

**BY FAX/SPEED POST**

**ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA**

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

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**K.N.BHAR**  
**UNDER SECRETARY**

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**NO. 470/2007/PLN-I**

**DATED:** 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2007

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of States and Union Territories

**Sub: Counting Centers - Arrangements thereat – including security arrangements.**

Sir,

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITIES AT COUNTING CENTRES AND  
MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTING PROCESS**

1. The Commission has decided to use Electronic Voting Machine in all polling stations for recording of votes. The counting of votes will be done polling station wise.
2. A counting Centre means a place where counting of votes will be done and may have one or more Counting Halls.
3. A counting Hall means a separate room walled on all sides and preferably with separate exit and entry facilities.
4. Where pre-constructed separate rooms are not available but large rooms are proposed to be divided for creating Halls, each part constitution a Hall will be separated by temporary partitions. These partitions will be of strong material, but preferably CGI sheets only. Where the owners of the Building have objections to dig holes on the floor, a suitable rigid frame, with CGI sheets fixed on two sides, may be used. The point to be ensured is that after the necessary portioning, each Hall is an independent room walled on all four sides. It should not only be not possible for persons to move out from a Hall without coming out of it, but it should be impossible to slip any materials from one Hall to other through the partitions. On both sides of the partitions, guards should be posted to ensure that these are not disturbed.
5. Each counting center will have a distinct number and within each Counting Centre each Hall will have a distinct number.
6. Each Hall, as defined earlier, will be used for counting for only one Assembly Segment at a given point of time. The counting of one assembly segment can

be taken up in maximum of two Halls provided that in one hall the physical distribution of space does not allow placing of more than 8 tables (including the table of the RO/ARO). IN cases where the size of the electorate in an Assembly segment is unusually large a maximum of 15 tables each can be put in two Halls for that Assembly segment. All such cases will be personally scrutinized by the DEO and the observers after taking into account all relevant factors such as number of candidates, number of counting agents etc.

7. In cases where two Halls are being used to count an Assembly segment the Polling Station numbers will and pre-allotted to the two Halls (each room being one separate Hall) in advance.
8. Assembly Segments must be pre-allotted to Halls and this allotment made known to all concerned in advance.
9. If the total number of Halls is less than the total number of Assembly Segments for a Parliamentary Constituency, the sequence of counting will be as per the ascending AC numbers. Thus, if there are seven such AC segments in a PC and only three Halls, then segments with the three lowest serial numbers will be taken up for counting in the three Halls available. As soon as counting is completed in respect of one Assembly Segment in a particular Hall and after necessary clearance of the Hall, counting for the next AC pre-allotted to the Hall will be taken up therein.
10. Under no circumstances, more than one AC segment will be taken up for counting simultaneously, inside one Hall, and, under no circumstances, Electronic Voting Machines (or Ballot Papers) of more than one AC segment will be physically available for counting purposes inside one Hall at any time.
11. The Commission has already prescribed limits for the number of counting tables, which can be placed inside a Hall. Important considerations for deciding on the number of counting tables would be the number of Polling Stations, size of the room, the number of counting agents, as per the number of candidates, and the total number of counting personnel proposed to be deployed and the security aspects.
12. The upper limit of 15 tables (including the Table of Returning Officer) in a counting HALL will not be increased under any circumstances. A lower actual limit may be fixed taking into account all relevant factors.
13. The Commission has prescribed a format for essential information on counting centers and personal inspection by the Returning Officers.

Observers of the Commission will undertake detailed inspection of counting centers during their visit and ensure that the counting Halls have been planned as per the above instructions and Assembly segments have been accordingly pre-allotted to each Hall. They will send a specific report on this to the Commission. They should also obtain relevant drawings of each counting centres and keep it as a part of the record for their final report.

