

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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No. ECI/PN/3/2018

Dated: 18th January, 2018

PRESS NOTE

Subject: Announcement of Schedule for the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, 2018.

The terms of the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura are due to expire as follows:

Meghalaya	06.03.2018
Nagaland	13.03.2018
Tripura	14.03.2018

By virtue of its powers, duties and functions under Article 324 read with Article 172(1) of the Constitution of India and Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Commission is required to hold general election to constitute the new Legislative Assemblies in the States of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura before expiry of their present terms.

(1) **Assembly Constituencies**

The total number of Assembly Constituencies in the State of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura and seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, as determined by the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assemblies Constituencies Order, 2008, are as under: -

State	Total No. of ACs	Reserved for SCs	Reserved for STs
Meghalaya	60	---	55
Nagaland	60	---	59
Tripura	60	10	20

(2) **Electoral Rolls**

The Commission firmly believes that pure and updated electoral rolls are the foundation of free, fair and credible election and intensive and sustained focus is laid on improving their quality, health and fidelity. The Commission, after visiting the poll bound State, had directed the State election machinery to ensure a smooth, effective, inclusive and time-bound completion of Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls with reference to 01.01.2018 as the qualifying date, so as to ensure that all eligible but un-enrolled citizens in the State are duly registered in the Electoral Rolls. Special efforts were made to identify the critical gaps in the electoral rolls and targeted SVEEP activities were carried out to address them.

The existing electoral rolls of all the Assemblies Constituencies in the State of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura have been revised, with reference to 01.01.2018 as the qualifying

date. Final publication of electoral rolls in respect of Tripura has been done on 05.01.2018 and final publication in respect of Meghalaya and Nagaland has been done on 10.01.2018. The details of the final publication are available on the ECI website. As per the final electoral roll, the number of electors in the State is as follows:

Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls w.r.t. 01/01/2018 as the qualifying date		
State	Total No. of Electors as per Draft Rolls	Total No. of Electors as per Final Rolls
Meghalaya	17,68,515	18,30,104
Nagaland	11,63,388	11,89,264
Tripura	25,05,997	25,69,216

(a) Photo Electoral Rolls

Photo Electoral Rolls (PER) will be used during this General Election and photo percentage in Photo Electoral Rolls of this State is as under:

State	Percentage of PER
Meghalaya	100 %
Nagaland	97.92 %
Tripura	100 %

(b) Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC)

Identification of the voters at the polling booth at the time of poll shall be mandatory. Electors who have been provided with EPIC shall be identified through EPIC. Presently, the EPIC coverage in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura is as under:-

State	Percentage of EPIC
Meghalaya	100 %
Nagaland	97.92 %
Tripura	100 %

All the residual electors are advised to obtain their Elector Photo Identity Cards from the Electoral Registration Officers of their Assembly Constituencies, urgently.

In order to ensure that no voter is deprived of his/her franchise, a separate instructions will be issued to allow additional documents for identification of voters.

(c) Photo Voter Slips

In order to facilitate the voters to know the location of their polling Stations and other details, **Voter slip bearing the Photo of the elector (wherever present in the roll) will be distributed, at least 7 days before the date of poll** to all enrolled voters by the District Election Officer. The Commission has directed the District Election Officers, Returning Officers and Observers to keep very close and rigorous monitoring of the distribution process.

The size, design and format of the Photo Voter Slip has also been substantially improved, to enhance its utility and effectiveness in voter identification, awareness and guidance. The size of the image has been increased and additional information, along with polling station Nazri Naksha on the reverse of the slip, has been provided.

It has also been directed that the said voter slip should be in the languages in which electoral roll is published for that Assembly Constituency. The Commission has laid a special emphasis on the systematic, efficient and timely distribution of the Photo Voter Slips through the Booth Level Officers (BLOs). The BLOs shall also maintain a Pre-Printed Register of Voters and take the signatures/thumb impression of person to whom the Photo Voter Slip is delivered.

(d) Voter Guide Brochure

In the General Election to Legislative Assembly of Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya, a **Voter Guide Brochure** shall be handed over to **every** household ahead of the elections, giving information about the date and time of polls, contact details of the BLOs, important websites, helpline numbers, documents required for identification at the polling station besides other important information including the Do's and Don'ts for voters at the polling station. This Voter Guide Brochure will be preferably distributed along with the Photo Voter Slips by the BLOs.

