of counting.
- (iii) Security Personnel should be posted on duty at the door or doors of the Counting hall. No person should be allowed to enter or leave the room without RO's permission. RO must ensure that complete order and discipline prevail and Counting takes place in a professional/judicious manner. The Counting staff shall leave the Counting Hall, with the permission of RO, only after the result is declared.
- (iv) Smoking and e-cigarette are not allowed anywhere in the Counting Centre.
- (v) Mobile phones, I-pads, laptops, or any other similar electronic devices capable of recording audio or video are not allowed inside the Counting Center. The only exception will be Commission's Observers. However, computer/ laptops or mobile devices required for official use to transmit Counting data through **ENCORE** will be allowed.

10. Videography/CCTV during Counting Process:

- (i) An uninterrupted CCTV coverage of movement of all CU, VVPAT machines and relevant documents from Strong Rooms to Counting Halls and back should be ensured. The CCTV coverage of the movement shall be displayed

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in TV/Monitor etc. inside the Counting Hall for viewing by the candidates/their agents.

- (ii) Entire counting process in the Counting Halls must have 360-degree CCTV coverage or videography with date and time stamping and stored in appropriate retrievable storage device safely. Video coverage shall also be ensured at every stage of counting. This video coverage shall include Counting Hall arrangements, security arrangements in and outside the Counting Hall/Center, presence of candidates and their Agents in the Counting Centers, the process of randomization of counting staff, opening of Strong Rooms, counting process in the Counting Hall, tabulation at the Returning Officer's table, counter checking of two CUs by the Observer, declaration of result, handing over of Certificate of Return of Election to elected candidate, transfer of VVPAT slips to thick black envelopes, sealing of CU/VVPAT and election papers after counting and any other significant events of the counting process.
- (iii) CCTV Camera for counting table earmarked for VVPAT Counting Booth (VCB) shall be installed on ceiling just above the counting table, as per instructions contained in the latest edition of 'Manual on Electronic Voting Machine and VVPAT'.
- (iv) However, in no circumstances, the actual votes displayed on individual EVMs or Ballot papers are to be video recorded.
- (v) The unedited video recording should be sealed, clearly labeling all the details contained therein, after the counting process is over, for future reference. It should be ensured that the video recording of the entire counting process is kept intact and unedited with proper locking seals so that it cannot be copied by anyone after it has been sealed. All the recordings of the counting process shall be under the custody of the District Election Officer and shall be treated as records under Rule 93(1) of Conduct of Election Rules 1961.
- (vi) The Commission's latest instructions on storage and retention of videography/CCTV data, shall be followed strictly in this context.

11. No Webcasting of Counting Center: There shall be no webcasting (transmission of video recording) of the process of counting of votes.



12. Persons allowed in the Counting Hall:

- (i) Only the following persons can be allowed inside the Counting hall -
 - a) Counting supervisors and Counting Assistants, Micro-Observers;
 - b) Persons authorized by ECI (possessing authority letter duly issued by ECI), and Observers,
 - c) Public servants on duty in connection with the election; and
 - d) Candidates, their Election Agents and Counting agents.
- (ii) Before Counting begins, RO should ensure that no one else is present in the Counting hall.
- (iii) RO should note that expression of "*public servant on duty in connection with election*" does not include police officers; such officers whether in uniform or in plain clothes should not, as a general rule, be allowed to enter inside the Counting hall without any exception, unless RO decides to call them in for the maintenance of law and order or some similar purpose.
- (iv) RO should also note that the above expression "*public servant on duty in connection with election*" also does not include the Ministers/State Ministers/Deputy Ministers of the Union Govt. or State Govt. They can come inside the Counting hall only as candidate. As per ECI instruction, they can't be allowed to be appointed as election agents or Counting agents as they have to be escorted by their security guards who are not to be allowed entry into the Counting Halls.
- (v) Entry of persons should be strictly regulated as detailed above. No other unauthorized person, whosoever he may be, should be allowed to enter the place of counting. No security personnel accompanying the candidates or their agents should be permitted to enter the Counting Halls. However, contesting candidate who is a SPG protectee or other similarly placed contesting candidates can be permitted to be accompanied inside counting hall only with one security personnel in plain clothes with one concealed arm.
- (vi) Besides, a contesting candidate, if having security personnel with arms, gives an undertaking that they are surrendering their security on their own voluntarily to sit in the Counting Hall, he/ she may be allowed (*this exemption is not available to any other persons having personal armed security*)

