

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, TELANGANA
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION (ELECTIONS) DEPARTMENT
9th Floor, B.R.K.R Bhavan, Adarsh Nagar, Hyderabad -500 063.

Memo. No.2080/Elecs.D/2025-55,

Dated:15.10.2025

Sub:- Elections – Bye Elections to the Telangana State Legislative Assembly
from 61-Jubilee Hills AC, 2025 – **Printing of Ballot Paper Instructions**
- Communicated -Reg.

Ref:- From ECI, Press Note No. ECI/PN/317/2025, dt: 06.10.2025
-:o0o:-

The following instructions issued by the ECI are communicated herewith to the Commissioner, GHMC & DEO, Hyderabad and to the Returning Officer, 61-Jubilee Hills AC, with a requested to follow them scrupulously during Bye Elections to TSLA from 61-Jubilee Hills Assembly Constituency, 2025 :-

Sl. No	Reference No &Date	Subject
1	ECI Press Note No. ECI/PN/306/2025, dt.17.09.2025	ECI revises guidelines to make EVM Ballot Paper more readable and EVMs to have colour photographs of candidates for the first time, serial numbers also to be displayed more prominently
2	ECI Lr No.4/Misc/2025/SDR/Vol. XII, dt.17.09.2025	Guidelines on design and printing of EVM Ballot Paper for use in General/ Bye Elections to the Hop and Legislative Assembly of the states / UTs.
3	Para 11.25 of Hand Book for Returning Officer, 2023	Design of ballot Papers for EVM.
4	ECI Lr No.576/3/2015/SDR, dt. 16.03.2015.	Printing of ballot papers photograph of candidate also to be printed along with the other particulars on the ballot paper.
5	ECI Lr No.576/3/2023/SDR, dt. 07.07.2023	Provision for "None of the above" option on the EVM / Ballot Paper - Instructions
6	ECI Lr No. 52/2023/SDR/Vol. IV, dt.14.03.2024	Guidelines on printing of postal ballot papers, their transportation and storage.

2. Receipt of the same should be acknowledged at once.

C SUDHARSAN REDDY,
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER &
E.O. SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT.

To

The Commissioner GHMC & DEO, Hyderabad (w.e)
The RO, 61-Jubilee Hills AC (w.e.) (through concerned DEO)

Copy to:

SLA (Place in CEO, Telangana web site)
SF/SC

//FORWARDED:BY ORDER//

M. Jayalree
SECTION OFFICER

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/306/2025

17.09.2025

Press Note

ECI revises guidelines to make EVM Ballot Papers more readable
Starting from Bihar, EVMs to have colour photographs of candidates for the
first time
Serial number to also be displayed more prominently

1. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has revised the existing guidelines under Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, for the design and printing of EVM Ballot Papers to enhance their clarity and readability.
2. The initiative is in line with the 28 initiatives already taken by the ECI in the past 6 months to streamline and improve election processes and enhance convenience for voters.
3. Henceforth, photographs of candidates will be printed in colour on the EVM Ballot Paper. The candidate's face will occupy three-fourths of the photo space for better visibility.
4. Serial numbers of candidates/NOTA will be printed in the international form of Indian numerals. The font size will be 30 and in **bold** for clarity.
5. To ensure uniformity, the names of all candidates/NOTA will be printed in the same font type and font size large enough for easy readability.
6. The EVM Ballot Papers will be printed on **70 GSM paper**. For Assembly Elections, pink-coloured paper of specified RGB values shall be used.
7. The upgraded EVM Ballot Papers will be used in the upcoming elections, starting with Bihar.



P. Pawan
Deputy Director

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi 110001

No. 4/Misc./2025/SDR/Vol. XII

Dated: 17th September, 2025

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States and Union Territories,

Subject: Guidelines on design and printing of EVM Ballot Paper for use in General/Bye Election to the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies of the States/UTs – regarding.

**Reference: 1. Para 11.25 of Handbook for Returning Officer, 2023.
2. ECI Instruction No. 576/3/2015/SDR dated 16th March 2015.**

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer the provisions of Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, wherein, a complete legal framework has been provided for preparation of voting machine including EVM Ballot Paper by the Returning Officer.

2. The Commission has reviewed the existing guidelines on the subject mentioned above and accordingly, the following changes are made in Handbook for Returning Officer 2023 for the purpose of clarity and uniformity for design and printing of Ballot Paper for EVM (BEL and ECIL make):

(a) Sub-Para (iii) of para 11.25.3 will be read as

In the space so provided, on the top left-hand corner, the serial number of the ballot paper shall be printed. On the top right-hand corner, the sheet number shall be printed if the ballot paper is printed on more than one sheet, where the number of contesting candidates exceeds fifteen and the particulars of the election shall be printed at the center. These particulars will contain the serial number and name of the Parliamentary or Assembly Constituency, as the case may be, the year of election and the nature of election and shall be printed in English alone.

The following illustration will make the position clear:

- (a) For General Election to the House of the People; '1-New Delhi PC. 2004- Genl.';
- (b) For Bye-Election to the House of the People; '1-New Delhi PC. /2005-Bye';
- (c) For General Election to the Legislative Assembly; '304-Etawah AC. /2004-Genl';
- (d) For Bye Election to the Legislative Assembly; '304-Etawah AC /2005-Bye'.

(b) Sub-Para (xiii) of 11.25.3. will be read as

The names of the contesting candidates including NOTA option shall be printed in the same language or languages in which the list of contesting candidates has been prepared. CEO of the State/UT concerned shall choose appropriate font type for printing of names of the candidates in the State/UT. The font size of names of all candidates/NOTA shall be the same and adequately big.