(3) Polling Stations and Special Facilitation

Details of Polling Stations in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura are as follows:

State	No. of Polling Stations in 2013	No. of Polling Stations in 2018	% Increase
Meghalaya	2485	3082	24%
Nagaland	2023	2187	8.10%
Tripura	3041	3214	5.69 %

(a) Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at Polling Stations

The Commission has upgraded the status of facilities at the Polling Stations from the earlier concept of Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) to Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF). Accordingly, instructions have been issued to the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that every Polling Station is equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) like drinking water, shed, toilet, ramp for the physically challenged voters, a standard voting compartment etc. for the convenience and facilitation of voters.

(b) Facilitation for Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

The Commission has issued instructions to ensure that polling stations are located at ground floor and sturdy ramps are provided for the convenience of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) electors. Further, in order to provide targeted and need-based facilitation to them. The Commission has directed that all Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in an Assembly Constituencies be identified and mapped with their respective Polling Stations and necessary disability-specific arrangements be made for their smooth and convenient voting experience on the poll day. Identified PwDs should be assisted by volunteers appointed by RO/DEO. It has been directed that Persons with Disabilities (PwD) electors be given priority for entering polling booths, provision for designated parking spaces is done close to the entrance of polling premise and special

facilities is provided to electors with speech and hearing impairment. Special focus has been laid for the sensitization of the polling personnel regarding the needs of the Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

(c) Special Arrangement For Women:

There would be separate queues for men and women electors. Men and Women voters would be admitted into the polling station by turns. Two women voters may be allowed entry into polling stations for entry of each male voter. Infirm/senior citizens voters and women voters with babies in arms may be given precedence over other voters in the queue.

(d) Voter Facilitation Posters

In order to fulfill the statutory requirements under **Rule 31** of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and to provide accurate and relevant information for voter awareness and information at each polling station, the Commission has also directed that standardized Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP) shall be displayed on all Polling Stations for greater facilitation and awareness of the voters. A total of FOUR (4) Posters have been designed to provide voter-centric information relevant on the poll day like details of the Polling Booth, polling area specified for that particular polling booth, list of contesting candidates, contact details of the important election functionaries, list of prescribed identification documents, illustrative voting procedure, items prohibited around the polling booth and important Do's and Dont's to be observed on the poll day. The Commission has directed that these four VFPs shall be prominently displayed at each polling booth in the poll-going State.

(e) Voter Assistance Booths (VAB)

Voter Assistance Booths shall be set up for **every polling station location**, having a team of BLO/officials with the objective of facilitating the voters to locate their polling booth number and serial number of that voter in the electoral roll of that concerned polling booth. The VABs will be set up with prominent signage and at a conspicuous place in the premise of the polling stations so that voters are able to seek required facilitation on the poll day.

(f) Increased Height of Standardized Voting Compartment to ensure Secrecy of Voting

In order to maintain the secrecy of vote at the time of poll and uniformity in use of voting compartments, the Commission has issued revised instructions to increase the height of the Voting Compartments from existing 24 inches to 30 inches. It has been, further, directed that the Voting Compartment should be placed on a table whose height shall be 30 inches and only corrugated plastic sheet (flex-board) of steel-grey colour, which is completely opaque and reusable, shall be used for making the voting compartments. The Commission hopes that the use of these standardized and uniform Voting Compartments in all the polling booths will translate into greater voter facilitation, enhance the secrecy of vote and eliminate aberrations and non-uniformity in the preparation of Voting Compartment inside the polling booths.

(4) All Women Managed Polling Station

As part of its firm commitment towards gender equality and greater constructive participation of women in the electoral process, the Commission has also directed that, to the extent possible, '**All- women Managed Polling Stations**' be **set up in one polling station for each Assembly Constituency** where the entire polling staff, including the police and security personnel, shall be women.

(5) Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

EVMs & VVPATs shall be used in all the polling stations of all the three States of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to enhance the transparency and credibility of the election. The Commission has already made arrangements to ensure availability of adequate number of EVMs and VVPATs for the smooth conduct of election. The **First Level Check of EVMs and VVPATs** has been completed in the presence of representatives of political parties. A **two-stage randomization of EVMs and VVPATs** will also be done. In the first stage, all the EVMs and VVPATs stored in the district EVM warehouse will be randomized by the District Election Officer (DEO) in the presence of the representatives of the recognized political parties for Assembly Constituency-wise allocation. Second randomization of EVMs and VVPATs will be done at RO level before candidate setting of EVMs and VVPATs for polling station-wise allocation. This is done in the presence of General Observer of Election Commission of India, contesting candidates/their agents. This process will be carried out after finalization of the contesting candidates. At this stage also, candidates or their agents/representatives will be allowed to check and satisfy themselves in every manner about the error-free functionality of the EVMs and VVPATs. On a pilot basis, VVPAT from One (1) Polling Station in each Assembly Constituency will be randomly selected by the Returning Officer by Draw of Lot in presence of all candidates to count VVPAT paper slips for verification of the result obtained from the Control Unit. Thus, paper slip for one polling station in each Assembly Constituency will be counted in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