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13. Arrangement for pre-counting of ETPBS:

The pre-counting arrangements for Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballots (ETPBs), being used for Service Voters, shall be done as under:

- (i) The Returning Officer should carry out advance planning about the number of tables and teams that would be required for ETPBs QR code reading, which is a pre-counting exercise for ETPBs counting, without undue delay by assessing the estimated number of ETPBs that are likely to come back and other factors such as total time likely to be taken for EVM counting and mandatory VVPATs counting (*approximate gross scanning speed of 4 scans per minutes per team may be assumed in assessing arrangements*).
- (ii) Purchasing of QR Code Readers in sufficient numbers and testing for their error-free functioning should be ensured in advance.
- (iii) QR code reading may be taken up in a separate room, adjacent to the main Counting Hall. One counting agent for each candidate, irrespective of number of tables for QR code reading, may be allowed to watch the process of QR code reading and suitable seating arrangements for them should be made.
- (iv) Each team should comprise one Supervisor and one Assistant with a QR code Reader.
- (v) One ARO should be assigned to supervise a maximum of ten QR code reading teams.
- (vi) After completing the QR code reading, as per laid down procedure, the set of envelopes will be assigned to counting tables arranged for the postal ballot counting.

14. VVPAT Paper Slip Counting:

- (i) For counting of VVPAT paper slips, one of the counting tables inside the Counting Hall shall be converted into a VCB (VVPAT Counting Booth) and should be ready well in advance of the counting day. If counting of an Assembly Constituency is proposed to be conducted in more than one hall, the VCB shall be set up in the hall where RO is seating. Such VCBs shall be set up one each for every Assembly Segment pertaining to Parliamentary Constituency.

- (ii) The table on which the VCB is set up can be used for normal round-wise counting of EVM votes. After the completion of such counting, the VVPAT paper slips will be taken up for counting on the same table prepared as VCB.
- (iii) The same counting staff assigned to the table for counting of EVM votes shall be assigned for counting of VVPAT paper slips on the table.
- (iv) The VCB should be enclosed in a wire mesh just like a bank cashier's cabin, so that no VVPAT paper slip can be accessed by any unauthorized person.
- (v) In case where the counting of votes to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly is held simultaneously, separate VCBs will be arranged on separate tables for each of the assembly segments of the Parliamentary Constituency and the Assembly Constituency.
- (vi) VCB should have a minimum length of 6 ft, a breadth of 6 ft and a height of 8 ft. All four sides and ceiling should be covered with narrow wire mesh and a circular hole of 5 cm radius at suitable height be placed for the Counting Agents' transactions.
- (vii) A CCTV camera shall be installed on ceiling just above the Counting table earmarked for VCB for monitoring and recording purpose.
- (viii) There shall be seating arrangements for at least 4 persons inside the VCB.
- (ix) Other arrangements like a sturdy transparent container of 14" X 10" X 5" (L x B x H) for keeping VVPAT Paper Slips taken out from the Drop Box of the VVPAT; a fixed base Pigeonhole Framework of a sturdy and transparent material having 6" X 4" X 4" (L x B x H) size of each compartments, with symbols as per the ballot paper on 4" X 3" size paper pasted on respective walls for keeping VVPAT paper slips of the respective candidates including NOTA and self-test slips and at least 100 Rubber bands for making bundles of VVPAT paper slips shall be made.
- (x) The Observer during his visit to the Counting Centre should ensure that VCB is set up as per the above instructions.

15. Official Communication Room, Media Center and Public Communication Room:

- (i) At each Counting Center, there shall be a Communication Room for the officials with table/chairs, a telephone with STD, a fax, computer with

printer and internet facility attached to it. A senior officer should be deployed in such Communication Room.