(c) Sub-Para (xiv) of 11.25.3. will be read as

Serial number, the name and photograph of the candidate shall be printed on the left-hand side and symbol on the right-hand side in the candidate panel. **The serial number of the candidate shall be indicated in the international form of Indian numerals. The font size of serial number of candidate/NOTA shall be 30 and printed in BOLD.**

The photograph of the candidate shall be printed in the panel of the candidate and shall appear in between the name and symbol of the candidate. The size of the photograph printed on the ballot paper shall be 2 cm x 2.5 cm (2 cm in breadth and 2.5 cm in height). **Photograph of the candidates shall be printed in color (unless the candidate has provided only black and white photograph). The candidate's face should occupy 3/4th of the space in the photograph.**

(d) Sub-Para (xvi) of 11.25.3. will be read as

Unless otherwise directed by the Election Commission in any particular case, the ballot papers shall be printed for Parliamentary elections on white paper and for Assembly elections on pink paper. **Paper quality to be used for printing of EVM Ballot Paper should be 70 GSM. The Color/RGB value of pink paper for printing of EVM Ballot Paper for Assembly Election should be R:252 G:187 B:209 or code #fcbdd1 (Tolerance limit of $\pm 02\%$ is permissible).**

(e) Sub-Para (ix) of 11.25.3. will be read as

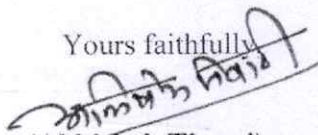
The names of not more than fifteen candidates shall be arranged on one sheet of a ballot paper and NOTA option will come after the last name of the panel. If the number of contesting candidates together with NOTA option is less than sixteen, the space below the panel after this shall be kept blank.

3. Printing of EVM ballot paper shall be done preferably at a Government or Semi-Government Press. However, in case, a Government/Semi-Government printing press is not available or does not have required capacity, private printing press(es) with required capacity can be selected after following due procedure and adequate provision and safety of the process shall be ensured as per the existing instructions.

4. The above instructions shall be brought to notice of all the District Election Officers, Returning Officers and all other election related authorities/officers for information and strict compliance.

5. The specimen of approved EVM Ballot Paper for both ECIL and BEL make EVM machines are enclosed for reference.

Yours faithfully


(Abhishek Tiwari)
Under Secretary

Encl: as above

Ballot Paper for ECIL Machine

140 mm

Serial No. of Ballot Paper	Particulars of Election		Sheet Number
1	Name of Candidate 1	Photo of Candidate 1	Symbol of Candidate 1
2	Name of Candidate 2	Photo of Candidate 2	Symbol of Candidate 2
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-

460 mm

Ballot Paper for BEL Machine

140 mm

461.5 mm

Serial No. of Ballot Paper	Particulars of Election		Sheet Number
1	Name of Candidate 1	Photo of Candidate 1	Symbol of Candidate 1
2	Name of Candidate 2	Photo of Candidate 2	Symbol of Candidate 2
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-

constituencies or on any subsequent date) cannot be counted and must be rejected. Note the date and time of its receipt on each such cover received too late. These covers are not to be opened and should be kept together for future reference, if required. However, the number of each postal ballot received back late should be noted in the register. The ballot papers contained in those covers need not be included in the total number of rejected votes in the Return of Election in Form 21-E. The final result sheet (Form 20) also does not provide any space to show the number of postal ballot papers not counted because they were received after the prescribed hour and date.

11.24 DELIVERY OF POSTAL BALLOT PAPERS

- 11.24.1 The Director-General of Posts has been requested to instruct all postal authorities regarding the provision of law making it their legal duty to arrange for the prompt delivery of every cover containing postal ballot paper to the correct addressee so that the system of postal ballot may work satisfactorily. Under the rules, postal ballot paper can be returned to Returning Officer as 'Service Unpaid' and Returning Officer has to pay cash against each such delivery. Since it will be very difficult to pay cash every time the covers are delivered, it is suggested that Returning Officer should open a deposit account at the nearest post office from which he/she will receive delivery of the covers so that the postal authorities can adjust the charges, against the deposit every time the covers are delivered. However, the question of postal ballot papers from Foreign Service Voters being returned to Returning Officer, as 'Service Unpaid' does not arise as postage stamps would have been affixed by the office in which the voter is serving. However, if their postal ballot papers are returned through diplomatic bag, then it will come to Returning Officer in cover super scribed 'Service Unpaid'. An account of such covers so received may be kept. The expenditure involved on account of certificate of posting for redirected postal ballot papers to Service Voters will be met from the grants of Ministry of Defence.
- 11.24.2 The Director-General of Posts will also instruct all postal authorities regarding prompt delivery of postal ballot papers to Returning Officer on the polling day irrespective of Sundays and post office holidays.

11.25 DESIGN OF BALLOT PAPERS FOR EVM

- 11.25.1 On every Balloting Unit of EVM, a ballot paper shall be displayed in the space meant thereof. Under rule 49B of the above referred rules, the ballot paper on the Balloting Unit [referred to as label in sub- rule (4) of that rule] shall contain such particulars and shall be in such language or languages as the Election Commission may specify.
- 11.25.2 As per instruction of the Commission the ballot papers to be displayed on the Balloting Unit of EVM shall in addition to the particulars as per the existing directions, also contain the photograph of the candidate. The photograph of the candidate shall be printed in the panel for the name of the candidate and shall appear on the right side of the name in between the name and symbol of the candidate. The size of the photograph printed on the ballot paper shall be 2cm x 2.5 cm (2 cm. in breadth and 2.5 cm. in height).
- 11.25.3 The Commission has specified that the said ballot papers shall be in the following form and language (s): -
- i) The total length of the ballot paper will be 460 mm and its width shall be 140 mm in the case of machines manufactured by ECIL. For machines manufactured by BEL, the length of the ballot paper will be 461.5 mm and the width will be 140 mm.
 - ii) At the top of the ballot paper, there shall be a space provided for indicating the particulars of the election and the name of the constituency, of the size 12.7 mm (length) x 140 mm (width) in the case of ECIL manufactured machines, and of the size 7.5 mm x 140 mm in the case of BEL manufactured machines.
 - iii) In the space so provided, on the top left-hand corner, the serial number of the ballot paper shall be printed. On the top right-hand corner, the sheet number shall be printed if the ballot paper is printed on more than one sheet, where the number of contesting candidates exceeds fifteen. The particulars of the election shall also be printed in the said space. These particulars will contain the serial number and name of the Parliamentary or Assembly Constituency, as the case may be, the year of election and the nature of election and shall be printed in English

alone. The following illustration will make the position clear:

- (a) For General Election to the House of the People; '1-New Delhi PC. 2004- Genl.';
- (b) For Bye-Election to the House of the People; '1-New Delhi PC. /2005-Bye';
- (c) For General Election to the Legislative Assembly; '304-Etawah AC./2004-Genl';
- (d) For Bye Election to the Legislative Assembly; '304-Etawah AC /2005-Bye'.