(a) None Of The Above (NOTA) In EVMs and VVPATs

On the Balloting Unit, **below the name of the last candidate**, there will be a button for NOTA option so that electors who do not want to vote for any of the candidates can exercise their option by pressing the button against NOTA. The **Commission has provided a new symbol for the NOTA option**, which was designed by Institute of Design (NID). This new symbol will facilitate the voters in casting of their votes.



NOTA Symbol

The Commission is taking steps to bring this to the knowledge of voters and all other stakeholders and to train all field level officials including the polling personnel about the provision of NOTA and its symbol.

(b) Photographs of Candidates on EVM Ballot Paper

In order to facilitate the electors in identifying the candidates, the Commission has prescribed an additional measure by way of adding provision for printing the photograph of candidate also on the ballot to be displayed on the EVM (Ballot Unit) and on Postal Ballot Papers. This will also take care to avoid likely confusion when candidates with same or similar names contest from the same constituency. For this purpose, the candidates are required to submit to the Returning Officer, their recent Stamp Size photograph as per the specifications laid down by the Commission. The poll-bound States will be using the photograph of the candidates on the ballot papers for the first time. Instructions have also been issued to ensure necessary publicity of this instruction.

(6) Deployment of Polling Personnel and Randomization

Polling parties shall be formed randomly, through the special randomization IT application. **Three-stage randomization** will be adopted. First, from a wider district database of eligible officials, a shortlist of a minimum 120% of the required numbers will be randomly picked up. This group will be trained for polling duties. In the second stage, from this trained manpower, actual polling parties as required shall be formed by random selection software in the presence of General Observers. In the third randomization, the polling stations will be allocated randomly to these polling parties just before the polling party's departure. There shall be such randomization for Police personnel and Home Guards also, who are deployed at the polling stations on the poll day.

(7) Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for Service Voter

The Commission has notified the schedule for Summary Revision of last part of the Electoral Rolls 2018 and Draft Rolls have been published for Service Voters containing 9,99,468 Service Voters as on 01.01.2018. Efforts are being taken by the Commission to maximize the enrollment of service voters with correct particulars. Final publication of service voters Rolls will be done on 31st January, 2018. For the States of Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland draft Rolls for service voters has been published on 15.12.2017 and final publication is scheduled to be on 15.01.2018.

Commission has implemented ETPBS on pilot basis in four states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Manipur and in the entire state of Goa in the State Assembly Elections conducted during Feb-March, 2017 and in recently concluded Legislative Assemblies Elections of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh during November-December 2017. The Commission has decided to implement ETPBS in General Election to Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura Assemblies elections too.

(8) Affidavits of candidates

(a) All Columns to be filled In

In pursuance of the judgment dated 13th September, 2013 passed by the Supreme Court in Writ Petition (C) No. 121 of 2008 (Resurgence India Vs Election Commission of India and Another), which among other things makes it obligatory for the Returning Officer “to check whether the information required is fully furnished (by the candidate) at the time of filing of affidavit with the nomination paper”, the Commission has issued instructions that in the affidavit to be filed along with the nomination paper, candidates are required to fill up all columns. If any column in the affidavit is left blank, the Returning Officer will issue a notice to the candidate to file the revised affidavit with all columns duly filled in. After such notice, if a candidate still fails to file affidavit complete in all respects, the nomination paper will be liable to be rejected by the Returning Officer at the time of scrutiny. The Chief Electoral Officer has been directed to brief all Returning Officers about the judgment of the Supreme Court and the Commission’s instructions.

(b) Additional Affidavit along with ‘No Demand Certificate’

The Commission has, in pursuance to the Judgment of Hon’ble Delhi High Court, dated 7th August, 2015, in W.P.(C) No. 4912/1998 (KRISHAK BHARAT VS UNION OF INDIA AND ORS), directed that at every elections to either the House of Parliament or to the State Legislature, every candidate, at the time of filing nomination paper, shall also file an additional affidavit in the prescribed format along with the ‘No Demand Certificate’ from the agencies providing electricity, water and telephone with also rent, in case he had been in occupation of any Government accommodation during the last 10 years. This Affidavit would be in addition to the affidavit required to be filed in Form-26, and shall be got attested by an Oath Commissioner or Notary Public or Magistrate of the First Class. The outer limit for filing this Affidavit would be 3.00 PM on the last date of filing nomination papers. It is also specified that failure to file the affidavit along with the ‘No Demand Certificate’ would be treated as a defect of substantial nature for the purposes of Section-36 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.