- (ii) A Media Center, for use by the authorized media personnel, should also to be set up at some distance away from main Counting Halls in each Counting Centre. As far as possible, a separate room of adequate size should be used and it should have all reasonable facilities like telephone, fax, computer with printer and internet facility etc.
- (iii) In case of any Parliamentary or Assembly Constituencies being counted in one Counting Centre with multiple Counting Halls, the media passes will be issued for Counting Centre and not for Counting Hall.
- (iv) One senior officer preferably from the Public Relations Department shall be exclusively designated as in-charge of the Media Center. Each RO shall also deploy other suitable officials to the Media Center who shall assist in dissemination of counting related information/latest trends etc. among the media persons. The officials on duty at Media Center shall escort the media groups in small and manageable numbers to visit Counting Halls at regular intervals for short durations only. Suitable arrangements will be made to securely store mobile phones in the Media Center, as mobile phones shall not be allowed to be taken inside the Counting Halls. Use of mobile phones and other communication equipment by media personnel shall be allowed in the Media Center only. Proper arrangement of loudspeaker should be made for dissemination of counting trends and results to public and media.
- (v) The media personnel with the authority letters issued by ECI, while covering the counting process, can and should be allowed to come out of the Counting Hall(s), if they so desire, during the counting. They should also be allowed to re-enter on the basis of the very same authority letters subject to arrangement specified at para 15 (iv). All entry at all times, however, is subject to the over-all requirement of maintenance of law and order, proper decorum and the conduct of orderly counting.
- (vi) A separate Public Communication Room will also be provided for candidates, their agents, counting staff etc. to use their mobile phones in case of any need. This room should also have arrangements for safe-keeping of mobiles phones and other belongings of the candidates, their agents and counting staff. An officer from Public Relation Department shall also be deployed here.



16. Carrying of mobile phones by RO/ AROs inside the Counting Hall:

- (i) No person other than the Commission's Observer is allowed to carry a mobile phone inside the Counting Halls.
- (ii) In addition to the Observer, the Returning Officer or Assistant Returning Officer or the Counting Supervisor, whose mobile phone is linked to ETPBS, is also authorized to carry mobile phone, but in silent mode to receive One-Time Password (OTP) for the purpose of pre-counting of ETPBS.
- (iii) The mobile handset will be switched ON only to receive 'OTP' and be switched off once the ETPBS system is logged in and be kept by the Observer/RO/ARO till counting is over.
- (iv) A declaration shall be signed by all users separately about DOs and DON'Ts for mobile usage.
- (v) Specific permission shall be obtained by the Returning Officers from the Chief Electoral Officer for the number of users and related mobile numbers in each case for permissible official activities and only then those mobile phones shall be allowed inside the Counting Halls for all such users.

17. Miscellaneous Arrangements:

The DEO/RO shall make all necessary arrangements such as:

- (i) Adequate barricades with strong materials, signages and parking spaces as prescribed and as required to ensure safety, security and order.
- (ii) Appropriate electricity supply with adequate power back up for the Counting Center
- (iii) CCTV with supervised control room covering Strong Rooms, Counting Halls, corridors etc. with display of relevant movements of EVMs inside Counting Halls.
- (iv) Sufficient number of QR Code readers for ETPBS scanning
- (v) Adequate number of computers, scanners, printers, UPS, stationery items, telephone, internet with prescribed speed (*with minimum redundancy from two separate providers*) etc. for online data transmission using **ENCORE** software provided by ECI (*provisions and prior testing as prescribed to be ensured*)
- (vi) Pre- printed white color paper cards of postcard size with name and number of Assembly Constituency/Assembly Segment, date of polling on the top and

the polling station number printed in the Center in 1"X 1" size in black ink for conducting the draw of lots for mandatory counting of VVPAT slips.

- (vii) DEO/RO shall make adequate arrangements for photocopier machines for making required number of copies of duly filled/signed Part-II of Form 17C.
- (viii) Every counting table has to be provided with the necessary stationery items including a ball point pen of blue ink, a paper knife for breaking open the seals, Part-II of Form 17 C in which the names of the candidates are pre-printed in the order they appear on the ballot paper and proformas for recording votes secured by each candidate and NOTA, to be used by the additional counting staff/Micro Observers.
- (ix) The Counting Agents are allowed to carry pen/pencil, plain paper/note pad and duplicate copy of Form 17C, furnished by the Presiding Officers to the Polling Agents after close of the poll, inside the Counting hall for their use/reference during the counting process.
- (x) Adequate teams should be formed for sealing the EVMs, transfer of VVPAT slips to black envelopes and sealing various election papers after counting. These teams should be provided with all necessary paraphernalia. The Nodal Officer for sealing work will keep the ECI Secret Seal in his possession safely and use it, wherever needed. Candidates/ their representatives shall be allowed to observe the sealing process and to affix their signature on the seals.
- (xi) Election materials shall be stored in a secured way as prescribed in the relevant instructions.

The abovesaid instructions shall be brought to the notice of all concerned for strict compliance during General Election and Bye elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assembly Elections.