Provided that where the number of contesting candidates is less than fifteen, the above particulars may be printed either at the top or at the bottom most portion (space meant for the candidate at serial number sixteen), as may be considered convenient from the point of view of printing.

Provided further that where the number of contesting candidates is fifteen or more, the above particulars may be printed in a vertical column, on the left-hand side of the ballot paper, with a thick line dividing the said column and the panels containing the serial numbers and names and photo of the contesting candidates and option of NOTA.

- iv) Below the space provided at the top for printing the particulars of the election, there shall be a thick black line of 2.1 mm in the case of machines manufactured by ECIL and of 1.00 mm in the case of machines manufactured by BEL.
- v) Below this line, there shall be printed the serial number of each contesting candidate, his/her name and photograph and the symbol allotted to him/her, in a separate panel for each candidate. And after the panel containing the name and symbol of the last candidate, there shall be a panel below the said panel with the words "None of the Above" written therein. Against "None of the Above", the symbol for "None of the Above" option as specified by the Commission shall be printed.
- vi) The size of the panel for each contesting candidate shall be 25.4 mm (length) x 140 mm (width) in the case of ECIL – manufactured machines and 27.5 mm (length) x 140 mm (width) in the case of BEL – manufactured machines.
- vii) The panels of the candidates shall be separated from each other by a thick black line of 2.1 mm in the case of ECIL – manufactured machines and 1.00 mm in the case of BEL – manufactured machines.
- viii) The names of the contesting candidates shall be arranged on the ballot paper in the same order in which their names appear in the list of contesting candidates.
- ix) The names of not more than fifteen candidates shall be arranged on one sheet of a ballot and NOTA option will come after the last name of the panel. If the number of contesting candidate together with NOTA option is less than sixteen, the space below the panel after this shall be kept blank, except where the particulars of election, etc., are printed at the bottom under clause (iii) above.
- x) If the number of contesting candidates exceeds fifteen, the ballot paper shall be printed on two sheets of the above-mentioned size and dimensions. If the number of candidates exceeds thirty-one, on three sheets and if the number of contesting candidates exceeds forty- seven, on four sheets. 383 candidates can be arranged on 24 balloting units.
- xi) In such cases where the ballot paper is printed on more than one sheet, the names of the contesting candidates from S. No. 17 to 32 shall be printed on the second sheet, from S. No. 33 to 48 on the third sheet and from 49 onwards on the fourth sheet. If the number of candidates is less than 32, the space below the panel from the last contesting candidate in the second sheet, after NOTA shall be kept blank. Similarly, for the third and fourth sheets of the ballot papers.
- xii) On each such sheet, in the space provided for indicating the particulars of the election, its number shall be indicated in bold words and letters, e.g., 'Sheet No.1', 'Sheet No.2', etc.
- xiii) The names of the contesting candidates including NOTA option shall be printed in the same language or languages in which the list of contesting candidate panel has been prepared. The serial number of the candidate shall be indicated in the international form of Indian numerals.

- xiv) Serial number and the name and photograph of the candidate panel shall be printed on the left-hand side and his symbol on the right-hand side in the panel meant for him. The photograph of the candidate shall be printed in the panel for the name of the candidate and shall appear on the right side of the name in between the name and symbol of the candidate. The size of the photograph printed on the ballot paper shall be 2cm x 2.5 cm (2 cm. in breadth and 2.5 cm. in height).
- xv) After the panel containing the name, photograph and symbol of the last candidate, there shall be a panel below the said last panel with the words "None of the Above" and its specified symbol therein, for the benefit of those electors who may wish to exercise the option of not voting for any of the candidates in the fray. These words shall be written in the same language or languages as used in the case of names of candidates. The size of the panel for "None of the Above" shall be the same as for the candidates. For example, if there are 12th candidates contesting the election, there shall be provided the 13 panel with the words "None of the Above" and its specified symbol and the ballot button against such 13 panel shall also be kept open. If there are sixteen candidates in the fray, an additional Balloting Unit shall be attached to the first Balloting Unit for the 'None of the Above' panel. Thus, in case more than one Balloting Unit is used, "None of the Above" panel shall be only in the last Balloting Unit below the panel for the last candidate.
- xvi) Unless otherwise directed by the Election Commission in any particular case, the ballot papers shall be printed for Parliamentary elections on white paper and for Assembly elections on pink paper.

11.26 PRECAUTIONS FOR PRINTING OF BALLOT PAPERS

11.26.1 The ballot papers shall be printed in such a way that after fixing the ballot paper on the Balloting Unit in the space provided for the purpose, dividing line drawn below the space in which the particulars of election are printed and the dividing lines below the panel of each candidate shall be in complete alignment with the corresponding grooves or lines engraved on the Balloting Unit. Utmost care will, therefore, have to be taken while printing the ballot papers and to ensure that the ballot paper have been correctly printed, the Balloting Unit should be shown to the technicians of the printing press. They may be asked to take the exact measurements of the space meant for printing the particulars of election and the panels of candidates and the thickness of the dividing lines so that the ballot papers are printed in exact alignment.

11.26.2 It is not necessary to get the ballot papers which are to be fixed on the Balloting Units, stitched into bundles.

11.27 TENDERED BALLOT PAPERS

11.27.1 Under Rule 49P of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, if a person representing himself to be a particular elector, seeks to vote after another person has already voted as such elector, he shall, on satisfactorily answering such questions relating to his identity as the Presiding Officer may ask, be supplied with a tendered ballot paper instead of being allowed to vote through the voting machine. That rule provides that the tendered ballot paper shall be of such design and the particulars of that ballot paper shall be in such language or languages as the Commission may specify.

