Delhi Assembly Elections 2020
New Benchmarks in Accessibility

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

SHARAT CHANDER
DIRECTOR, SVEEP

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 20 20.

In the run-up to polling day, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer reached out to all differently-abled voters, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80 years 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, up to 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 are to be deployed at polling locations to assist the voters with disabilities.
- Wheelchairs to be provided at polling stations for the convenience of PwD electors, centenarian voters, and voters above 80 years.

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 PwD voters, centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, four
From The Field
Delhi

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

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.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

- Total registered requests: 719
- Facility availed: 597
- Facility refused: 59
- Vote not cast: 28
- Out of station: 8
- Shifted to other places: 8
- Hospitalized: 4
- Expired: 5
- House found locked/untraced: 10

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 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.

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.

Postal Ballots

The Delhi Assembly Elections of 2020 also saw the implementation of a significant facilitation measure in the form of postal ballots. This facility was extended to voters above the age of 80, and PwD 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 PwDs, and 2,257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

Centenarian Voters

An initiative was taken to reach out to, and honour, all centenarian voters. Eighty-two 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. As many as 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 elections in Delhi. They have been summarised in the table on the facing page.

Civil Society Organisations and State Icons

A number of Civil Society Organisations worked towards making the Delhi elections more accessible.

- The National Association for the Deaf (NAD) played a key role in the preparation of accessible posters, and sensitisation of polling staff.
- The Association of Sign Language Interpreters supported the cause through 80 sign language interpreters on polling day.
AADI – Action for Ability Development and Inclusion – helped prepare the training material for polling officials, towards conduct of accessible elections.

The All India Confederation of the Blind prepared several election related documents in Braille, for the benefit of visually impaired voters.

The Blind Relief Association provided Braille Experts who had verified the Braille Ballot Sheets at the time of printing.

The Community Empowerment Trust worked towards greater participation of the transgender community in the elections.

The Centre for Holistic Development helped over 10,000 homeless persons in registration for the elections.

Sports persons Rishabh Pant and Manika Batra; para-athletes Ankur Dhama and Neeraj Yadav; radio Jockey Naved Khan, and Kathak dancer Alakananda Dasgupta played a key role in motivating voters through their efforts.

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**: 3975 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 60 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 signage 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.
The Wide Embrace of Electoral Education

Several initiatives were taken by ECI officials in Delhi during the recent elections to build a truly participative democracy in India.

**DR. AARTI AGGARWAL**  
SR CONSULTANT, ECI

**Delhi SVEEP Activities**

The Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation programme, known popularly as SVEEP, is the flagship programme of the Election Commission of India (ECI) for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting electoral literacy in India. In continuing pursuit of its goal to build a truly participative democracy in India by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed electoral choice, several initiatives were taken by ECI officials in Delhi during the recent elections.

**TURN AROUND-30**

This was an initiative undertaken by the CEO, Delhi, which aimed to turn around the voter turnout in the areas identified as ‘low-voter’ turnout areas going into the Lok Sabha election 2019. These included Assembly Constituencies such as Vikaspuri, Matiala, Okhla, Badarpur, Burari, Bawana, Nangloi Jat, Mundka, Rithala, Kirari, Karawal Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Narela, Najafgarh, Deoli, Palam, Badli, Patparganj, Mustafabad, Mehrauli, Dwarka, Ghonda, Laxmi Nagar, Chhatarpur, Kalkaji, Babarpur, Patel Nagar, Timarpur, Rajinder Nagar, and Bijwasan. To achieve maximum awareness in these areas, a plan to organise events on a daily basis in these 30 target spots was put into action from January 11 to February 7, 2020.

**Awareness Campaign**

The Delhi Election Office conducted several awareness creating methods...
including *nukkad natak*, EVM-VVPAT demos, magic shows, quiz shows, motivational slogans, *munadi*, distribution of pamphlets, door-to-door awareness rally, distribution of information on various apps such as PwD App, C-vigil, Voter Helpline App, and Pick & Drop App, among others. Senior election officials also visited these sites for making an appeal to the public to vote in an informed manner.

**Morning-walk Demos**

Considering the fact that many people go for a morning walk in parks, CEO, Delhi organised EVM/VVPAT awareness and functioning demonstration sessions and voter awareness programmes at various parks in different districts of Delhi on December 20 and December 21, 2019, and succeeded in finding a captive audience. The officers from the Delhi election office visited parks early in the morning and installed their stall with banners and EMM-VVPAT machines. They also informed the morning walkers about the facilities being provided by the CEO, Delhi to senior citizens and PwD voters during the Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections 2020.

**A Patient Hearing**

The office of CEO, Delhi, in association with the Director General Health Services (DGHS) of the Government of NCT of Delhi, organised special camps in medical dispensaries, and government and private hospitals. This four-day awareness campaign was conducted between December 27 and December 31, 2019. The prominent hospitals that were a part of this initiative were the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), B.L. Kapur Super Specialty Hospital, Action Balaji Hospital, Max Hospitals and all Delhi Government dispensaries in the capital.

In addition, various banners were installed to sensitise the public in various hospitals and dispensaries in different districts of Delhi on December 20 and December 21, 2019, and succeeded in finding a captive audience. The officers from the Delhi election office visited parks early in the morning and installed their stall with banners and EMM-VVPAT machines. They also informed the morning walkers about the facilities being provided by the CEO, Delhi to senior citizens and PwD voters during the Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections 2020.