Yours faithfully

(Ajay Kumar Verma)
Secretary

Legal Provisions	
Representation of People Act, 1951	
Section 64: Counting of Votes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counting under supervision and direction of the Returning Officer Contesting candidate /election agent/ /counting agents have a right to be present
Section 64A: Destruction, loss etc. of ballot papers at the time of counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RO shall report the matter to the ECI ECI may direct counting to be stopped and declare poll to be void, order re-poll for that polling station Or if satisfied the result of election will not get materially affected, may allow counting to be completed
Section 65: Equality of Votes	Results to be decided by draw of lot by Returning Officer
Section 66: Declaration of Results	In the absence of any otherwise direction from ECI, Returning Officer to declare the result
Section 67: Report of the Result	RO to report result to ECI & Appropriate authority (i.e. Secretary State Legislature/ Parliament, who shall get it published in official Gazette immediately.
Section 128: Maintenance of secrecy of voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicable to officer/clerk/agent/person performing duty in connection to Election (during poll or counting). RO/ARO should take an oath to maintain secrecy of voting & read it out aloud before the commencement of counting of votes. Violation punishable with 3 months imprisonment or fine or with both.
Section 129: Officers, etc. at elections not to act for candidates or to influence voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicable to DEO/RO/AROs/Polling staff. Imprisonment up to 6 months /fine/both
Section 136: Other offences and penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guilty of electoral offence: tampering with EVM/ballot box or ballot paper /nomination paper fraudulently

thereof [Sub sections to (1)-(4)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imprisonment up to 6 months or 2 years /fine /both
Conduct of Election Rules, 1961	
Rule 66A: Rules 50-54 have been made applicable. Rules 55C, 56C and 57C.	In relation to counting of votes where EVMs used.
Rule 51: Time and place for counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be fixed by RO at least one week before date of counting • Notice to given to in writing to each candidate/his election agent •
Rule 52: Appointment of Counting Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to ECI directions, a candidate may appoint counting agents which shall not exceed 16 for each place of counting • Appointment to be made in FORM 18, in duplicate. One copy for Returning Officer for record and other copy to agent for production before Returning Officer, not later than one hour before the time fixed for counting • No entry in counting hall unless second copy of FORM 18 is given to RO after signing the declaration • Revocation in FORM 19
Rule 53: Admission to the place of counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody else except RO/ARO, counting staff, candidates, their election agents and counting agents, public servants on duty, persons authorized by ECI • Whosoever misconducts himself or fail to obey lawful direction of RO shall be removed from counting hall. •
Rule 54: Secrecy of voting	Returning Officer to read out provision of section-128 aloud before commencement of counting.
Rule 55C: Scrutiny and inspection of voting machines	Counting staff and counting agents to inspect and ensure that the CU is not tempered and all seals are intact. In case not, report matter to ECI
Rule 56C: Counting of votes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Press the result button and see the display of votes count 2. Note down the same in part-II of form 17C. Counting supervisor to sign on it along with willing candidate counting agent 3. Corresponding entries to be made in form-

Handwritten signature

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Rule 57C: Sealing of voting machines	After, result is recorded in part-II of form 17C, the CU to be sealed with the seals of the RO and candidates/ counting agents.
Rule 60	for continuous counting
Rule 61	provides for re-commencement of counting after fresh poll
Rule 63	for recount of votes
Rule 64	for declaration of result of election
Rule 65	for counting at 2 or more places
Rule 66	for grant of certificate of election to returned candidate



**NOTICE TO CANDIDATE OR THEIR ELECTION AGENTS REGARDING THE DATE,
TIME AND PLACE FOR COUNTING**

Election to Lok Sabha.....Legislative Assembly..... Constituency
(When Counting takes place at one place)

In pursuance of rule 51 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, I hereby give notice that I have, in accordance with the said rule, fixed theday of (month)20.....a.m./p.m. as the date and time for the counting of votes in the Constituency and(place) inas the place for such counting.

Place.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Returning Officer.....

To

All the Candidates of their election agents

Annexure-C

**NOTICE TO CANDIDATE OR THEIR ELECTION AGENTS REGARDING THE DATE,
TIME AND PLACE FOR COUNTING**

Election to Lok Sabha.....Legislative Assembly..... Constituency

(When Counting takes place at more than one place)

In pursuance of rule 51 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, I hereby give notice that I have fixed the date, time and places of counting for the different Assembly segments of this Parliamentary Constituency as specified below:

Name of the Assembly Constituency	Date and Time	Place of Counting
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The Postal ballot papers of the entire Parliamentary Constituency will be counted, and the results of poll at all the polling stations will be consolidated at.....(Place) on..... (date)at. (time).