11.27.2 The Commission has specified that the tendered ballot paper shall also be of the same design and shall be printed in the same language or languages as the ballot paper to be used for display on the Balloting Unit. In other words, the ballot papers to be used on the Balloting Unit and the tendered ballot papers shall be the same. However, the words 'Tendered Ballot Paper' shall be stamped on the back of each ballot paper to be used as tendered ballot paper.

11.28 ASSESSMENT OF REQUIREMENT OF BALLOT PAPERS

11.28.1 The number of ballot papers to be printed depends upon the number of polling stations to be set up, number of voting machines to be used including reserve machines and the number of ballot papers to be supplied to each polling station for use as tendered ballot papers. The total requirement of ballot paper to be printed thus has to be made on the following basis:

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA
Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No.576/3/2015/ SDR

Dated: 16th March, 2015

To,

The Chief Electoral Officers
of all States and UTs.

Sub: Printing of ballot papers- photograph of candidate to be also printed along with the other particulars.

Madam/Sir,

Under Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, the ballot paper to be displayed on the balloting unit of the EVM shall contain such particulars as the Commission may specify. Similarly, Rules 22 and 30 provide, inter alia, that the particulars on the postal ballot paper and ordinary ballot paper shall be as specified by the Commission.

2. In terms of the abovementioned Rules 22, 30 and 49B, the Commission has specified the particulars to be printed on the ballot paper to be displayed on the balloting unit and the postal ballot paper. The particulars so specified at present are the serial numbers for the candidates, names of candidates and the election symbol allotted to each candidate and a panel for 'None of the Above' after the name of the last candidate. The existing directions which apart from the particulars to be printed, also contain specifications on other aspects, such as, size of the ballot paper, size of panels, number of columns, etc., have been given in the Handbook for the Returning Officers.

3. The Commission has noted that there are many cases where candidates with same or similar names contest from the same constituency. Although appropriate suffixes are added to the names of candidates in the event of two or more candidates having same name, the Commission considers that additional measures are required for removing confusion in the minds of electors at the time of voting. There is also a writ petition on this very subject pending before the Hon'ble Supreme Court [WP (C) No. 541 of 2014- Akash Gahlot Vs. Election Commission of India & another].

4. Having considered all aspects of the matter, the Commission in partial modification of its existing directions under Rule 22, Rule 30 and Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, hereby specifies that for elections to be held from 1st May, 2015 onwards, the

postal ballot papers, the ordinary ballot papers and the ballot papers to be displayed on the balloting unit of EVM shall, in addition to the particulars as per the existing directions, also contain the photograph of the candidate. The photograph of the candidate shall be printed in the panel for the name of the candidate and shall appear on the right side of the name in between the name and symbol of the candidate. The size of the photograph printed on the ballot paper shall be 2 cm.X 2.5 cm. (two cm. in breadth and 2.5 cm. in height). A sample ballot paper for election to Lok Sabha is enclosed for reference (Annexure-1).

5. The above direction for printing of photograph of candidate on the ballot paper shall also apply in relation to elections by Assembly members and elections from Council constituencies. In respect of the said elections, the directions are in exercise of powers under Rule 30 as made applicable to these elections by Rule 70 of the said Rules.

6. The specifications for the photograph are as follows:

- (i) Candidates are required to submit their recent photograph (taken during the preceding period of 3 months before the date of notification) .
- (ii) Photograph should be of stamp size 2 cm.X 2.5 cm. (two cm. in breadth and 2.5 cm. in height) in white/off white background, with full face view directly facing the camera, neutral facial expression with eyes open. The photo may be in colour or black and white as may be convenient for the candidate.
- (iii) Photograph should be in normal clothing. Photograph in uniform is not permitted. Caps/hats should be avoided. Dark glasses also to be avoided.

7. The candidates at every election shall be required to submit their photograph conforming to the above requirements/specifications alongwith their nomination papers and, in any case, latest by the date fixed for scrutiny of nominations. The photograph should bear the signature of the candidate/election agent on the reverse side of the photograph. When the photograph is submitted, the candidate/election agent/proposer submitting the photograph shall be asked to give a declaration stating that the photograph being submitted is that of the candidate (mentioning the name and address) taken during the period of preceding 3 months. A printed format for the declaration as annexed (Annexure-2) to this letter shall be kept with the RO/ARO for this purpose.

8. When the nomination is filed, if the photograph of the candidate is not submitted, the RO shall give a notice asking the candidate to submit the photograph latest by the date of

scrutiny of nomination. In the same Notice, it shall also be added that if the photograph is not submitted, his/her photograph will not be printed on the ballot paper. If any candidate still fails or refuses to give his photograph, that candidate will not have his photograph printed on the ballot paper. It may be added that non-submission of the photograph by the candidate shall **NOT** be a ground for rejection of the nomination of the candidate.

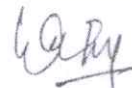
9. The Returning Officer shall display a list of validly nominated candidates with the photographs of the candidates against their names on the day following the date fixed for scrutiny of nominations. The Returning Officer shall inform the candidates at the time of scrutiny that the photographs to be printed on ballot paper will be displayed on his notice board on the next day (time may also be specified). If there is any error in the photograph or other particulars, the candidates/others will get an opportunity to point out the same to the Returning Officer for rectifying the error.

10. These directions may be brought to the notice of all DEOs, ROs and other election authorities in the State/UT. These may also be brought to the notice of all political parties based in your State, including the State Units of recognized parties. A press release may also be given for wider dissemination of the directions.

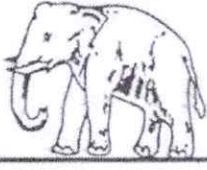
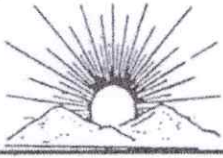
11. Please note that as mentioned in paragraph 4 above, these directions shall be applicable for elections to be held from 01-05-2015.

11. Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully,



(K.F. WILFRED)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

1.	అశోక్ కుమార్, కె. అశోక్ కుమార్, కె.		
2.	శాన్ బాషా, ఎం. చాన్ బాషా, ఎం.		
3.	శిన్న పిల్లప్ప, పి. చిన్న పిల్లప్ప, పి.		
4.	శివలక్ష్మమ్మ, డాక్టర్. అ. శివలక్ష్మమ్మ, డాక్టర్. అ.		
5.	కవి, ఎన్.ఎస్.ఎం. గౌడ, ఎన్.ఎస్.ఎం.		
6.	కుంతరం, ఎస్. సుందరం, ఎస్.		
7.	మణి, జి.కె. మణి, జి.కె.		
8.	మొనిరాజ్, కె. మొనిరాజ్, కె.		
9.	అశోక్ కుమార్, ఎ. అశోక్ కుమార్, ఎ.		
16.	మేధావీ నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో నాథులలో		NOTA

Declaration by candidate/election agent/proposer while submitting the
photograph of the candidate

Subject – Election to _____ (mention the name of
the House) from _____ (name of the
constituency)/election to Council of States/Legislative Council by
Assembly Members.

I _____
(name and address), Son/daughter/wife of Sh. _____, nominated as
candidate for the abovementioned election, am submitting herewith my
photograph for the purpose of printing the same on the ballot paper. I declare that
the photograph has been taken during the last 3 months before the date of
notification of election.

(fill up this part when the candidate himself is submitting the photograph).

OR

I _____ (name), election agent/proposer of
Sh. _____
_____, (name and address of the candidate), son/daughter/wife of
Sh. _____, a candidate for the abovementioned election,
hereby submit the photograph of the said candidate for the purpose of printing the
same on the ballot paper. I declare that the photograph has been taken during the
last 3 months before the date of notification of election.

(fill up this part when the election agent/proposer is submitting the photograph).

Date: _____

Name : _____

Address: _____

Tel No. _____

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 576/3/2023/SDR

Dated: 7th July, 2023

To,

The Chief Electoral Officers
of all States and Union Territories.

Sub: Provision for "None of the above" option on the EVM/Ballot Paper-Instructions.

Ref:

1. No. 576/3/2013/SDR dated 11th October, 2013
2. No. 576/3/2013/SDR dated 07th December, 2013
3. No. 576/3/2013/SDR-Vol.II dated 24th January, 2014
4. No. 576/3/2014/SDR-Vol.II dated 27th February, 2014
5. No. 576/3/2014/SDR-Vol.II dated 18th March, 2014
6. No. 576/3/2014/SDR-Vol.II dated 26th August, 2015
7. No. 576/3/2014/SDR-Vol.II dated 18th September, 2015, and
8. No. 576/3/2018/SDR-Vol.III dated 11th September, 2018

Sir/Madam,

In supersession of Commission's existing instructions issued from time to time on provision for "None of the above" option in the EVM/Ballot Paper, the consolidated instructions are being issued as below:

A. NOTA option on the EVM/Ballot Paper in elections to House of the People and State Legislative Assembly

1. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, in its judgment dated 27th September, 2013, in Writ Petition (C) No. 161 of 2004 (People's Union for Civil Liberties & Anr. Vs Union of India & Anr), has directed that the Commission should make necessary provision in the ballot papers/ EVMs for "None of the Above (NOTA)" option so that the electors who do not wish to vote for any of the candidates can exercise their right "not to vote" for any candidate without violation of the secrecy of their decision. A copy of the operative part of the judgment is enclosed at Annexure-1.
2. Accordingly, the Commission has issued the following directions:-

- (i) After the last panel containing the name and particulars of the contesting candidates on the postal ballot paper and the ballot papers to be affixed on the Balloting Unit of the EVM, there shall be a panel below, with the words "None of the Above" written therein, for the benefit of those electors who may wish to exercise the option of not voting for any of the candidates in the fray. These words shall be written in the same language or languages as used in the case of names of candidates. The Hindi version for "None of the above" approved by the Commission is "इनमें से कोई नहीं". The Commission has directed that the version in the regional language(s) in your State for "None of the Above" to be printed on the ballot paper should be as per the said Hindi version. The size of the panel shall be the same as in the case of the candidates.
- (ii) In Part II (Result of Counting) of Form 17C, after the name and votes for the last candidate, the votes recorded against "None of the Above" shall also be mentioned in column 2 and 3. The total votes to be indicated in this Part shall also include the votes against "None of the Above".
- (iii) In Form 20 (Final Result Sheet), in the last but one column of the table in Part-I, the number of votes recorded against "None of the Above" option shall also be mentioned for each polling station and the total votes for NOTA option for all polling stations shall be mentioned at the bottom of the table. Similarly, in Part II of Form 20 also, the number of votes recorded against "None of the Above" option for each Assembly segment shall be mentioned.
- (iv) In Form 21E (Return of Election), after the name and number of votes in respect of the last candidate, the Number of votes against "None of the Above" shall be mentioned.
- (v) A sample of each of the postal ballot paper and ballot paper to be affixed on the balloting unit, Form 17C Part-II, Form 20 and Form 21E are enclosed for guidance (**Annexure-2 collectively**).
3. The Presiding Officers and Polling Officers should be told that where ballot papers are used for taking poll, the ballot papers returned as "spoilt" under rule 41(1) shall continue to be kept and sealed in a separate packet.

4. It is also clarified that NOTA has the same effect as not voting for any candidate under the earlier provisions of rule 49-O. Therefore, even if, in any extreme case, the number of votes against NOTA is more than the number of votes secured by the candidates, the candidate who secures the largest number of votes among the contesting candidates shall be declared to be elected as per the provisions of rule 64.
5. Further, under Section 158 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, it is the total number of valid votes polled by all the contesting candidates that is to be taken into account for calculating the one-sixth of votes polled by individual candidates for return of security deposit. As the votes polled against the NOTA option cannot be treated as valid votes, the same is not to be taken into account for calculating the total valid votes polled by the contesting candidates for the purpose of return of, security deposit.

B. Symbol of NOTA

1. The Commission has specified the symbol printed below for "None of the Above" option. The same shall be printed on the ballot paper against "None of the Above" in the column meant for printing of election symbol. The entries will appear on the ballot paper as shown below: -

(Sr.No.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

(Sr.No.)