(9) Model Code of Conduct

The Model Code of Conduct **comes into force with immediate effect**. All the provisions of the Model Code will apply to the whole of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura and will be applicable to all candidates, political parties and, the State Government of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. The Model Code of Conduct shall also be applicable to the Union Government insofar as announcements/policy decisions pertaining to/for these States are concerned.

The Commission has made elaborate arrangements for ensuring the effective implementation of the MCC Guidelines. Any violations of these Guidelines would be strictly dealt with and the Commission re-emphasizes that the instructions issued in

this regard from time to time should be read and understood by all Political Parties, contesting candidates and their agents/representatives, to avoid any misgivings or lack of information or inadequate understanding/interpretation. The government of the poll-bound States has also been directed to ensure that no misuse of official machinery/position is done during the MCC period.

The Commission has also issued instructions for swift, effective and stringent action for enforcement of Model Code of Conduct during the first 72 hours of announcement of the election schedule and also for maintaining extra vigilance and strict enforcement action in the Last 72 hours prior to the close of polls. These instructions have been issued in the form of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for compliance by the field election machinery.

(10) Communication plan

The Commission attaches great importance to preparation and implementation of a perfect communication plan at the district/constituency level for the smooth conduct of elections and to enable concurrent intervention and mid-course correction on the poll day. For the said purpose, the Commission has directed the Chief Electoral Officers of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to coordinate with the officers of Telecommunication Department in the State headquarters, BSNL/MTNL authorities, the representatives of other leading service providers in the States so that network status in the States is assessed and communication shadow areas be identified. The CEOs has also been instructed to prepare the best communication plan in the States and make suitable alternate arrangements in the communication shadow areas by providing Satellite Phones, Wireless sets, Special Runners etc.

(11) Videography/ Webcasting/CCTV Coverage

All critical events will be video-graphed. District Election Officers will arrange sufficient number of video and digital cameras and camera teams for the purpose. The events for videography will include filing of nomination papers and scrutiny thereof, allotment of symbols, First Level Checking, preparations and storage of Electronic Voting Machines, important public meetings, processions etc. during election campaign, process of dispatching of postal ballot papers, polling process in identified vulnerable polling stations, storage of polled EVMs and VVPATs, counting of votes etc. Additionally, CCTVs will be installed at important Border Check Posts and Static Check Points for effective monitoring and surveillance. Further, the Commission has directed that Webcasting, CCTV coverage, Videography and Digital cameras will also be deployed inside critical polling booths and polling booths in vulnerable areas to closely monitor the proceedings on the poll day without violating secrecy of voting process.

(12) Law and Order, Security Arrangements and Deployment of Forces

Conduct of elections involves elaborate security management, which includes not just the security of polling personnel, polling stations and polling materials, but also the overall security of the election process. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are deployed to supplement the local police force in ensuring a peaceful and conducive

atmosphere for the smooth conduct of elections in a free, fair and credible manner. In view of the same, the very preparation of poll schedule, sequencing of multi-phase elections and choice of constituencies for each phase had to follow the logic of force availability and force management.

The Commission has taken various measures to ensure free and fair elections by creating a conducive atmosphere in which each elector is able to access the polling station and cast his vote without being obstructed or being unduly influenced/intimidated by anybody.

Based on the assessment of the ground situation, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and State Armed Police (SAP) drawn from other States will be deployed during these elections. The **CAPFs shall be deployed well in advance for area domination, route marches in vulnerable pockets, joint patrolling and other confidence building measures to re-assure and build faith in the minds of the voters**, especially those belonging to the weaker sections, minorities etc. In the insurgency-affected areas, CAPFs shall be inducted well in time for undertaking area familiarization and hand-holding with local forces and all other standard security protocols for movement, enforcement activities etc. in these areas will be strictly adhered to. The CAPFs/SAP shall also be **deployed in the Expenditure Sensitive Constituencies and other vulnerable areas and critical polling stations** as per the assessment of ground realities by the CEO of the State, in consultation with the various stakeholders. On the Poll-eve, the CAPFs/SAP shall take position in and control of the respective polling stations and will be responsible for safeguarding the polling stations and for providing security to the electors and polling personnel on the poll day. Besides, these forces will be used for securing the strong rooms where the EVMs and VVPATs are stored and for securing the counting centers and for other purposes, as required.