Place.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Returning Officer.....

To

All the Candidates of their election agents

Annexure- D

Election Commission of India

INFORMATION SHEET ON COUNTING CENTRES FOR PC

State/UT Code:-	State/UT Name :			
A. Basic Information				
(a) Counting Centre No.	(b) Category:- Urban/Rural			
(c) No of Parliamentary Constituencies to be covered in this Centre				
Sl. No.	PC No.	PC Name	PC Type (Gen/SC/ST)	Whether PC covered in whole or part
1				
2				
3				
(d) Building				
(e) Area – ID (Particulars of the Street/Locality/ area in which the building is situated):				
(f) Village/Town/Metro Name* :				
(g) Police Station No :-		(h) Police Station Name		(k) Pin Code
(i) District No:-		(j) District Name		
(l) Confirm is the Strong Room for storing Polled Ballot Boxes After the Poll is Located in the counting center itself: - Yes/No				
(m) If the answer in (l) above is 'No', name of place where the Strong Room is located, its distance from the Counting Centre and the reasons for choosing this location :				
(n) Whether sufficient space/shelter is available near the Strong Room for the Security Guards & agents of the candidates to keep watch: Yes/No (Please give details in item E(b).				
(o) Distance from Police Station of which the Counting Centre forms a part (in Kms) :				
(p) ECI's approval date :				
(q) Attached Media Centre No & Name :				
B. Facilities/Infrastructure Available (Please Tick)				
(a) Type of Structure		Pucca/Kuchcha		(b) Adequate Storage Space :- Yes/No
(c) Water :		Yes/No		(d) Toilet Yes/No
(e) First-aid facilities		Yes/No		(f) Regular electricity availability:- Yes/No
(g) Arrangements Proposed for emergency lighting:-				
(h) fire – fighting arrangements proposed:-				

*1Strike out whatever is not applicable

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	(c) Name	Place
	(d) Designation	Signature
	(e) Full Address (use stamp, if available)	
G.	Comments of DEO	Signature
H.	For use by CEO	
	(a) Remarks	
	Continued on continuation sheet no. _____ No. of continuation sheets added: _____	
	(b) Name	Date:
	(c) Address	Place:
	(use stamp, if available)	Signature:

**** Phone/fax nos. should be obtained in advance, even though these may be made operational later.

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Annexure - E

Election Commission of India

INFORMATION SHEET ON COUNTING CENTRES FOR AC

State/UT Code:-		State/UT Name :	
A. Basic Information			
(a) Counting Centre No.		(b) Category: - Urban/Rural	
(c) No of Assembly Constituencies to be covered in this Centre			
Sl. No.	AC No.	AC Name	AC Type (Gen/SC/ST)
Whether AC covered in whole or part			
1			
2			
3			
(d) Building			
(e) Area - ID (Particulars of the Street/Locality/ area in which the building is situated):			
(f) Village/Town/Metro Name* :			
(g) Police Station No :-		(h) Police Station Name	(k) Pin Code
(i) District No:-		(j) District Name	
(l) Confirm is the Strong Room for storing Polled Ballot Boxes After the Poll is Located in the counting center itself: - Yes/No			
(m) If the answer in (l) above is 'No', name of place where the Strong Room is located, its distance from the Counting Centre and the reasons for choosing this location :			
(n) Whether sufficient space/shelter is available near the Strong Room for the Security Guards & agents of the candidates to keep watch: (Please give details in item E(b).) Yes/No			
(o) Distance from Police Station of which the Counting Centre forms a part (in Kms) :			
(p) ECI's approval date :			
(q) Attached Media Centre No & Name :			
Facilities/Infrastructure Available (Please Tick)			
(a) Type of Structure		Pucca/Kuchcha	(b) Adequate Storage Space :- Yes/No
(c) Water :		Yes/No	(d) Toilet Yes/No
(e) First-aid facilities		Yes/No	(f) Regular electricity availability:- Yes/No
(g) Arrangements Proposed for emergency lighting:-			
(h) fire - fighting arrangements proposed:-			

