

## Assembly Election in the capital of India sets New Benchmarks in Accessibility



**E**lection Commission of India is committed to Accessible Elections. The Commission has issued detailed guidelines on Accessible Election from time to time, focusing on registration, voting process and voter education/ facilitation of the Persons with Disabilities thus ensuring their holistic participation in electoral process. During Lok Sabha Elections 2019 (Indian Elections), numerous initiatives were taken up at the centre and state level such as ramps, wheel chairs, braille EPIC, braille EVM and ballot paper, accessible toilets, tactile signage, sign language interpreters, volunteers and transport facility to ensure hassle free participation of Persons with Disabilities. In addition to that, emphasis was laid on strengthening inclusive voter education, better use of IT applications and efficient mapping, sensitization training programs and improved

facilitation at the polling station. The Indian Election witnessed a collective effort of Election Machinery and numerous other stakeholders to make elections inclusive and accessible in all aspects.

Hitherto, every Election gives an opportunity to reflect and improve further. A detailed report on Accessibility was sourced from all states and a conference was organized to review the initiatives, identify challenges and chalk out strategy for future endeavors.

Carrying forward the takeaways of the conference, special efforts were made for ensuring participation of centenarian voters, voters aged over 80, and Persons with Disability, during the Assembly Elections in Delhi, in February 2020.

With the announcement of Assembly elections, a 360 degree campaign was adopted that ensured

Information, Motivation and Facilitation (IMF) to ensure Accessible Elections. Further, in the run-up to polling day, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer reached out to all voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80, through various media and outreach avenues, informing them of the facilities and administrative arrangements being made to assist them in casting their vote.

Many of these measures have, of course, been part of the Election Commission of India's accessibility initiatives earlier as well, and were used extensively during the Lok Sabha elections of 2019. They include the following:

- Voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80 are to be given priority for entering the polling station, without having to wait in the queue. If necessary, a separate queue will be made for them.
- Seamless access for wheelchairs by providing ramps of adequate slope, wherever required, and clear space for movement within the polling room till the voting compartment.
- Transport facility to be provided for Persons with Disability (PwDs), centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, upto Polling Station and back.
- If due to disabilities, an elector is unable to vote on his/her own; the Presiding Officer shall permit the elector to take a companion of not less than 18 years of age to the voting



compartment (preferably a relative) for recording the vote on his/her behalf and in accordance with his/her wishes.

- Staff on polling duty including police personnel, are trained/sensitized about the special needs of the voters with disabilities, courteous behaviour, and for providing necessary support to them. Volunteers will be deployed at polling locations to assist the voters with disabilities.
- Wheelchairs to be provided at polling stations for convenience of voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters above 80.

Nodal officers were appointed in all eleven districts of Delhi to assist such voters. The names and contact details of these nodal officers were widely shared.

## Pick and Drop Facility

In order to ensure maximum use of the facility of pick and drop being provided to voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, four different mechanisms were put in place to receive such requests. Electors could reach out through:

- The regular call centre number – 1950
- A dedicated pick-drop mobile app
- The website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi
- SMS at a dedicated mobile number

All four channels proved effective in reaching out to the Persons with Disability (PwDs) centenarian voters and voters aged above 80. A total of 719 requests were received for pick and drop, through the four channels. All those eligible were informed through an SMS alert about the time at which they would be picked up. This SMS alert was sent twice. Once, on the eve of polling day, and then, early morning on polling day.