The CEOs and State Police Nodal Officer will ensure a **day-to-day monitoring** of the activities and deployment of the CAPFs/SAP in the State to optimize the usage and effectiveness of these forces for conducting peaceful and transparent elections and inform the Commission periodically. Further, the entire force deployment in the Assemblies segments shall be under the **oversight of the Police Observers** deputed by the Commission.

The Commission lays a special emphasis on the advance preventive measures to be taken by the District Magistrates and Police authorities to maintain the Law & Order and to create atmosphere conducive for the conduct of free and fair elections. The Commission will be constantly monitoring the ground situation closely and will take appropriate measures to ensure peaceful, free and fair polls in the State.

(13) Election Expenditure Monitoring:

Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been issued, which include formation of Flying Squads (FS), Static Surveillance Teams (SST), Video Surveillance Teams (VST),

involvement of Investigation Directorates of Income Tax Deptt. etc. State Excise Departments and police authorities have been asked to monitor production, distribution, sale and storage of liquor and other intoxicants (including narcotics) during the election process. The functioning and operations of the Flying Squads/Mobile Teams shall be closely monitored using GPS Tracking.

For greater transparency and for ease of monitoring of Election Expenses, Candidates would be required to open a separate bank account and incur their election expenses from that very account. The Investigation Directorate of Income Tax Dept. has been asked to open Air Intelligence units in six airports of the three poll going States and also to gather intelligence and take necessary action against movement of large sum of money.

Some new initiatives taken by the Commission to strengthen the Expenditure Monitoring mechanism are:

- (a) Standard Operating Procedure for Seizure and release of cash:** For the purpose of maintaining purity of elections, the Election Commission of India has issued the Standard Operating Procedure for Flying Squads and Static Surveillance Teams, constituted for keeping vigil over excessive campaign expenses, distribution of items of bribe in cash or in kind, movement of illegal arms, ammunition, liquor, or antisocial elements etc. in the constituency during election process.

In order to avoid inconvenience to the public and genuine persons and also for redressal of their grievances, if any, the Commission has instructed vide its instruction no. 76/Instructions/EEPS/2015/Vol-II dated 29.05.2015, that a committee shall be formed comprising three officers of the District, namely, (i) CEO, Zila Parishad/Community Development Officer/Project Director, DRDA, (ii) District Treasury Officer and (iii) Nodal Officer of Expenditure Monitoring in the District Election Office (Convenor). The Committee shall suo-motu examine each case of seizure made by the Police or SST or FS and where the Committee finds that no FIR/Complaint has been filed against the Seizure or where the seizure is not linked with any candidate or political party or any election campaign etc., as per Standard Operating Procedure, it shall take immediate step to order release of such cash etc. to such persons from whom the cash was seized after passing a speaking order to that effect. The Committee shall look into all cases and take decision on seizure. In no case, the matter relating to seized cash/seized valuables shall be kept pending for more than 7(seven) days after the date of poll, unless any FIR/Complaint is filed.

- (b) Accounting of the expenditure incurred for campaign vehicles – on the basis of permissions granted:** It had come to the notice of the Commission that the candidates take permission from the Returning Officer for use of vehicles for campaign purpose, but some candidates do not show the vehicle hiring charges or fuel expenses in their election expenditure account. Therefore, it has been decided that unless the candidate intimates the R.O. for withdrawing the permission, the notional expenditure on account of campaign vehicles will be calculated based on the number of vehicles for which permissions is granted by the Returning Officer and added to the election expenditure account of the candidate.

(c) **Account Reconciliation Meeting:** In order to reduce litigations relating to expenditure accounts, a reconciliation meeting will be convened by the DEOs before final submission of the accounts, on the 26th day after the declaration of the results.

(d) **Candidate' Booth/ (Kiosk) Outside Polling Station- Expenditure to be Included in Candidates' Election Account:**

In order to ensure effective, accurate and credible election expenditure monitoring and to ensure that the candidates' expenditure accounts faithfully represent the actual spending on electioneering, the Commission has decided that that the candidates' booths set up outside the polling stations should, hereinafter, be deemed to have been set up by the candidates as part of their individual campaign and not by way of general party propaganda and all such expenditure incurred on such candidates' booths shall be deemed to have been incurred/authorized by the candidate/his election agent, so as to be included in his account of election expenses. The DEOs have been asked to notify the rates of the candidates' booths set up outside polling stations after due consultation with the political parties as per the Commission's instruction to all Chief Electoral Officers vide letter no. 6/ECI/INST/FUNC/EEM/EEPS/2016/Vol. IX dated 23.12.2016.