*1Strike out whatever is not applicable

	(h) Name	Place
	(i) Designation	Signature
	(j) Full Address (use stamp, if available)	
G.	Comments of DEO	Signature
H.	For use by CEO	
	Remarks	
	Continued on continuation sheet no. _____ No. of continuation sheets added: _____	
	Name	Date:
	Address	Place:
	(use stamp, if available)	Signature:

**** Phone/fax nos. should be obtained in advance, even though these may be made operational later.

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Election Commission of India

INFORMATION SHEET ON COUNTING CENTRES

Continuation Sheet for CEO's Comments

A.	State /UT Code	State/UT Name
	(a) Counting Centre No.	

F.	For Use by CEO	
	(b) Remarks (Contd.)	
	Continued on continuation Sheet No. -- No. of continuation sheets added - --	
	(c) Name:	Date
(d) Address	Place	
(Use stamp, if available)	Signature	

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Explanatory Notes

Item No.	Item	Explanation
	State /UT Code	Code assigned to the State/UT S01 to S29 (except S09) and U01 to U09 for UTs in the alphabetical order (List of codes enclosed)
A (a)	Counting Centre No.	No assigned to the Counting Centre within each State/UT. Running serial numbers for Counting Centers have to be given starting from 1.
A (b)	Building	Name of the Building of the Counting Centre
A (e)	Area-ID (Particulars of Street/Locality area in which the building is situated)	Geographical Identification details like Street, Mohalla, Locality, Area etc. where the building of the Counting Centre is situated. This should help to quickly locate the building
A (g)	Police Station No.	Number assigned to the Police Station within the District. Running Serial number, starting from 1, should be assigned to Police Station within each District.
A (i)	District No.	Number assigned to the Revenue District within the State/UT. Running Serial nos., starting from 1, should be assigned to the Districts in a State/UT.

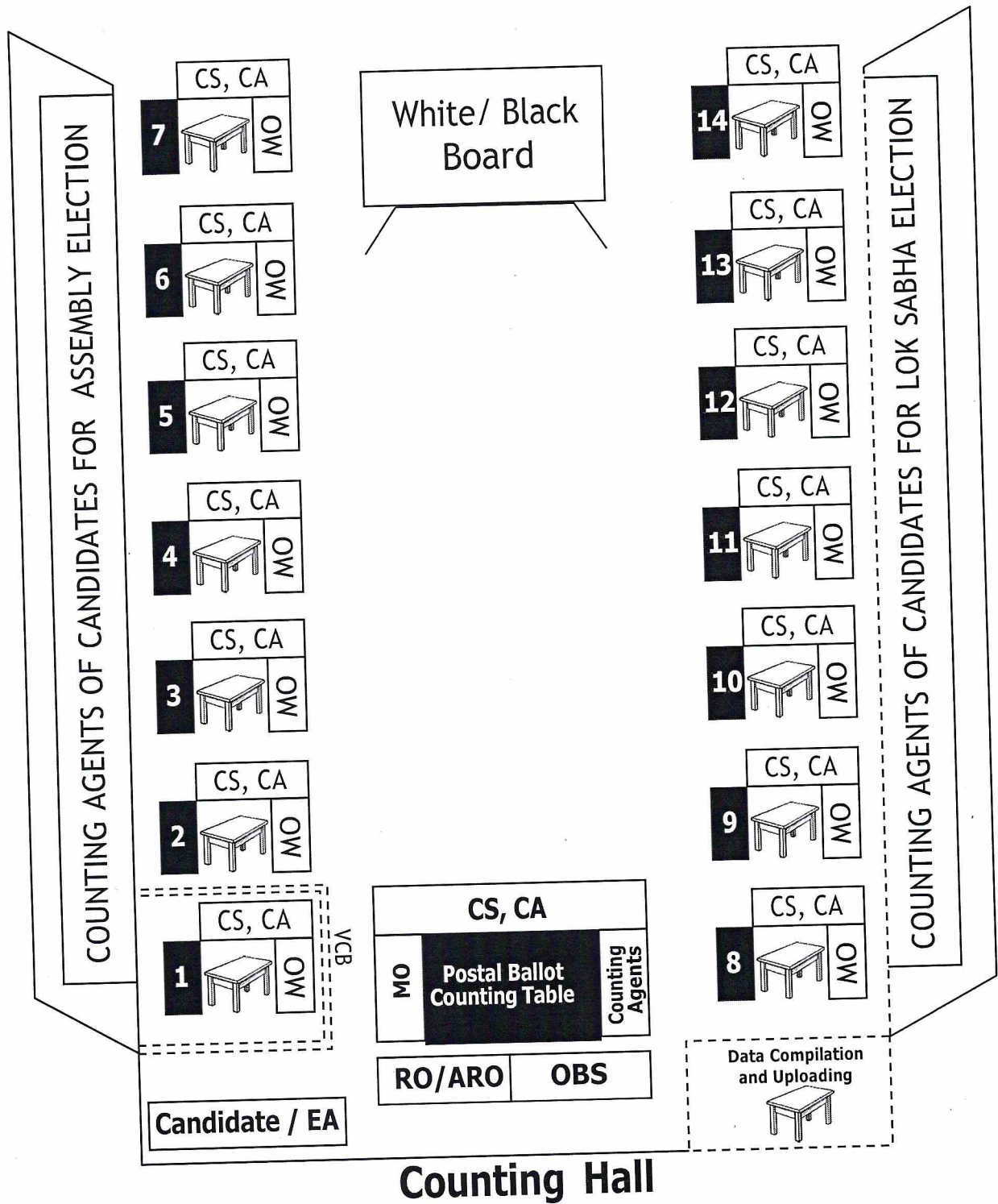
Note: State/UT code, District Number, Police Station Number etc. shall be same as provided in the *latest version* of **ERONET**. If these unique identification numbers for the various units have not been assigned so far, the verifying officers may leave the respective fields blank but the names of the different units must invariable be filled up in the form.