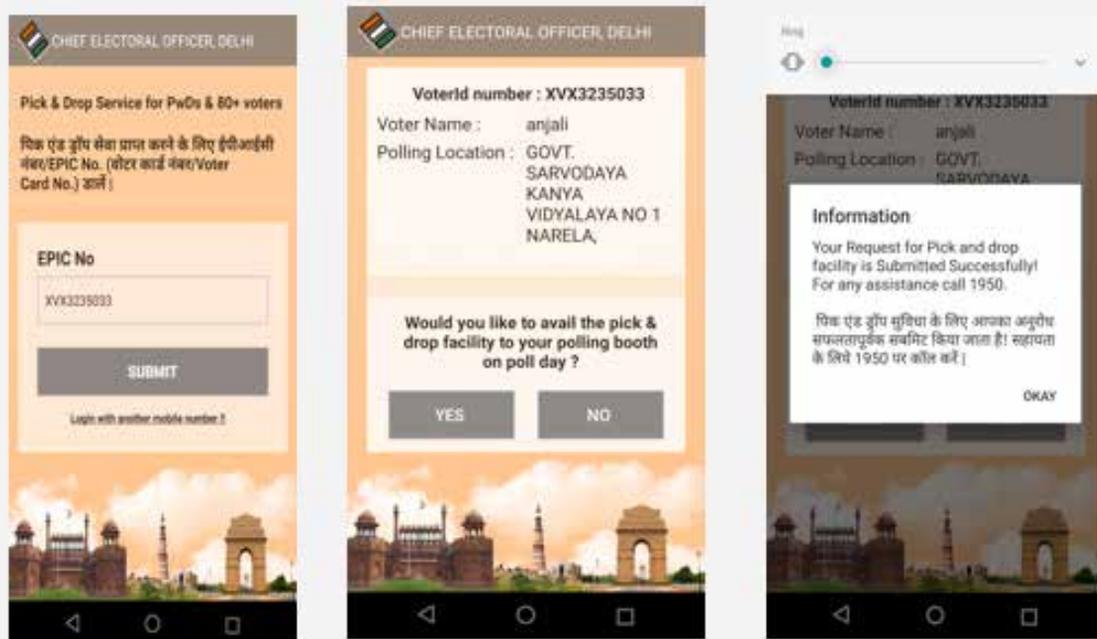
## Special App for Monitoring Request Status

A special App was put in place for Block Level Officers and Supervisors to monitor the progress of pick-and-drop on polling day. This enabled them to effectively ensure in real-time, that the facility reached the intended beneficiary.

## REQUEST THROUGH 1950 CALL CENTRE

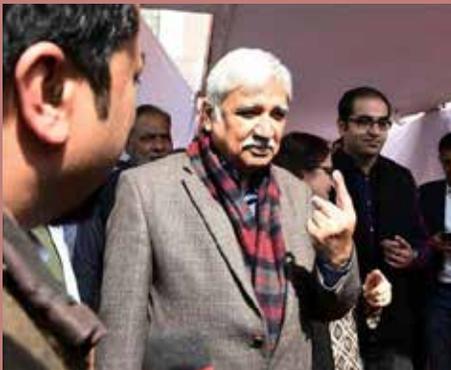
- On receiving the call, an agent asks the elector for his/her EPIC Number and Mobile Number
- The Agent enters this data on a special link provided on the CEO Website
- An OTP is generated and sent to the elector on his mobile number. The agent asks for this OTP and enters it in the appropriate field
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
  - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950 .Your request ID is....
  - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category

## REQUEST THROUGH MOBILE APP





Ram Nath Kovind, the President of India and the First Lady casting their vote



The Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners of India at the polling station

## REQUEST THROUGH CEO WEBSITE

REQUEST PICK & DROP FACILITY FOR 00+ AND DIVYANG VOTERS'

ENTER MOBILE NO. : 803648706	ENTER OTP : 6431
<input type="button" value="GET OTP"/>	<input type="button" value="VERIFY OTP"/>
ENTER EPIC NO. : YDS431356	<input type="button" value="SUBMIT"/>

Your Request for Pick & Drop facility is submitted successfully! For any assistance call 1950.

AC No. :	33
Part No. :	228
Serial No. :	1346
Name :	HARDEY KASHI
Relation Name :	PREM SINGH
EPIC No. :	YDS431356
Age :	66
Gender :	M
Category :	80+

## REQUEST THROUGH SMS

- Elector sends an SMS at 7738299899  
**EPIC <space> EPIC number <space> PICK**
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
  - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950 .Your request ID is....
  - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category

## Performance Evaluation

An evaluation of the performance of this facilitation measure reveals a high degree of success, as can be seen from the chart.



Feedback about the facility was taken from 343 voters. As many as 290 voters (nearly 85%), rated it as “excellent”, “very good” or “good”.

The arrangements for pick-and-drop for PwD voters, centenarian voters, and voters above 80 years of age in Delhi, mark the setting of new benchmarks towards Accessible Elections.