(14) **Ceiling Of Election Expenses For Candidates:**

The election expenses ceiling for candidates has been revised by the Government of India vide Notification dated 28th February, 2014. **As per the revised ceilings, the maximum limit of election expenses for the Assembly Constituencies is Rs. 20 lakh per candidate for the state of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.** All candidates are required to furnish their accounts of expenditure within 30 days of declaration of results.

(15) **Final Accounts By Political Parties:**

All Political Parties sponsoring candidates for the Legislative Assemblies elections are required to maintain day-to-day accounts of all election campaign expenses and submit the accounts to the Commission within 75 days of the completion of such elections. Such accounts will be uploaded on the website of the Commission for public viewing.

(16) **Media Engagement:**

The Commission has always considered the media as an important ally and a potent force multiplier in ensuring an effective and efficient election management. Hence, the Commission has directed the CEOs of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to take the following measures for positive and progressive engagement and interaction with the media:

- a) Regular interaction with the media during the elections and maintaining an effective and positive line of communication with media at all times.
- b) A strong and concerted focus on the creation of an effective information dissemination system to the media at the State and district level to ensure timely

and due access to election-related data and information by media by appointment of a Nodal Officer and Spokesperson at State Level.

- c) Effective steps to sensitize the media about the Election Code.
- d) Authority letters will be issued to all accredited media for the polling day and day of counting.

Commission expects the media to play a positive, pro-active and constructive role in supplementing and facilitating the efforts towards delivery of free, fair, transparent, participative, peaceful and credible elections.

(17) Use of Social Media:

The Commission has decided to enhance its interaction and involvement with all the stakeholders in the electoral processes by inducting the use of social media at the State as well as the District level. A Social Media Cell at ECI level has also been set up to monitor the performance of the State/UTs and District and to guide them to maximize the use of Social Media, making it more interactive and interesting for the general public.

(18) Paid News:

To deal with the menace of 'Paid News', a mechanism has been laid out with three tier Media certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMCs) at District, State and ECI level. Revised comprehensive instructions on 'Paid News' are available on the Commission's website.

Necessary instructions have been issued to the CEO of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to ensure briefing of political parties and Media in the districts about 'Paid News' and the mechanism to check 'Paid News'.

(19) Pre-Certification of Political Advertisements:

The Commission vide its Order No. 491/Media Policy/2015/Communication, dated 28th May, 2015, decided that the bulk SMSs/Voice messages on phone and in election campaigning shall also be in the purview of pre-certification of election advertisements as in case of all electronic media/TV Channels/Cable Network/Radio including private FM channels/Cinema halls/audio-visual displays in public places and political advertisement in social media.

(20) Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP):

Comprehensive measures for voters' education and awareness were taken up during the Special Roll Revision process. These measures will continue and will be further augmented during the ensuing electoral process.

Lowest turnout Polling Stations have been identified and possible reasons for the lower turnout analyzed and targeted interventions based on the findings towards enhanced IMF (Information, Motivation and Facilitation) have been meticulously

planned and rolled out to meet the objective of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'. This includes special outreach measures for Persons with Disability and identified marginal segments in the States and Districts.

Voter Facilitation Centres have been activated in all the districts in the States of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to facilitate voters. Special campaign has been undertaken on VVPAT awareness starting October 2017 in view of VVPATs being used for the first time in the Assembly Elections in these states. Short awareness video on VVPAT has been developed and widely disseminated through Cinemas, Cable TV besides Social Media including whatsapp. The VVPAT awareness is also being carried out through Radio, Hoardings, SMS and VVPAT equipped Mobile Vans are being used to cover all blocks and local markets.

Steps have been taken up to ensure wide dissemination of election related information, as well as to ensure adequate facilitation measures for wider participation of people in polling. Voter helplines, Voters' Facilitation Centres, web and SMS based search facilities are active for assistance of voters. Reminder services on poll days have been meticulously planned.

As per the directions of the Commission, Booth Awareness Groups have been activated at the Polling Stations for educating the voters and motivating them for informed and ethical voting. Campus Ambassadors have been activated in educational institutions for motivating and facilitating electoral participation amongst youth.

Partnerships have been nurtured with Departments, PSUs, CSOs and Media for maximum outreach of SVEEP initiatives. Customized informational and motivational messaging has been designed to cater to different segments of the electorate. All available platforms of information dissemination are being utilized including electronic, digital, outdoor, print, folk, inter-personal and social media.