State/UT Code	Name of State/UT	Short Name of State/UT
S01	Andhra Pradesh	AP
S02	Arunachal Pradesh	AR
S03	Assam	AS
S04	Bihar	BR
S05	Goa	GA
S06	Gujarat	GJ
S07	Haryana	HR
S08	Himachal Pradesh	HP
S10	Karnataka	KT
S11	Kerala	KL
S12	Madhya Pradesh	MP
S13	Maharashtra	MT
S14	Manipur	MR
S15	Meghalaya	MG
S16	Mizoram	MZ
S17	Nagaland	NG
S18	Orissa	OR
S19	Punjab	PB
S20	Rajasthan	RJ
S21	Sikkim	SK
S22	Tamil Nadu	TN
S23	Tripura	TP
S24	Uttar Pradesh	UP
S25	West Bengal	WB
S26	Chhattisgarh	CG
S27	Jharkhand	JKD
S28	Uttarakhand	UKD
S29	Telangana	TG
U01	Andaman and Nicobar Island	ANI
U02	Chandigarh	CHD
U03	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	DNH & D&D
U05	NCT of Delhi	DL
U06	Lakshadweep	LKD
U07	Puducherry	POND
U08	Jammu & Kashmir	J&K
U09	Ladakh	LD

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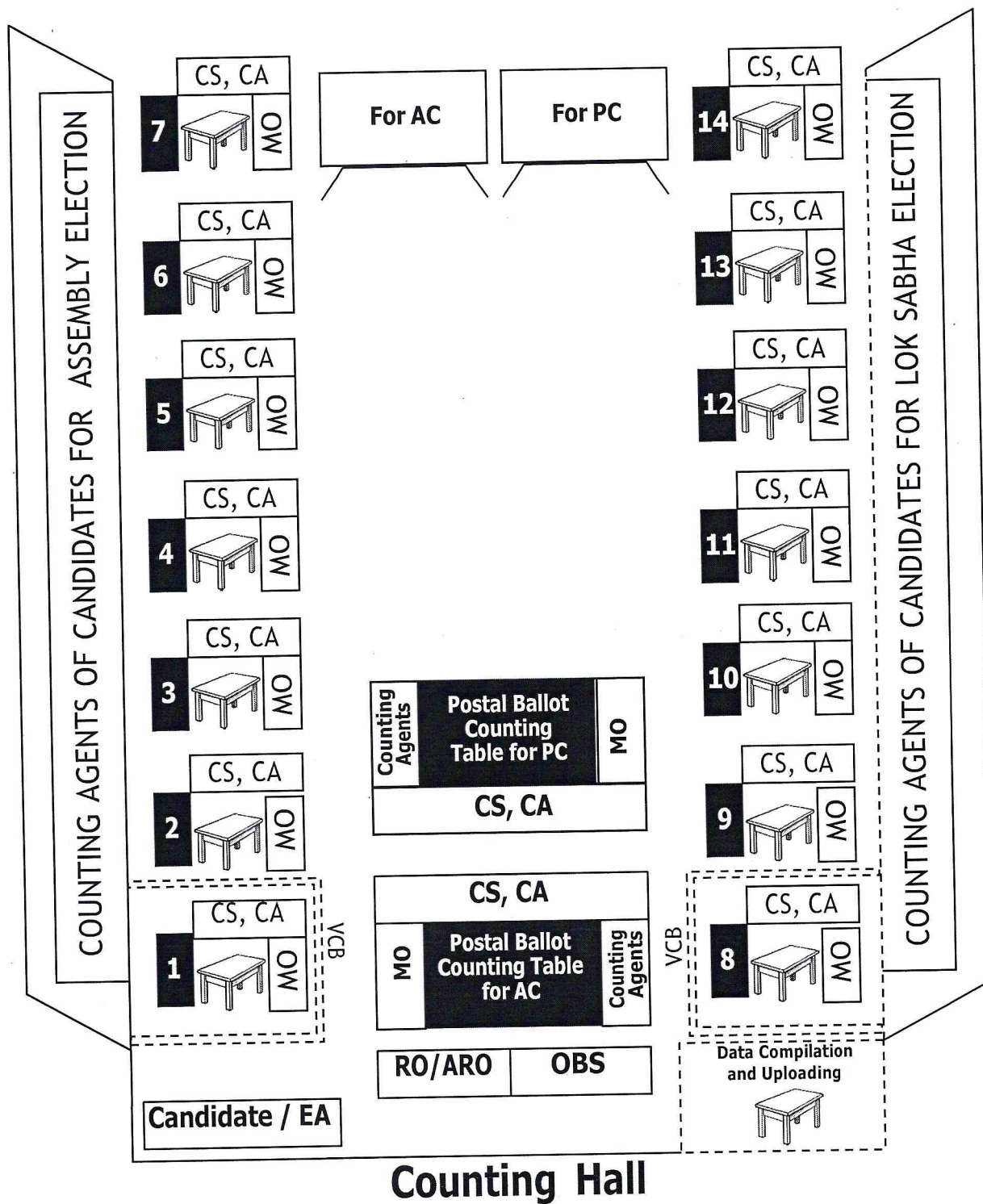
Layout of counting hall for AC/AS (Single Election)



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LAYOUT OF COUNTING HALL

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS



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APPOINTMENT OF COUNTING STAFF

ORDER

No.

Dated.....

Election to the House of the People / Legislative AssemblyConstituency
I(name)..... (designation) appoint the persons
whose names are specified below to act as Counting Supervisor/Assistant and to
attend at for the purpose of assisting me in the counting of votes
at the said election.

1.....

2.....

Place.....

Signature

Date

Returning Officer.....



APPOINTMENT OF MICRO OBSERVERS FOR COUNTING

ORDER

No.

Dated.....

Election to the House of the People / Legislative AssemblyConstituency