None of the Above



2. The design of the symbol for NOTA may be obtained from M/s ideal Cottage, Ideal Cottage Industries, Chandpole Bazar, Jaipur-302001, Rajasthan or M/s Times Engineering, 14, S.L.V. complex, Srinivasa Mandira Road, Balapet Cross, Bangalore-560053 (Email- timesengineering19@gmail.com)

C. Provision for "None of the above" option not applicable in elections to Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Council

1. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (C) no. 631 of 2017 (Shailesh Manubhai Parmar Vs. ECI & Ors.) vide its decision dated 21.08.2018, it has been held that NOTA should be provided only in direct elections (i.e. elections to Lok Sabha/Legeslative Assembly) and None of the Above (NOTA) option should not be made applicable for elections to Council of States and Legislative Councils.
2. The above instructions shall be informed to the District Election Officers, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers of all Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies in the State/ Union Territory for their strict compliance. This may also be brought to the notice of all political parties based in your State, including the State units of National and State recognized political parties.
3. Kindly acknowledge receipt of the letter.

Yours faithfully,



(S.B. JOSHI)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

STANDARD DISTRIBUTION

REPORTABLE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

CIVIL ORIGINAL JURISDICTION

WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO. 161 OF 2004

People's Union for Civil
Liberties & Anr.

.... Petitioner (s)

Versus

Union of India & Anr.

.... Respondent(s)

J U D G M E N T

P.Sathasivam, CJI.

1) The present writ petition, under Article 32 of the Constitution of India, has been filed by the petitioners herein challenging the constitutional validity of Rules 41(2) & (3) and 49-O of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 (in short 'the Rules') to the extent that these provisions violate the secrecy of voting which is fundamental to the free and fair elections and is required to be maintained as per Section 128 of the

stands on the spirit of tolerance and allows people to have diverse views, ideas and ideologies. Not allowing a person to cast vote negatively defeats the very freedom of expression and the right ensured in Article 21 i.e., the right to liberty.

50) Eventually, voters' participation explains the strength of the democracy. Lesser voter participation is the rejection of commitment to democracy slowly but definitely whereas larger participation is better for the democracy. But, there is no yardstick to determine what the correct and right voter participation is. If introducing a NOTA button can increase the participation of democracy then, in our cogent view, nothing should stop the same. The voters' participation in the election is indeed the participation in the democracy itself. Non-participation causes frustration and disinterest, which is not a healthy sign of a growing democracy like India.

Conclusion:

51) Democracy being the basic feature of our constitutional set up, there can be no two opinions that free and fair

elections would alone guarantee the growth of a healthy democracy in the country. The 'Fair' denotes equal opportunity to all people. Universal adult suffrage conferred on the citizens of India by the Constitution has made it possible for these millions of individual voters to go to the polls and thus participate in the governance of our country. For democracy to survive, it is essential that the best available men should be chosen as people's representatives for proper governance of the country. This can be best achieved through men of high moral and ethical values, who win the elections on a positive vote. Thus in a vibrant democracy, the voter must be given an opportunity to choose none of the above (NOTA) button, which will indeed compel the political parties to nominate a sound candidate. This situation palpably tells us the dire need of negative voting.

52) No doubt, the right to vote is a statutory right but it is equally vital to recollect that this statutory right is the essence of democracy. Without this, democracy will fail to

duress or coercion. Protection of elector's identity and affording secrecy is therefore integral to free and fair elections and an arbitrary distinction between the voter who casts his vote and the voter who does not cast his vote is violative of Article 14. Thus, secrecy is required to be maintained for both categories of persons.

55) Giving right to a voter not to vote for any candidate while protecting his right of secrecy is extremely important in a democracy. Such an option gives the voter the right to express his disapproval with the kind of candidates that are being put up by the political parties. When the political parties will realize that a large number of people are expressing their disapproval with the candidates being put up by them, gradually there will be a systemic change and the political parties will be forced to accept the will of the people and field candidates who are known for their integrity.

56) The direction can also be supported by the fact that in the existing system a dissatisfied voter ordinarily does not

turn up for voting which in turn provides a chance to unscrupulous elements to impersonate the dissatisfied voter and cast a vote, be it a negative one. Furthermore, a provision of negative voting would be in the interest of promoting democracy as it would send clear signals to political parties and their candidates as to what the electorate think about them.

57) As mentioned above, the voting machines in the Parliament have three buttons, namely, AYES, NOES, and ABSTAIN. Therefore, it can be seen that an option has been given to the members to press the ABSTAIN button. Similarly, the NOTA button being sought for by the petitioners is exactly similar to the ABSTAIN button since by pressing the NOTA button the voter is in effect saying that he is abstaining from voting since he does not find any of the candidates to be worthy of his vote.

58) The mechanism of negative voting, thus, serves a very fundamental and essential part of a vibrant democracy. The

following countries have provided for neutral/protest/negative voting in their electoral systems:

S.No	Name of the Country	Method of Voting	Form of Negative Vote
1.	France	Electronic	NOTA
2.	Belgium	Electronic	NOTA
3.	Brazil	Ballot Paper	NOTA
4.	Greece	Ballot Paper	NOTA
5.	Ukraine	Ballot Paper	NOTA
6.	Chile	Ballot Paper	NOTA
7.	Bangladesh	Ballot Paper	NOTA
8.	State of Nevada, USA	Ballot Paper	NOTA
9.	Finland	Ballot Paper	Blank Vote and/or 'write in*'
10.	Sweden	Ballot Paper	Blank Vote and/or 'write in*'
11.	United States of America	Electronic/Ballot (Depending on State)	Blank Vote and/or 'write in*'
12.	Colombia	Ballot Paper	Blank Vote

13.	Spain	Ballot Paper	Blank Vote
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* Write-in' - The 'write-in' form of negative voting allows a voter to cast a vote in favour of any fictional name/candidate.

