

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No.470/2019/SDR/Vol.I

Dated: 4th May, 2019

To,

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States and Union Territories

Sub: Lok Sabha General Election, 2019-counting of postal ballots of service voters transmitted through ETPBS- infrastructure and advance planning-regarding.

Sir/Madam,

Postal ballot papers for service voters are transmitted electronically from RO to the Record Office/ Unit Office through ETPBS. Such postal ballots, after marking vote, are returned to the respective Returning Officer through postal service. All the ballot papers that reached the Returning Officer by the hour fixed for commencement of counting are to be taken up for counting.

2. In the case of postal ballots sent through ETPBS, at the time of counting of votes, certain additional measures by way of reading the QR Codes on the labels affixed on the envelopes (Form 13C and 13B) and on the declaration by electors (Form 13A) have been put in place in order to confirm their genuineness. This exercise has to be carried out first before these ballot papers are taken up for counting. The past experience shows that, on an average, about one minute will be required for QR Code Reading of the documents in respect of one envelope. This would mean that if 300 envelopes are assigned to one table/team for QR Code Reading work, the exercise may take up to 5 hours to complete. Therefore, it is imperative that Returning Officers should make an assessment of the estimated number of ETPBs that are likely to come back in time, and accordingly, carry out advance planning about the number of tables and teams that would be required for completing the QR Code Reading without undue delay. Purchasing the QR Code Readers should also be completed well in advance and the Readers should be tested for error-free functioning. While estimating the time that may be taken for the pre-counting exercise of QR code reading and planning the no. of teams for QR code reading, Returning Officers should take into account the total time likely to be taking for EVM counting, including the time taken to complete the mandatory VVPAT counting of 5 polling stations per Assembly Constituency. The planning should be for making arrangements in such a way that the initial QR

code verification and subsequent counting of Postal Ballots are all managed so that the whole work is completed without delaying the over all process of counting.

3. QR code reading work may be done in a separate hall. However, this should be close/adjacent to the main counting hall. Suitable seating arrangements for one agent for each candidate may also be made within the room for them to watch the process of QR code reading.

4. When multiple tables and teams are provided for QR Code Reading work, each team will be given a separate login credentials which will enable to trace the envelopes and documents read by that team. Each team should comprise a Supervisor and an Assistant with a QR Code Reader. One ARO should be assigned to supervise a maximum of ten QR Code Reading teams. The SOP for QR Code Reading is given in Annexure-1. After reading the QR Codes on the outer envelope and the documents (declaration in Form-13A and the envelope in Form 13B containing the postal ballot paper), all these papers shall be placed back in the bigger envelope. After completing the QR Code reading for all envelopes, the set of envelopes to be taken up for counting will be assigned to the counting tables for the postal ballot paper. Further course of action for counting will be as per the provisions of Rule 54A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and the Commission's instructions on the subject.

4. These instructions should be communicated to all District Election Officers and Returning Officers with instructions to make advance planning as per the requirement of the individual constituencies.

5. Please acknowledge receipt and confirm action being taken.

Yours faithfully,



(K.F. WILFRED)

Sr. PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

SOP for Counting of Service Voters using ETPBS

Note: Scanning of QR Codes should be done in sequence without fail. Form 13-C should be scanned first, followed by both the QR Code on Form 13-A and then Form 13-B of the same postal ballot. Sequence of QR Code scanning should not be change under any circumstances.

Step 1: The Outer covers (Form 13-C) which is having QR Code on lower right hand side, it will be read by the QR Code Reader and necessary valid checks will be performed for possible duplicates and verification of the service voter. A unique serial number will be provided by the computer. This serial number will also be manually marked by RO on the envelope being verified.

Step 2: If no duplicate and correct verification is found, then only outer envelope (Form 13-C) will be open.

Step 3: Open the outer cover (Form 13-C) and take out the two documents which are required to be found inside. The first one is declaration (Form 13-A) and the second one is inner cover (Form 13-B) containing the postal ballot paper.

Step 4: RO should take out the declaration from Outer Envelope, Form 13-A and the inner cover in Form 13-B.

Step 5: Now scan two QR Codes on Form 13-A one by one and after that scan the QR Code which is on lower right side on Form 13-B.

Step 6: Note down the Sl. No. generated in all the above Covers.

Step 7: If the QR Code reading does not raise any anomaly, keep Form 13B envelope and the Declaration back in Form 13C envelope and keep the envelope in a tray meant for valid Envelopes to be taken up for counting. If the QR Code reading indicates any discrepancy such as the documents not being genuine or multiple copies of the document have been received, such envelopes shall be kept in a separate tray meant for rejected envelopes.

In the case of rejection of envelope/documents on QR code reading, the ARO in-charge of the team should see and satisfy himself about the discrepancy shown in QR code reading that results in rejection.