(21) Training and Capacity Building of Returning Officers:

The Returning Officers are required to be constantly updated on the various rules and instructions related to conduct of polls. With this in mind the Commission has introduced an in-depth **Training and Capacity Building for all Returning Officers**. Also all the Election Trainers, who would be training various category of officials involved with the conduct of elections, have been trained in training techniques and methodology through **Train the Trainers & Facilitators (TTF)** programmes. Team Leaders at various levels are also being given Leadership Training. It is expected that the election officials in the States would thus be far better equipped to manage elections in a smooth manner.

(22) Deployment of Central Observers:

(a) General Observers

The Commission will deploy General Observers in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura in adequate number to ensure smooth conduct of elections. The Observers will be asked

to keep a close watch on every stage of the electoral process to ensure free and fair elections. Their names, addresses within the district/constituency and their telephone numbers will be publicized in local newspapers so that the general public can quickly approach them for any grievance redressal. The Observers will be given a detailed briefing by the Commission before their deployment. The Observers will fix a suitable time every day for meeting the political parties, candidates and other stakeholders to redress their election related grievances.

(b) Police Observers.

The Commission would deploy senior IPS officers as Police Observers at district/AC level in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura depending upon the need, sensitivity and assessment of ground realities and prevailing law and order and security scenario. They will monitor all activities relating to force deployment, law and order situation and co-ordinate between civil and police administration to ensure free and fair election.

(c) Expenditure Observers.

The Commission has also decided to appoint adequate number of **Expenditure Observers** and **Assistant Expenditure Observers** who will exclusively monitor the election expenditure of the contesting candidates. **Control room and Complaint Monitoring Centre** with **24 hours toll free numbers** shall be operative during the entire election process. Banks and Financial Intelligence Units of Government of India have been asked to forward suspicious cash withdrawal reports to the election officials. Comprehensive instructions for the purpose of effective monitoring of the election expenditure of the candidates have been separately issued by the Commission and are available at ECI website <www.eci.nic.in>.

(d) Micro Observers

As per the extant instructions, the General Observers will also deploy Micro-Observers, from amongst Central Government/PSUs Officials, to observe the poll proceedings on the poll day in critical/vulnerable polling stations. Micro-Observers will observe the proceedings at the polling stations on the poll day, right from the conduct of mock poll, to the completion of poll and the process of sealing of EVMs and VVPATs and other documents so as to ensure that all instructions of the Commission are complied with by the Polling Parties and the Polling Agents. They will report to the General Observers directly regarding any vitiation of the poll proceedings in their allotted polling stations.

(23) New IT Applications To Be Used For Forthcoming General Elections:

(a) SAMADHAN: Public Grievance Redressal and Complaint Monitoring System

A comprehensive, robust and reliable Public Grievance Redress System has been developed by the Election Commission to provide a common platform for all registering complaints, grievances, concerns, Code of Conduct violation and suggestions lodged by any member of the public, including our other stakeholders like political parties, candidates, civil society groups etc. A citizen has the Multi-Channel facility to lodge any election-related complaint via bouquet of modes/sources like Website, Email, letter, fax, SMS, Call-centre (Call-center Number is "1950") etc. A Mobile App would also be made available for the people, so that they can submit complaints with photographs/videos on the common platform.

(b) SUVIDHA: Single Window Permission System

A single window IT system for getting all election campaign related permissions/clearances within 24 hours has been created. In this system, Candidates and Political Parties can apply for permissions for Meetings, Rallies, vehicles, temporary election office, loudspeakers etc. at a single location at least 48 hours in advance, where backend convergence of various authorities/departments concerned has been done. This system is put in place at every RO level in each sub-division which will provide for applying, processing, granting and monitoring permissions in a synergistic manner. However, in case of permissions for Helicopter usage/landing and use of helipads, the application shall have to be submitted at least 36 hours in advance.

(c) SUGAM: Vehicle Management System:

It is an IT-based Vehicle Management System from election vehicle need assessment till their release and payment of hiring charges with the facility of issuance of requisition letters for vehicles, maintaining vehicle details with address, mobile number and bank details of owner and driver, transfer of vehicles from one district to another district etc. and will be used in these elections wherever required.

(d) Webcasting/CCTVs at Polling Stations:

Webcasting at identified critical/ Vulnerable polling stations for LIVE monitoring of election process, to keep a check on illegal activities such as booth capturing, money distribution and bogus voting and to bring about complete transparency in the voting process shall be undertaken. Further, during the election process, CCTV monitoring and webcasting shall also be done at various border Check-Posts, Nakas and other sensitive and critical locations across the constituencies to keep a strict vigil on any nefarious activities designed to vitiate the electoral process.