59) The Election Commission also brought to the notice of this Court that the present electronic voting machines can be used in a constituency where the number of contesting candidates is up to 64. However, in the event of there being more than 64 candidates in the poll fray, the conventional system of ballot paper is resorted to. Learned counsel appearing for the Election Commission also asserted through supplementary written submission that the Election Commission of India is presently exploring the possibility of developing balloting unit with 200 panels. Therefore, it was submitted that if in case this Court decides to uphold the prayers of the petitioners herein, the additional panel on the balloting unit after the last panel containing the name and election symbol of the last contesting candidate can be utilized as the NOTA button. Further, it was explicitly

asserted in the written submission that the provision for the above facility for a negative or neutral vote can be provided in the existing electronic voting machines without any additional cost or administrative effort or change in design or technology of the existing machines. For illustration, if there are 12 candidates contesting an election, the 13th panel on the balloting unit will contain the words like "None of the above" and the ballot button against this panel will be kept open and the elector who does not wish to vote for any of the abovementioned 12 contesting candidates, can press the button against the 13th panel and his vote will be accordingly recorded by the control unit. At the time of the counting, the votes recorded against serial number 13 will indicate as to how many electors have decided not to vote for any candidate.

60) Taking note of the submissions of Election Commission, we are of the view that the implementation of the NOTA button will not require much effort except for allotting the last panel in the EVM for the same.

61) In the light of the above discussion, we hold that Rules 41(2) & (3) and 49-O of the Rules are *ultra vires* Section 128 of the RP Act and Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution to the extent they violate secrecy of voting. In view of our conclusion, we direct the Election Commission to provide necessary provision in the ballot papers/EVMs and another button called "None of the Above" (NOTA) may be provided in EVMs so that the voters, who come to the polling booth and decide not to vote for any of the candidates in the fray, are able to exercise their right not to vote while maintaining their right of secrecy. Inasmuch as the Election Commission itself is in favour of the provision for NOTA in EVMs, we direct the Election Commission to implement the same either in a phased manner or at a time with the assistance of the Government of India. We also direct the Government of India to provide necessary help for implementation of the above direction. Besides, we also direct the Election Commission to undertake awareness programmes to educate the masses.

62) The writ petition is disposed of with the aforesaid directions.

.....CJI.
(P. SATHASIVAM)

DESAI)

.....J.
(RANJANA PRAKASH

.....J.
(RANJAN GOGOI)

NEW DELHI;
SEPTEMBER 27, 2013.

PART II- RESULT OF COUNTING

Sl No. of candidates	Name of candidates	Number of votes as displayed on control unit	Number of test votes to be deducted as per item 5 of Part I	Number of valid votes (3-4)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	A	ab	..	..
2.	B	cd	..	..
3.	..	..	..	..
4.	..	..	..	..
5.	..	..	..	..
6.	None of the Above	xy	..	..

TOTAL

Whether the total number of votes shown above tallies with the total number of votes shown against item 6 of Part I or any discrepancy noticed between the two totals.

Place

Date

Signature of Counting Supervisor
Full signature

Name of candidate/ election agent/ counting agent

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Place

Date

Signature of Returning Officer."

Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961
(Statutory Rules and Others)

[FORM 20

[See rule 56 (7)]

Final Result Sheet

(To be used for recording the result of voting at polling station other than notified polling stations)

Election to the from the constituency.

Part I

(To be used both for Parliamentary and Assembly Elections)

Name of the Assembly segment (in the case of election from
a parliamentary constituency)

Total No. of Electors in Assembly Constituency/ segment.....

Serial No. of polling station	No. of Valid votes cast in favor of			Total of valid votes	No. of rejected votes (Test Votes)	Votes for 'NOTA' option	Total no. of tendered votes
	A	B	C				
1.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
4.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

TOTAL No. of
votes recorded
at Polling Stations:

No. of votes recorded
on postal ballot papers.
(TO be filled in the case of election from an Assembly constituency.)

TOTAL votes polled.

Place.....

Date.....

Returning Officer

Conduct of Election Rules, 1961
(Statutory Rules and Others)

[FORM 21E]
(See rules 64)

Return of Election

Election to the from the
..... constituency

Return of Election

Serial No.	Name of Candidate	Party affiliation	Number of votes polled
1.	A	XXXXX	ab
2.	B	YYYYY	cd
3.	C	Independent	ef

Total number of electors LMN

Total number of valid votes polled (ab+cd+ef)

Total number of votes for 'None of the Above' (xy)

Total number of rejected votes

Total number of tendered votes

I declare that —

Sh. (Name)
of (Address)

Has been duly elected to fill the seat/

Place

Date

Returning Officer

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 52/2023/SDR/Vol.IV

Dated: 14th March, 2024

To,

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States and Union Territories

Subject: Guidelines on printing of postal ballot papers, their transportation and storage-regarding.

Madam/Sir,

In continuation to the Commission's letter of even number dated 31.10.2023 and letter No. 3/4/2022/SDR/Vol.II dated 04.03.2024, I am directed to state that the following supplementary instructions related to printing of postal ballot papers, their transportation and storage are hereby issued.

1. Printing of Postal Ballots:

1.1 The printing of postal ballot papers for categories other than service voters shall commence immediately after publication of list of contesting candidates in Form 7A and shall be completed within 72 hours. The District Election Officer shall plan the logistics in this regard in advance viz; finalization of printing press, safe and secure transportation of paper for printing and printed postal ballots, appointment of one Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) for each constituency for overseeing all the arrangements at the printing press as well as checking the correctness of the postal ballot during printing and storage of printed postal ballots.

1.2 The printing of postal ballot will be done preferably at a government or semi-government press. However, in case a government/semi-government printing press is not available or does not have required capacity, a private printing press with required capacity can be selected after following due procedure; and adequate provision of security & safety of the process will be ensured as per instructions contained in Para 1.6 below.

1.3 The candidates/their agents shall be informed, immediately after preparation of Form 7A, the plan of printing of postal ballots. The candidates can deploy their representatives, one each for each candidate, to witness the printing process, transportation and storage of printed postal ballots.

