

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/38/2021

Dated: 27th March, 2021

PRESS NOTE

Polling for Phase 1 Assam and West Bengal Assembly Constituencies conducted peacefully & successfully

The first phase of Assam and West Bengal Assembly Elections was conducted successfully across 21825 Polling Stations spread over 77 Assembly Constituencies today. The Commission has laid great emphasis on ensuring transparent and vigilant mechanism for inducement and intimidation free elections.

The first phase of elections were conducted for 30 Assembly Constituencies in West Bengal. Nearly 74 lakh electorates across 10,288 Polling Stations are registered to exercise their franchise in this phase. Voting was held in 47 Assembly Constituencies of Assam with a total of 81lakh electorates registered across 11,537 Polling Stations. The number of Polling Stations has increased in view of the fact that the number of voters per polling station has been reduced from 1500 to 1000 keeping social distancing norms in view.



As a major push in conducting free and fair elections, live monitoring and webcasting mechanism for more than 50% of Polling Stations including critical and vulnerable polling booths was put in place to ensure safe and secure

atmosphere in polling areas. Commission, CEOs, DEOs, Observers could watch live streaming and keep a close watch on these polling booths in Assam and West Bengal. Webcasting arrangements were put in place for 5392 Polling Stations in West Bengal and 5039 Polling Stations in Assam.



As an initiative towards **inclusive and accessible elections**, the option of postal ballot facility has been extended to PwDs, Senior Citizens above the age of 80 years, COVID-19 suspect or affected persons and persons employed in essential services. The Observers were specifically asked to oversee arrangements for facilitation of these voters.

For handholding and for guidance of the poll going states the Commission also directed Special Observers to have additional role in supervising deployment of forces and their randomization for poll duties.

All the Polling Stations were directed to follow COVID-19 Safety protocols. Accordingly it was ensured that the Polling Stations were sanitized one day prior to poll and facility of thermal scanning, hand sanitisers, face masks were also made available at the Polling Stations. Proper arrangements for social distancing were put in place. Nodal Health Officers have been designated for State, district and Assembly Constituencies to oversee COVID-19 related arrangements and preventive measures during the entire electoral process.

All the 21825 Polling Stations of phase-1 in Assam and West Bengal, have been equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) of drinking water, waiting shed, toilet with water facility, adequate arrangements for lighting, ramp of appropriate gradient for wheelchair for PwD electors and a standard voting compartment etc were made available at all the Polling Stations. All arrangements like transport

facility, volunteers assisting Persons with Disability and senior citizens have also been put in place.



During this phase, a total of 10288 Ballot Units (BUs), 10288 Control Units(CUs) and 10288 VVPATs were used in West Bengal and 11,537 Ballot Units (BUs), 11,537 Control Units (CUs) and 11,537 VVPATs were used in Assam. As per standard procedure all these EVMs and VVPATs had already undergone First Level Checking, Randomisation, and Commissioning in the presence of Political Parties/Candidates agents. During FLC and during commissioning each of these EVMs and VVPATs had undergone mock polls. Today before the start of the poll each of the EVMs and VVPATs again underwent a mock poll in the presence of polling agents of the candidates with minimum 50 votes cast on each, as per standard procedure. At the end of the mock poll the result of EVM were matched with the result of VVPAT slips and shown to the polling agents. Nonfunctioning rate during the poll is lesser than experienced in last few polls.

Since the date of notification of Election till first phase, **record seizure of Rs. 281.28 Crore** has already been achieved for both the states. The seizure figure, which includes seizure of cash, liquor, narcotics, freebies etc, is more than four times higher than the total combined seizure of Rs. 60.91 Crore in GE LA 2016. The Commission has been laying specific emphasis on inducement free elections and curbing the malaise of undue money power, liquor, freebies. Till date Rs. 97.31crore has been seized in Assam (as against a total seizure of Rs. 16.58crore in LA 2016) and a total of 183.97crores for West Bengal (as against a total seizure of Rs 44.33crore in LA 2016). Total 53 & 85 Expenditure Observers have been deployed in Assam & West Bengal Assembly Elections, 2021 respectively for effective monitoring. In Assam, 603 Flying Squads (FS) and 762 Static

Surveillance Teams (SST) were operationalised to check movement of cash, liquor, drugs & freebies. The figures of FS & SST deployed in West Bengal are 1137 & 1012 respectively. In Assam, 06 Air Intelligence Units (AIU) of IT Department are set up at Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Silchar, Tezpur & Lakhimpur. In West Bengal, 03 Air Intelligence Units (AIU) of IT Department are set up at Kolkata, Andal in Durgapur & Bagdogra.

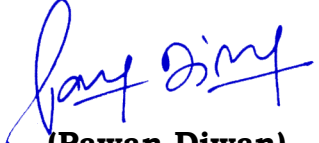


Election Commission of India's Cvigil App is a citizen centric mobile application which empowers people to report cases of MCC violations in real time basis, with auto populated details of location etc and responded within 100 minutes after verification at field level. Today a total number of 167 cases of Model Code of Conduct violations were reported through the cVIGIL app from West Bengal out of which 111 were disposed as of 4.30 pm. Similarly 582 cases were reported from Assam with 423 disposed till 4.30 pm.

Election Commission of India expresses gratitude to all stakeholders specially the voters for their enthusiastic and fearless participation in the election process today. Commission particularly thanks PwD electors, senior citizens, service voters for taking part in elections honoring COVID protocol norms. The voter turnout reported by 5pm from the 30 AC of phase 1 in West Bengal is 79.79%. The poll Percentage reported from the 47 ACs of phase 1 in Assam is 72.14% as of 5pm.



ECI also recognizes the services of the entire electoral machinery including polling staff on duty, security personnel, supervisory staff, Observers, Special Observers railway authorities, enforcement agencies as also the Health authorities for making comprehensive arrangements and dedicatedly working towards successful conduct of free, fair, transparent and safe elections despite pandemic. The Commission solicits active cooperation, close collaboration and constructive partnership from all stakeholders including media for delivering smooth and peaceful elections.


(Pawan Diwan)
Under Secretary