The officers from the Delhi election office visited parks early in the morning and installed their stall with banners and EMM-VVPAT machines.
districts of Delhi. These included N.C. Joshi Hospital, Karol Bagh; Maharishi Valmiki Hospital, Pooth Khurd; the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre; Dada Dev Hospital; and Acharyashree Bhikshu Hospital, among others.

**Zoo Logical**

A voter awareness campaign was organised at the popular venue – the Delhi Zoo – which included magic shows, children’s dance events and various other activities. A group of artists gave a spectacular performance appealing to the spectators to participate actively poll day, i.e., February 8, 2020. The event was followed by an EVM-VVPAT demo. The public observed the functioning of EVM very minutely and asked various questions that were answered by the election team present at the event.

**Making the Most of Malls**

On the eve of Christmas, CEO, Delhi aimed to gather the attention of the general public to create awareness for elections. Since the footfall of visitors in malls is high during festivals, various events were organised at the malls in the capital to create awareness amongst the voters and to enrol new voter through registration. Officials, dressed as Santa Claus, were deputed in malls in different areas of Delhi. Games and quizzes were also organised and the Santas distributed gifts to the winners.

**The Magic of Democracy**

A new initiative for creating voters’ awareness was introduced by conducting magic shows in different areas of Central, West and North West districts of Delhi. The District Election Office displayed banners on the theme of elections, while the magician showed tricks, effects and illusions to entertain the public, while appealing to them to cast their vote on February 8, 2020.
Soon after the announcement of elections to the Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi, the Commission, vide its press note dated January 9, 2020, reiterated the guidelines for media coverage.

All the TV/Radio channels and cable networks/Internet website/social media platforms were asked to ensure that the contents of the programmes telecast/broadcast/displayed by them during the period of 48 hours were not in violation of Section 126 of the RP Act, 1951. This, among other things, included the display of any opinion poll and of standard debates, analysis, visuals and sound-bites. Attention was also invited to Section 126A, which prohibits exit polls and dissemination of its results during the period mentioned therein, i.e. the hour fixed for commencement of poll and half an hour after the time fixed for close of poll.

All print media and electronic media was asked to follow the guidelines issued by the Press Council of India and the National Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) respectively for ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

All social media platforms were also asked to observe the ‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ adopted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) to ensure free, fair and ethical usage of their platforms to maintain electoral integrity.

Social media violations reported by the ECI

In pursuance of the ‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ adopted by all major social media platforms, the Commission reported a total of 50 cases of violations of RP Act, MCC, IPC and other electoral laws to various social media platforms during the Legislative Assembly Election to the NCT of Delhi-2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of National/State Party</th>
<th>Total time allotted in minutes for broadcast on All India Radio</th>
<th>Total time allotted in minutes for telecast on State Capital Kendras of Doordarshan</th>
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<tr>
<td>All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)</td>
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<td>Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)</td>
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<td>Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ is a set of guidelines adopted by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) in consultation with the Election Commission of India (ECI) for all elections including Assembly elections. The Code of ethics provides for a high priority and dedicated grievance redressal channel and a dedicated grievance officer to escalate election related complaints and resolve the issue. The Code has been developed to ensure free, fair and ethical use of social media platforms and to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

The telecasts/ broadcasts on Doordarshan AIR do not permit:
(a) Criticism of other countries;
(b) Attack on religions or communities;
(c) Anything obscene or defamatory;
(d) Incitement of violence;
(e) Anything amounting to contempt of court;
(f) Aspersions against the integrity of the President and Judiciary;
(g) Anything affecting the unity, sovereignty and integrity of the nation;
(h) Any criticism by name of any person.

ECI Updates

CEC and ECs contribute to COVID-19 funding through voluntary reduction of their salaries

The Election Commission of India has come forward to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 with Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra pledging voluntary reduction of 30% of their salaries for a period of one year commencing on April 1, 2020.

As the country grapples with the global pandemic of COVID-19, the Government and civil society organizations require vast resources to control the spread of this pandemic and minimise its impact on public health and the national economy. For this purpose, contributions from all sources including reducing the burden of salaries on the exchequer might be of help.

Additionally, the Commission is ensuring that the salaries of all employees including contractual staff are paid on time.

India A-WEB Centre

An India A-WEB Centre (http://indiaawebcentre.org/) has been established at New Delhi for documentation, research and training for sharing the best practices and capacity building of officials of all A-WEB members. The ECI will provide necessary resources for the India A-WEB Centre, which aims to become a global ‘Knowledge and Resource Centre’ for world-class ‘Documentation, Research and Training’ in pursuit of supporting free, fair, inclusive, accessible, efficient, transparent and credible elections and strengthening electoral democracy worldwide.
Delhi Election Museum visit

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra visited the Delhi Election Museum on March 4, 2020. The Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi, Dr Ranvir Singh, was also present.

After the visit, Chandra said he was highly impressed with the way the museum was organised and maintained, and added, “The museum shows the panorama of the history of elections since the first to the recent election. The gallery of Mahatma Gandhi really inspires all visitors.”
DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2020

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