14. The Counting Halls, including partitions as planned, should be got ready at least three clear days, ahead of the date of counting and a report sent by each RO to the CEO, and by the Observers to the Commission. CEOs shall send a consolidated report to the Commission. These rooms should be located in a manner that the smooth flow of polled EVMs and other papers to and from the strong room are not interrupted by the presence of non-officials and media persons.
15. Three tier cordoning system should be set up in all counting centers to prevent the entry of unauthorized persons inside the counting centers. No counting agent without proper identity card having the photograph, duly displayed on its person, shall be allowed to cross the first cordon of the counting centre. Similarly, the identity of all candidates, their election agents and of all the counting staff shall also be thoroughly verified with reference to their identity cards at the first cordon itself. A senior Magistrate shall be posted at the entrance to control crowd and regulate entry.
16. Before allowing the entry of the candidates, their agents and other officials whose identities have been established by means of identity card to the second cordon, proper frisking should be made by the security personnel. The frisking shall be done by State police force personnel only. Women shall be frisked only by women police personnel/women Home Guards. There should be no further frisking
17. CEOs, during their tours, will specifically review arrangements proposed and inspect as many counting centers as possible.
18. At each counting center the Observer or group of Observers will be provided a separate room or cubicle with table/chairs, a telephone with STD and a fax attached to it. This will be reserved for the exclusive use of the Observers for their communication with the Commission, in strict confidentiality.
19. The number of this telephone will be obtained from the Telephone authorities at least 15 days ahead of the counting and made known to the Commission.

20. The RO shall provide a hotline, wherever possible, with CEO and one or more separate telephone line(s) with STD facilities to keep in touch with the CEO and the Commission. A fax machine should invariably be available for use of the RO/ARO at each counting centers.
21. Media centers have to be set up at each Counting Centre. As far as possible, a separate room of adequate size should be set apart for these centers and reasonable facilities like telephone, fax, data communication network etc have to be provided. Each returning Officer is required to exclusively deploy one senior officer to be in charge of the Media Centre. Such an officer should be an Assistant Returning Officer or an officer drawn from the Public Relations Department or any other officer capable of managing this function on behalf of the Returning Officer. Limited coverage of short duration by manageable audio/visual groups can be allowed and the groups, may be conducted by the official designated for this purpose by the officers in charge of counting. It is important that adequate number of officers/officials are available to assist the officer in charge of the Media Centre at each counting centre so that they can escort the media groups in small manageable numbers to visit counting halls from time to time. Such visits are to be of short duration only. All such visits will be escorted visits conducted by officers identified and earmarked for this purpose in advance. For further detail on media management, Commission's letter No. 491/CNTG/MCS/99, dated 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1999 may please be referred.
22. The media room should be set up at some distance away from the main Counting Hall. In case of any Parliamentary or Assembly constituencies being counted in one Counting Centre with multiple Counting Halls, the media passes will be issued "Counting Centre-Wise" and not "Counting Hall-wise".
23. The holders of the authority letters, 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. 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 peaceful counting. Limited coverage of short duration by manageable audio/visual groups can be allowed and the groups, may be

conducted by the official designated for this purpose by the officers in charge of counting.

24. The arrangements for dissemination of counting trends and results to public and for media is to be made in advance so that there is absolute clarity in the matter. These are expected to provide the counting trends and results information in an organized and systematic manner in good time. These should be made known to all concerned in advance.
25. It may also be noted that no static (fixed) camera – still or video of the media is allowed inside any counting hall. No camera stand should thereof be allowed to be taken inside counting halls. Further, while taking audio visual coverage of the counting process with camera carried in hand or on shoulders, under no circumstances, the actual votes recorded on an individual ballot papers is to be photographed or covered by audio visual coverage. The exact location up to which the, still and video camera can move, should be indicated by the Returning Officer in advance marked by a line or a string for guidance of all concerned.
26. DEOs, and ROS will accordingly make detailed plans and ensure that the arrangements are in position well in time and at least 72 hours before start of counting. This will facilitate dry run of transmission of counting information and system checks by all concerned.
27. For ensuring accuracy of the result of counting, a round-wise statement shall be prepared by the Returning Officer in the proforma annexed hereto (**Annexure for tabulating round-wise figures**). Both the Returning Officer and Observer shall personally verify that the number of votes posted against the name of each candidate in respect of every counting table tally with the figures as shown in Part II of Form 17 'C' (result of counting) pertaining to that table. They shall append their initial below the total of each counting table. A copy of the detailed table-wise polling station-wise round –wise break up of the votes as shown in the said Annexure will be kept by the Observer in his folder.

In addition, a computer will be installed in the Counting Hall where parallel tabulation work will be done in an Excel Sheet to counter check any human error. This data entry will also be done Table wise, Polling station wise and Round wise. Even though computer tabulation will not substitute the manual tabulation being done for obtaining final result of the counting of

votes, the Computer based parallel tabulation/totaling will be helpful as a double check on the accuracy of manual tabulation.