In all, 429 Persons with Disabilities, and 2257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

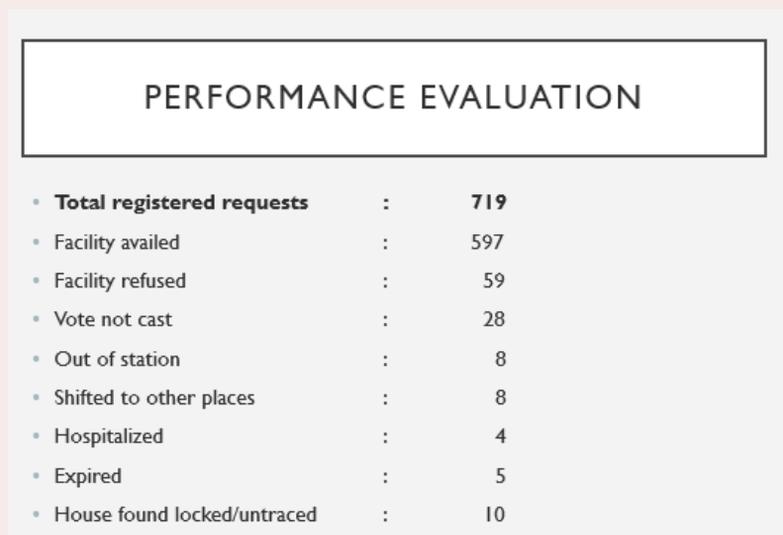
## Postal Ballots

Senior citizen of more than 80 years of age, centenarian voters and PwD electors marked in the electoral roll now have a choice of voting either as an absentee voter or as a regular voter on the poll day.

The Delhi Assembly Elections of 2020 also witnessed significant facilitation measure in the form of postal ballots. This facility was extended to voters above the age of 80, centenarian voters and Persons with Disabilities electors. All these voters were given the choice of casting votes through postal ballots, at home. Six centenarian voters cast their vote using this facility. In all, 429 Persons with Disabilities, and 2257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

## Centenarian Voters

An initiative was taken to reach out to, and honour, all centenarian voters. 82 centenarian voters were felicitated during this initiative. They were assigned one Liaison Officer each. The Officer met the Centenarian Voter before the



polling day, and fixed an appointment for polling day. The Centenarian was escorted to the polling booth by the Liaison Officer, and assisted for priority voting. Each Centenarian Voter was felicitated with a bouquet of flowers, and escorted back to his/her residence.

A survey of all Centenarian electors – numbering 150 – was undertaken with the help of Bharat Scouts and Guides. Stories were prepared and photographs were taken during the survey. 111 could be successfully reached out to, and 73 of them interacted in detail, recounting their stories, in the course of India's journey of democracy.

A number of other measures were taken to ensure Accessible Election in Delhi. They have been summarized in the table.



**Sharat Chander**

Director, SVEEP  
Election Commission of India



### Accessible Election

Election Commission emphasizes that the electoral system be made fully accessible for Persons with Disability (PwD). There are 50471 registered PwD voters in Delhi. Following facilities were provided to PwD voters during Assembly Election-2020 in order to ensure PwD vote in large numbers.

- ◆ **Ramp:-** All the polling station locations were provided with proper ramp facility.
- ◆ **Wheel Chairs:-** 3875 Wheel Chairs were provided for the PwD Electors.
- ◆ **Volunteers:-** Total 9997 volunteers to assist old aged and PwD voters were provided in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, GNCT of Delhi.
- ◆ **Sign Language Interpreters:-** Sign Language Interpreters were provided at the 80 locations with high incidence of Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters. For creating voter awareness amongst the Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters, a video was developed in Indian sign language, and uploaded on social media and website of CEO, Delhi.
- ◆ **Toilet Facility:-** Every location was provided with sufficient toilet facility for male and female voters and accessible toilets for the PwD.
- ◆ **Accessible Posters:-** For Deaf & Hard of Hearing Voters posters in Indian sign language were displayed at all polling stations.
- ◆ **Magnifying Sheet for low vision:-** Magnifying Sheet was made available for low vision voters at each polling station.
- ◆ **Proper Signage:-** Proper signages were put at the polling stations for guidance of the voters.
- ◆ **Braille Facility:-** Braille Voter slips, Braille EPIC, Braille dummy ballot sheet and Braille voter assistance guide were provided to all visually impaired voters.