I(name)..... (designation) appoint the persons whose names are specified below to act as Micro Observers for Counting and to attend at for the purpose of assisting me in observing the counting of votes at the said election.

1.....

2.....

Place.....

Signature

Date

(**Returning Officer**)

.....

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Annexure-J

PROFORMA FOR VERIFYING VOTES OF RANDOMLY SELECTED CUs

Number and name of AC/AS:

Round number:

Polling Station number and name:

Table number:

CU number:

Number of votes as per Form 17C:

Number	Name of candidates (pre-printed)	Number of votes recorded in CU

(Micro Observer)

Annexure K

Matrix for Randomization of Counting Staff for counting of votes in CU, Postal Ballots and pre-counting scanning of ETPBS in case of PC/AC

Level of Randomization	Authority	Time of Randomization	Purpose	Remarks/ Presence	Randomization tool
First Randomization	DEO concerned where Counting Centre is located.	One week before the date of counting	To draw requisite 120% pool of staff for deployment from the database for each category	RO/ARO* to remain present.	Software developed by CEO
Second Randomization	DEO concerned where Counting Centre is located	(i) 48 Hours prior to time fixed for counting in case counting is also held at locations other than district headquarter (ii) 24 Hours prior to time fixed for counting in case counting is held district headquarter	To allocate staff in each category to AC/AS	In presence of Observer and RO/ARO*	Software developed by CEO
Third Randomization	RO/ARO*	5:00 am on the counting day	To allocate tables	In presence of Observer	Manual (if software facility not available)

*ARO in cases of PC where RO is not present

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