28. Next Round of counting should only start after repeat after all tables of previous round have finished counting and their result sheets are accepted by AROs.
29. The Observer/Returning Officer will ensure that the results of **table-wise – round-wise** counting of votes are immediately displayed prominently on a notice board inside the counting center and announced through public address system. After the counting is completed and the Returning Officer has compiled the final result sheet, the Observer will tally the figures of votes obtained by the candidates with the details of round-wise breakup kept by him in his folder and allow the result to be declared only when the figures tally with each other.
30. The Commission has issued detailed instructions on the flow of data through GENESYS. These instructions are to be followed scrupulously by all Returning Officers.
31. The RO will fax round-wise data to the CEO. Wherever hot lines are available with the CEO, these will be utilized to orally confirm the contents of the fax message. CEOs would set up adequate number of fax lines with hunting line facility to receive the faxes. For this purpose, they can hire faxes or temporarily borrow fax machines from various government departments and corporations. The total number of such fax machines required, including a few in reserve, should be decided in advance and these should be positioned and tested at least 72 hours before the start of counting. The CEOs should have blank forms to note down the round wise data, if received orally on phone or hotline.
32. As soon as the result is declared, the data as contained in Form 21, which is handed over to the winning candidate, will be handed over to the Observer as prescribed by the Commission for immediate communication to the Commission.
33. As per the above arrangements, the progress of every round, Assembly segment-wise, will be announced as soon as each round is complete. Similarly, the consolidated position of the PC by combining the position of the rounds of different ACs available from time to time should also be

announced over the public address system,, preferably from a centralized location where the public announcement booth is located. The public announcements could be repeated at suitable intervals for the knowledge of the public that gather in good number outside the Counting Centres.

34. It is important that soon after the counting is finished, the fully reconciled counting data is tabulated and checked thoroughly before the result is formally declared.
35. The Observers will ensure that the Final Result Sheet in form 20A is filled by the RO before he declares the result in Form 21 C and sends it to appropriate quarters. One copy each of the Forms 20 A, 21C and 21E duly filled in will be collected by the Observers and attached with their reports on counting.
36. Commission has decided that all Observers will keep a close watch on the process of counting of votes and compilation of results. Before the Returning Officer declares result of an election, he/she shall obtain an authorization for declaration of result from the Observer concerned. Every Observer shall completely satisfy himself/herself about the fairness of counting of votes and complete accuracy of compilation of result. After having done so, he/she shall issue an authorization to the concerned Returning Officer in the following format for declaration of result :-

“ \_\_\_\_\_ Observer (Code \_\_\_\_\_),  
For \_\_\_\_\_ Assembly Constituency after having satisfied myself about the fairness of counting of votes and complete accuracy of compilation of result in Form-20 hereby authorize the Returning Officer for \_\_\_\_\_ Assembly Constituency to declare the result.”

Signature of the Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
Code of the Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
Assembly Constituency No. & Name \_\_\_\_\_ ”

37. No Returning Officer shall declare the result without receiving the authorization in the format as detailed in Para 36 above from the Observer. It shall be the personal responsibility of the Observer and Returning Officer to ensure fairness of counting of votes and accurate compilation of results.
38. The Observers can make out a joint report at the end of counting. On the day immediately following the counting, they will put together their reports, along with copies of Forms 20A, 21C and 21E and send them to the Commission.

This should be done before the Observers leave the Constituency on completion of their duty. They will also ensure that the original Forms in two sets are dispatched by the RO through special messenger to the CEO, in turn, will send one set for all constituencies in his state, through a special messenger by flight, to the Commission.

39. The CEOs will keep in touch with the Zonal Secretaries on the progress of counting and the collection and dispatch of data in statutory forms as mentioned earlier.
40. It shall be the personal responsibility of the concerned District Election Officer to ensure that all the abovementioned instructions are strictly complied with and brought to the notice of all the Returning Officers, Observers, Candidates, Counting Agents etc sufficiently before the commencement of the Counting.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

(K N BHAR)



**Annexure for tabulating Trends/Results**

Number & Name of Constituency \_\_\_\_\_ Round Number \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Table No.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	Total	Brought from Previous Round	Cumulative Total
Polling Booth No.									
Sl. No.	Name of Candidate								
Rejected Vote									
Total Vote									
	Initial of RO	Initial of RO	Initial of RO	Initial of RO	Initial of RO	Initial of RO	Initial of RO		
	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer	Initial of Observer		

Important:

1. All Over writings/cutting should be certified by observer.
2. Polling station Number whose votes are counted should be indicated below the table Number.
3. A copy of this is to be kept by observer in a separate folder for cross checking later.