(e) **E-Payment :**

The Commission has directed to the Chief Electoral Officers of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to make Payments through e-payment gateway wherever possible for (i) Timely Payment of Honorarium to all the Civilian Officials/Police Officials deployed for “Election Duties” (ii) Timely Payment to all the Vehicles Owners whose vehicles are Requisitioned for Election Purpose, (iii) Timely Payment for all the Vendors who provide Goods and Services for Election related Duties in all the Assemblies Constituencies.

(24) **Conduct of Officials**

The Commission expects all officials engaged in the conduct of elections to discharge their duties in an impartial manner without any fear or favour. They are deemed to be on deputation to the Commission and shall be subject to its control, supervision and discipline. The conduct of all Government officials who have been entrusted with election related responsibilities and duties would remain under constant scrutiny of the Commission and strict action shall be taken against those officials who are found wanting on any account.

(25) **Poll Day Monitoring System**

A constant and stringent 24-hour monitoring of the critical events and activities of the poll day will be done using the Poll Day Monitoring System. All the crucial events like reaching of Polling Parties, Votes Cast, Voters’ Images etc will be captured and monitored using this state-of-the-art IT application, which has the added advantage of being used offline also, so as to circumvent non- connectivity of network. All data captured offline is synchronized with the centralized server as soon as the person using the App comes in the coverage area. Through this App, election management authorities, viz., RO, DEOs, CEOs, and Commission would be able to monitor Voter Turnout (VTR) gender-wise, age-wise and section-wise.

(26) **New Initiatives**

a. **Use of VVPATs at all the Polling Stations:**

VVPATs will be used along with EVMs in all Polling Stations of each assembly constituency of poll going States of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to enhance the transparency and credibility of the elections. VVPAT from One (1) Polling Station in each Assembly Constituency will be randomly selected to count VVPAT paper slips for verification of the result obtained from the control unit.

b. **All Women Managed Polling Stations:**

All- women Managed Polling Stations’ would be **set up in one polling station for each Assembly Constituency** to the extent possible with the entire polling staff, including the police and security personnel, being Women.

c. Service Voters to caste the vote using Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS):

To ensure all registered Service Voters' participation in elections, the Commission has implemented ETPBS on pilot basis in 4 states of Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand and Manipur and in the entire state of Goa in the General Elections to State Legislative Assemblies conducted during Feb-March, 2017 and also in the General Election to the Legislative Assemblies of Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat.

For the registered Service Voters in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura ETPBS would be implemented which would enable 2181 Service Voters in Meghalaya, 5044 in Nagaland and 5202 in Tripura registered as on 11.01.2018 and final registered Service Voters' number would be published on 15.1.2018.

d. Friendly Polling Stations for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) (Accessible Elections):

In order to make elections more accessible and friendly to Voters with disability, special facilitation will be provided at the Polling Stations.

(27) Schedules of Election

The Commission has prepared the Schedules for holding General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura after taking into consideration all relevant aspects like climatic conditions, academic calendar, major festivals, prevailing law and order situation in the State, availability of Central Police Forces, time needed for movement, transportation and timely deployment of forces and in-depth assessment of other relevant ground realities.

The Commission after considering all relevant aspects has decided to recommend to the Governors of the State of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura to issue notifications for the General Elections under the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as per the **Schedule annexed**.

The Commission seeks the active cooperation, close collaboration and constructive partnership of all the esteemed stakeholders in the electoral process and strives to employ the collective synergies towards delivering Free, Fair, Peaceful, inclusive and credible General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, 2018.

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(SUMIT M UKHERJEE)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

Schedule for the General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Tripura

Poll Events	Tripura (All 60 Assembly Constituencies)
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	24.01.2018 (WED)
Last Date of Nominations	31.01.2018 (WED)
Date for Scrutiny of Nominations	01.02.2018 (THU)
Last Date for Withdrawal of candidatures	03.02.2018 (SAT)
Date of Polling	18.02.2018 (SUN)
Date of Counting	03.03.2018 (SAT)
Date before which election shall be completed	05.03.2018 (MON)

Annexure-2

Schedule for the General Election to the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya and Nagaland

Poll Events	Meghalaya and Nagaland (All 60 Assembly Constituencies of both States)
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	31.01.2018 (WED)
Last Date of Nominations	07.02.2018 (WED)
Date for Scrutiny of Nominations	08.02.2018 (THU)
Last Date for Withdrawal of candidatures	12.02.2018 (MON)
Date of Polling	27.02.2018 (TUE)
Date of Counting	03.03.2018 (SAT)
Date before which election shall be completed	05.03.2018 (MON)