1.4 The postal ballots shall be printed in bundles of 50 ballot papers each and assigned sequential serial numbers. It shall be ensured that the serial number of ballot paper and its counterfoil in each leaf shall be identical. Proper records shall be maintained for the ballot papers printed.

1.5 In view of the urgency of the matter, the Chief Electoral Officer/District Election Officer shall ensure uninterrupted power supply and proper security to the printing press during the printing of postal ballots. DGP/SP shall provide proper security during printing at the printing press premises and transportation of printed postal ballots.

1.6 The District Election Officer shall depute an Assistant Returning Officer (Printing), assisted by adequate supporting staff for printing of ballot papers. They shall be suitably briefed about the sensitivity and importance of the work. Accurate and timely printing of postal ballot should be ensured by the Superintendent/Incharge of printing press and the Returning Officer.

1.7 For printing of postal ballots, paper of required specifications shall be procured centrally from government press in sufficient quantity and be distributed among the District Election Officers with proper account. In case procurement of paper for printing of postal ballot paper from government press is not feasible or government press does not exist in the State/UT the paper of the standard specification may be procured from a semi-government or private press/agency following due procedure. District will be printing postal ballots on the same paper. The blank paper should be kept in a separate room. The key of the room should remain with the responsible person nominated by the Superintendent/Incharge of printing press. The paper will be issued on specific job cards in exact number of sheets and not in terms of reams. The register has to be maintained by the Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) and nominated official in the printing press. In the printing hall, there should be no paper other than the paper earmarked for printing of postal ballots.

1.8 The Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) will check that the sufficient quantity of paper, "type high-numbering machines", CDs/electronic storage device containing soft form of election symbols supplied by the firm/ company authorized by the Election Commission and other necessary material is available with the printing press. He will ensure that services of responsible press employees are utilized in checking each individual postal ballot particularly that –

- (i) Each bundle contains 50 postal ballots in consecutive serial number and no ballot paper is missing,
- (ii) The particulars of each candidate, photograph and election symbol are correctly printed,

(iii) The names of contesting candidates are in the same serial order and in the manner as provided in Form 7A,

(iv) NOTA option is also correctly printed.

1.9 The serial number of postal ballots will be printed in 6 digits or 7 digits, as may be convenient through "type high-numbering machines". Serial number shall start from 100001/1000001 and not from 000001 as sometimes the figure '0' does not appear in full during printing. By deputing checker at machines, skipping or jumping of numbering machines can be checked simultaneously. Numbering of all postal ballots of a constituency should be done through one type of numbering machine only.

2. Checking of printed postal ballot-

2.1 As soon as the postal ballots are printed, cut into size and ready for checking, the checking parties authorized by the Returning Officer will check the postal ballots before packing. The Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) should also do random checking of the finally packed bundles of postal ballots.

2.2 When the packing of printed postal ballots is finally done, the Superintendent/Incharge of press will handover such packets to the Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) under proper receipt.

3. Disposal of surplus and waste postal ballot papers at printing press-

3.1 The surplus and waste ballot papers at the printing press will be shredded and made into the pulp in the presence of the Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) and Superintendent/Incharge of printing press and both will jointly sign a certificate for that purpose and make an entry in the register. The register should contain account of every single sheet of paper consumed or wasted in the printing. The register for each constituency shall be submitted to the District Election Officer.

3.2 The District Election Officer will submit to the Chief Electoral Officer the account containing the particulars of paper utilized i.e. the papers consumed in printing, disposed of as waste and the remaining stock of the paper left in balance, in his district.

4. Transportation and storage of the printed postal ballot papers-

4.1 The Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) will take delivery of the printed postal ballots from the printing press and the same will be transported in the vehicles under police guard. The representatives of the candidates may also be allowed to join the team to witness transporting of

printed postal ballot from printing press to the designated place of storage. The Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) or any other officer, as the case may be authorized by the Returning Officer will receive the packets of printed postal ballots in the direct supervision of the Returning Officer. After making proper entry in the register maintained for the purpose, these printed postal ballots shall be kept in steel trunk(s) of appropriate size(s) with double lock and key on them. This steel trunk(s) shall be stored in a separate room under the direct supervision of the Returning Officer. One of the keys of the trunk containing printed postal ballot papers shall be with Returning Officer and the other with the Assistant Returning Officer (Printing) assigned for this task. The room meant for keeping these printed postal ballots should be in the same building/premises where Returning Officer is located. CCTV, up-to-date firefighting equipment and proper security shall be deployed for safety and security of the printed postal ballot.

4.2 A log book shall be maintained to record the proceedings of each occasion of opening and closing of the room where such printed postal ballot papers are stored. Signature of Returning Officer and other officials entrusted with the task shall be obtained on each occasion.

5. Colors of postal ballot paper and envelopes-

5.1 The color of postal ballot papers and envelopes for voters other than Service Voters shall be as follows: -

- (i) White color for Lok Sabha election, whether general or bye-election;
- (ii) Pink color for Vidhan Sabha election, whether general or bye-election

5.2 The postal ballot papers and envelopes for Service Voters shall be of white color in all types of election.

5.3 In case of simultaneous elections also, the color of postal ballot paper and the envelopes will remain the same as prescribed above.

6. Custody of postal ballot papers after counting-

6.1 As per rule 92(2) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, the District Election Officer concerned shall be responsible for the safe custody of postal ballot papers used at an election, along with voting machines and packets containing Form 17A and other election papers listed under the said rule.

6.2 In case of multi - district constituency following shall be the custodian of Postal Ballots post counting in terms of Rule 92 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961: -

Election (General/Bye)	Custodian
Parliamentary Election	District Election Officer who is Returning Officer of the Parliamentary Constituency or District Election Officer in whose division Returning Officer's Headquarters is located.
Assembly Election	District Election Officer in whose jurisdiction Returning Officer's Headquarters is located.

6.3 Further, rule 93(1) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 provides that the postal ballot papers while in custody of the District Election Officer shall not be inspected by or produced before, any person or authority except under the order of a competent court.

7. The above directions should be brought to notice of all the District Election Officers, Returning Officers and all other election related authorities/officers for their information and strict compliance.

Yours faithfully,



(S.B. JOSHI)

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY