

Theme – 8B: Postal Ballot

Guidance Plan:

1. **S 59 RPA , 1951 r/w R 16 COER 1961**, lays down the general norm that the voting by all electors at an election would normally be in person at the polling station provided for that elector under **S 25 RPA 1951** or as the case may be, at the place of polling fixed under **S 29 RPA 1951**. Further, the general norm is voting through EVM.
2. The 2 exceptions to the vote-in-person rule, but at the designated PS, is 'Proxy Voting' (**Part III-B, Rule 27M-27Q COER 1961**) and 'Voting with companion' (**Rule 40 COER 1961**) – to note that the method of voting remains EVM.
3. Therefore, RO may note that the category dealt in **Part-III of COER 1961**, i.e. 'Postal Ballot' is an exception to the general procedure of voting in person. Thus the concept of Postal Ballot embeds 3 exceptions, viz. i) polling takes place outside the PS, ii) it is by non-EVM methodology, iii) it takes place prior to the date of poll fixed.
4. RO must understand which categories of voters are entitled to Postal Ballot by law and, those who may be specially entitled for a particular election, by ECI exercising its power under **S 60 RPA 1951**.
5. It is with this above starting understanding that RO may go through the PPT of the sub-thematics to be clear w.r.t entitled categories of Voters for Postal Ballot; the concept of Absentee Voter; Home Voting and the ETPBS system
6. RO may note the legal principle which define the point of time where a choice can be exercised to opt for postal ballot; the fact that the choice once exercised is final. Accordingly, RO will note the categories where there is no choice and Postal ballot is the only available method of voting to that group of electors, for e.g. PD cases
7. RO will note that this method of voting cannot empower anyone who does not have the right to vote under **S 62 RPA 1951**.
8. Lastly, the impact of this method of voting in terms of procedure for counting of votes as explained in that sub-thematic shall be accounted for.



Postal Ballot (including AVSC, AVPD, AVCO & AVES)



Introduction:

1. The time for finalization, printing, design, storage, destruction, etc. of Ballot paper in general, including Postal ballot has already been covered previously under the theme on 'Ballot Papers'
2. Therefore, in the physical parameters such as layout and design, there will be an initial overlap in this sub-thematic, focussing only on Postal Ballot (PB)
3. The slides will congregate on the design, process of dispatch, receipt and counting of PB for each of the category of entitled electors, i.e., Service Voters, Special Voters, Electors under Preventive Detention, Electors on election duty, Notified Voters including Absentee Voters.

The presentation covers:

- Relevant provisions related to PB and ETPBS
- Who are entitled for PB & ETPBS
- The procedure for preparation of PB for different classes of voters
- The process of issue and dispatch of PB for different classes of voters
- Manner of voting by PB for different classes
- The process of return, receipt and management of polled PB & ETPBS

Relevant Provisions of Election Law

- **S 20 RPA, 1950** – Definition of Service Voter and Special Voter
- **S 60 RPA, 1951** – Special procedure for voting by certain classes of persons
- **R 17, 18(a), 18(A) 19, 20 & 21 of COER, 1961** – Persons entitled to vote by post.

Electors entitled to vote through Postal Ballot Paper

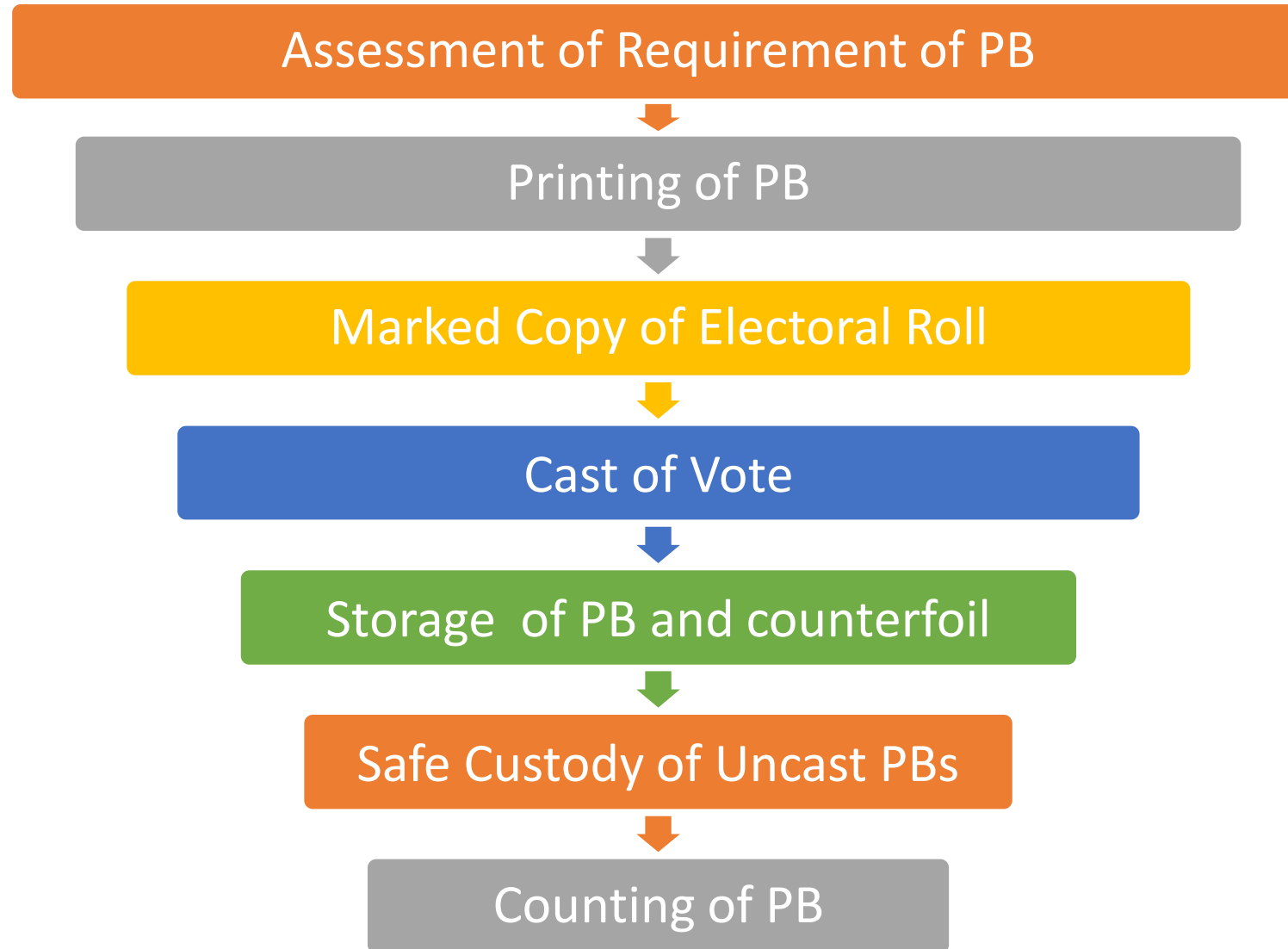
Entitled category of electors:

- **Service Voters** (S 20 RPA, 1950) - (including Spouse) except those who opted for proxy voting
- Members of Armed Forces of Union
- Members of other forces to which **Army Act, 1950** applies
- Members of armed police force of a **State** posted outside the State
- Persons employed under GOI, posted outside India
- **Special Voters** - (including Spouse) who are holding declared offices
- **Electors under Preventive Detention**
- **Electors on election duty** – Persons and Staff deployed on elections duty on the day of poll & are not able to vote *in person on poll day* viz. presiding officers, polling officers, polling agents, all police personnel (except those on leave), HGs, DEOs/ROs/AROs & their Staff, Control Room Staff, Videographers/Staff of EEM Teams/ ZOs/SOs, BLO, MOs, Drivers/Cleaners, etc.
- **Notified voters, including Absentee Voters** – Electors above the age of **85** years(AVSC), Electors who are marked as PwD (AVPD) and having a benchmark disability certificate (not less than 40% of a specified disability), electors infected with COVID-19 (AVCO), electors employed in essential services (AVES) or any other category of electors notified by ECI

NB-1: Category of Absentee Voters was introduced in 2019, Amended and modified in Jun. 2020 and further in Mar. 2024.

NB-2: Do ensure that the Service Voters belonging to Armed Forces and CAPF, who have appointed proxy are not issued Postal Ballot

Postal Ballot - Process Flow



Design of Postal Ballot Papers -

- Names of candidates shall be arranged in the same order under 3 categories in which they appear in the list of contesting candidates **(Form 7A)**. However, headings of categories should not appear in PBs.
- “None of the Above” option shall be printed in a separate panel after the name of all the contesting candidates

NB: The full details of the design of PB has been covered in the previous sub-thematic and should be referred to. This slide is just for the vital recalls.

Printing of Postal Ballot Papers

DEO is responsible for printing of PB for all ACs/ PCs within the District

- Preparation/generation of PBs for service voters (through ETPBMS) should be completed within 24 hours of finalization of list of contesting candidates
- For other categories, PBs should be printed within 72 hours of finalization of candidates
- To be stitched in bundles of 50 ballot papers
- Ensure that Sl. No. on postal ballot and on its counterfoil are identical

Particulars to be printed on Postal Ballot for Service Voters

- **Names and party affiliation of candidates** in the official language of the State and English
- **Photograph** of the candidate in the right side of the name in between the name and the place for marking Vote
- **Symbols** will **not** be printed on the PBs for service voter
- **Party affiliation** will be shown for the candidates set up by all political parties
- For independent candidates the word "**Independent**" will be printed

NB: Please see Sample Ballot Paper for Service Voters in next slide

**01-Purola (S.C) AC/2017 Gen.
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER**

Electoral Roll Part No.....
Serial No. of Elector.....

S.No.

**01-Purola (S.C) AC/2017 Gen.
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER**

S.No.

1- मालचन्द
(भारतीय जनता पार्टी)
Malchand
(Bharatiya Janata Party)



2- राजकुमार
(इंडियन नेशनल कांग्रेस)
Rajkumar
(Indian National Congress)



3- रामलाल
(बहुजन समाज पार्टी)
Ramlal
(Bahujan Samaj Party)



4- दुर्गेश्वर लाल
(निर्दलीय)
Durgeshwar Lal
(Independent)



5- इनमें से कोई नहीं
None of the Above

**Sample Postal
Ballot Paper for
Service Voters**

Content in Postal Ballot for Other Categories of Electors

- **Names of candidates** in the official language of the State and English
- The **photograph** of the candidate in right side of the name in between the name and the place for marking Vote in the panel
- **Symbols** to be printed between the photograph and the space for marking vote
- Party affiliation not to be printed

NB: Please see Sample Ballot Paper for Other categories in next slide

01-Purola (S.C) AC/2017 Gen.
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER

Electoral Roll Part No.....
Serial No. of Elector.....

S.No.

01-Purola (S.C) AC/2017 Gen.
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER

S.No.

1- मालचन्द
Malchand



2- राजकुमार
Rajkumar



3- रामलाल
Ramlal



4- दुर्गेश्वर लाल
Durgeshwar Lal



5- इनमें से कोई नहीं
None of the Above



Sample Postal
Ballot Paper for
Other Categories

Documents sent along with Postal Ballot Paper/ETPBs

- 1. Form 13-A (*Declaration*)**
- 2. Form 13-B (Cover A - inner)**
- 3. Form 13-C (Cover B - outer)**
- 4. Form 13-D (Instructions)**

Declaration to be filled up by the Elector with Attestation of the Gazetted Officer and to sent Returning Officer along with Postal Ballot

FORM 13A

Declaration by Elector

(See rules 23(1)(a) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961)

Election to the **** House of the People** from the _____ Constituency
Legislative Assembly

Number and Name of the Constituency

(This side is to be used Only when the elector signs the declaration himself)

I hereby declare that I am the elector to whom the postal ballot paper bearing serial number _____ has been issued at the above election.

very important to record here the serial no of P.B.

Signature of elector

Signature of elector/ employee /applicant

Date _____

Address _____

Attestation of Signature

The above has been signed in my presence by _____ (elector)** who is personally known to me /has been identified to my satisfaction by _____ (identifier) who is personally Known to me.

Signature of identifier, if any.

Address _____

*Signature of Attesting Officer

Signature and details of gazetted officer, who should be competent to attest this under Rule 24, sub rule of conduct of Election Rules 1961

Designation _____

Address _____

Date _____

**Strike off the inappropriate alternative.

* In case of a voter on election duty, any gazetted officer or the persiding officer of the polling station in which he/she is posted on Election duty.

Form 13-A
(Declaration)

Contd...

Form 13-B (Cover-A - inner)

FORM 13-B
[See rule 23 (1) (b)]
COVER A
NOT TO BE OPENED BEFORE COUNTING
ELECTION

**COVER
'A'**

To the* _____
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER

Serial number of ballot paper _____

* Appropriate particulars of the election to be inserted here.

It is mandatory to mention here the serial number of ballot paper *by RO*, issued to Voter in this space

NB-1: PB and envelopes for Service Voters – White colour (in all elections)

NB-2 : For other voters – Pink colour (VS election)

NB-3 : For other voters – White colour (LS election)

Contd...

Form 13-C (Cover-B - outer)

O.I.G.S
FORM 13-C
COVER-B

**COVER
'B'**

*****SERVICE
UNPAID**

(To be used at an election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of a State)
(See Rule 23(1) (c) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961)
("Every officer under whose care or through whom a postal ballot paper is sent shall ensure its delivery to the addressee without delay-Rule 23(4) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961")

**ELECTION-IMMEDIATE
POSTAL BALLOT PAPER**

For* _____ Constituency
(NOT TO BE OPENED BEFORE COUNTING)

To,
The Returning Officer

** _____

Signature of sender _____

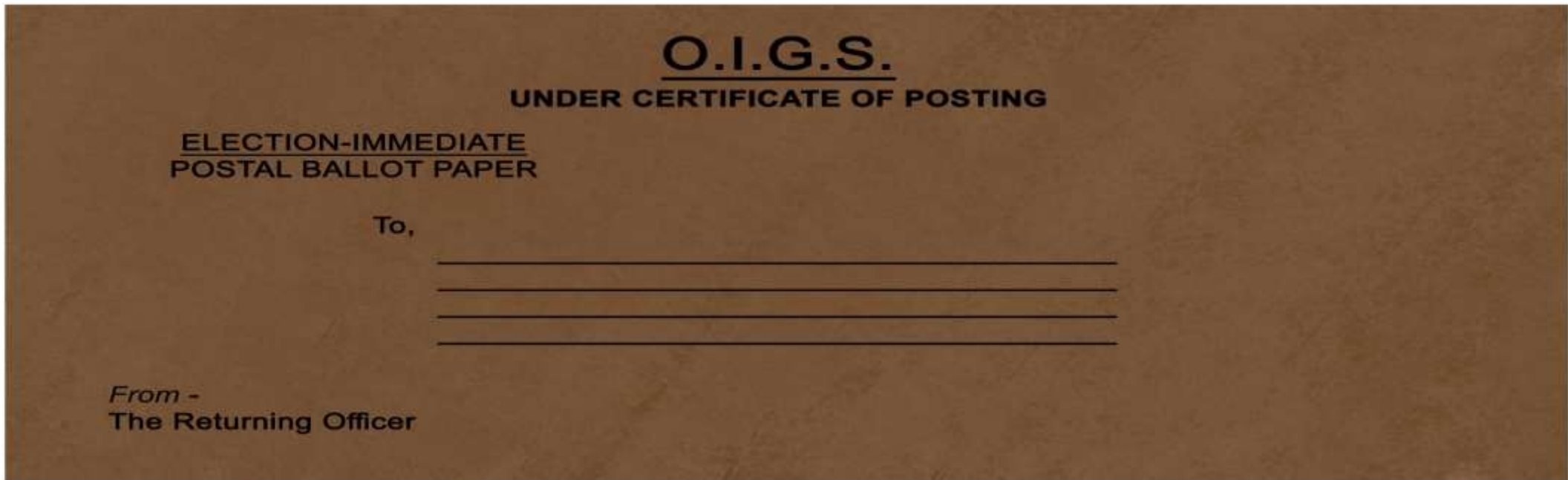
- * Returning Officer to insert here the name of the appropriate Parliamentary/Assembly Constituency.
- ** Returning Officer to mention here his full postal address.
- *** Strike off in case of an elector who is employed under the Government of India in a post outside India.

It is necessary to give address of the RO here. Please take care that the address given here is that of RO of the Assembly Constituency where you are registered as a voter.

Do not forget to put signature of employee / Applicant here

Contd...

Returning Officer will put the Envelope **Form-13 B** containing Postal Ballot, **Form-13C, Form-13 D & Form-13 A** (blank declaration) for the Elector in this Envelope and provide it to the Elector.



Intimation by Voters to Vote by PB

Timelines for intimation by entitled voters:

- **Service Voter**- Intimation **not** required. RO sends ETPBs to **every** such voters
- **Special Voter & Voters on Election duty** - Intimate/ apply to the RO in **Form-12**, in **advance** for issue of PB paper
 - Form 12 A to apply for EDC, if deployed in same constituency
- Intimation by **Voters on Election Duty** shall be at least **7 days** before poll **or** such shorter period **as decided** by RO (R 20 COER, 1961)
- Intimation by **special voter** at least **10 days** before poll (R 19 COER, 1961)
- Electors under **Preventive Detention** - Name and details are furnished by the State Govt. to the RO within **15 days** of issue of notification (R 21 COER, 1961)
- **Notified Electors** – Intimate/apply to the RO in **Form 12D** from the date of announcement of election until 5 days from the date of notification [S 60(c) RPA, 1951], R 18(a) COER, 1961

NB 1: Please note that date of poll or date of notification will not be included while calculating the timeline.

NB 2: PD - the detainee can directly apply to RO for the Postal Ballot

Dispatch of PB (General Instruction)

Procedure for dispatch of PB:

- Provide following documents (i) PB, (ii) **Form-13A** (Declaration), (iii) **Form 13B** (Inner Envelope) (iv) **Form 13C** (Outer Envelope) and (v) **Form-13D** (Instruction)

NB: For Service Voters the above will be transmitted electronically through ETPBMS

- Record the electoral roll number (Part No. and Sl.No. as entered in the marked copy) on the counterfoil of PB
- In the Marked Copy of the ER, PB in RED ink should be written against the names of all who have been issued PBs.
- PB serial no. should NOT be written against the voter's entry.
- No PB can be issued after the stage of preparing marked copy of electoral roll for supply to the presiding officers for conduct of poll.

General Instructions - Dispatch contd.

Steps to remember for preparing marked copy of ER -

- PB serial no. should be written on **Form 13-B (Cover A - inner cover)** without fail.

NB: PB liable for rejection, if PB Serial number not mentioned

- **Classified Service Voter (CSV)** should be marked in the Electoral Roll against the entries of the voters who have **opted for proxy** (R 27P COER, 1961)
- **EDC** should be marked against the entries of voters to whom EDC has been issued.
- **Seal** the counterfoils with proper description and date (R 23(6) COER, 1961)
- **Proper account** of PB and EDC issued to be maintained in a **Register**.
- The team entrusted with preparing Marked Copies of ER, may also be entrusted with issuance of PBs for better results/efficiency
- Please note that only one **Marked Copy** should be used as a **Master copy** for issuing PBs to avoid any mistake.
- Ensure that electors issued with PB are **not allowed** to vote at Polling Station

NB: Please ensure that the voters issued PB will not be eligible to vote on polling station.

Dispatch - PB serial No. – DOs and DON'Ts – contd.

Where to be written/printed ?

- On cover A (inner)– **Form 13-B**
- On **Form 13-A**
- On Counter foil of the PB

YES ✓

Where NOT to be written?

- ⊙ In Electoral Roll/Marked Copy
- ⊙ On any cover *other than* Cover **A** (inner) (**Form 13-B**)

NO ✗

Dispatch (transmission) of ETPB to Service Voters

Documents to be transmitted and timelines:

- After publishing **Form 7A**, RO will prepare/generate and **upload PB** with connected papers through Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot **Management System (ETPBS)**.
- Transmit following document **electronically**- (i) PB, (ii) **Form-13A** (Declaration), (iii) Label for **Form 13B** (Inner Envelope) (iv) Label for **Form 13C** (Outer Envelope) and (v) **Form-13D**(Instruction)
- ETPBs are to be issued within **24 hours** from the last date of withdrawal.
- ETPB for the service electors will be **issued/uploaded by the RO**
- DEO will appoint a suitable officer as the **Nodal Officer** to supervise the entire process of issuance of PBs to service electors.

Contd...

Dispatch (transmission) of ETPB to Service Voters – Contd.

Designating ARO for ETPBS and procedure to be followed:

- Each R.O shall depute a team of officers including an ARO with details of Service **Voters** to whom PBs are to be dispatched on the basis of the last part of the electoral roll.
- Mark "PB" against the entry of elector in the marked copy of last part of electoral roll.
- Sr. No. of PB not be mentioned in the marked copy of last part of electoral roll.
- Issue ETPB one by one. (There will be a **QR code** on every ETPB)

Dispatch (transmission) of ETPB to Service Voters–contd.

Role of Observers in ETPB:

- **Senior-most Observer** available in the District Headquarters shall personally monitor the entire process of dispatch of ETPBs.
- The entire process must be **videographed**.
- Observer to send a **detailed report** to ECI as soon as the dispatch of postal ballots meant for service voters is completed.

NB 1: Voters, who have been issued PB, are not entitled to vote in person at a Polling Station.

NB 2: Note the special role of Observer

NB 3: RO to ensure that all required particulars including NOTA are correctly entered in the Ballot before uploading the same

Contd...

Dispatch (transmission) of PB to Service Voters – contd.

Duties of ARO designated for ETPBS -

The ARO deputed to supervise the issuing of postal ballot papers to service voters shall **ensure the following-**

- Write the letter PB against the entry of the elector in the **marked copy** of the electoral roll,
- Proper account of PBs issued to service voters shall be maintained in an ***issue register***.
- The electoral roll part relating to service voter should be **sealed** and kept in RO's **safe custody**.

Contd...

Dispatch (transmission) of ETPB - Sealing of Counterfoils and Marked Copy of Electoral Roll (23(2)(a) & (b) COER, 1961) – contd.

Record of
Counterfoils of
ETPBS issued,
shall be **kept**
by RO

Marked copy
of last part of
Electoral roll
relating to
service voters,
to be sealed in
separate
packet.

Brief description
of contents
inside the
packet with date
of recording to
be mentioned **in**
packets and
kept in safe
custody of RO.

NB: These packets are to be transmitted to DEO for safe custody, after declaration of result.

Dispatch/ Issue of Postal Ballot to Special Voters (R 23(2)(a) & (b) COER, 1961)

Mode of delivery of PB to Special Voters –

- PB may be delivered or caused to be delivered personally to a special voter in place of sending by registered post.
- PB to be issued as expeditiously as possible.

NB: Please note special marking for female voters

Notified voters -Absentee voters (**S 60(c) RPA 1951, R 18(a)(v) COER, 1961**) – Process – applying -
Distribution of **Form 12D** - dispatch to different categories – collection process of different
categories – process of deposit – w.r.t AVSC, AVPD, AVES and AVCO

Categories of Absentee Voters

- Sr. Citizen (above **85** Yrs) (AVSC),
- PwD Electors (AVPD)
- Voters on duty in Essential Services (AVES)
- Covid-19 **suspects/affected** electors (AVCO)

Dedicated ARO for Absentee Voters:

- **One ARO** is assigned to handle all work related to PB voting by Absentee Voters. Such ARO will be responsible to carry forward the postal voting program from the stage of receipt of applications in **Form 12D**, and take all necessary action in this regard

NB-: Category of Absentee Voters was introduced in 2019, Amended and modified in Jun. 2020 and further in Mar. 2024.

Contd...

Categories of Absentee Voters

Senior Citizen (AVSC) :

- Elector above 85 years of age.
- Age mentioned in ER to be considered.
- No additional certificate/ undertaking required.

Persons with Disability (AVPD) :

- Elector flagged in the database as PwD and should have a benchmark disability certificate (not less than 40% of a specified disability) as certified by the concerned certifying authority, under Section 2 of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**.
- Benchmark disability certificate to be submitted with **Form-12D**.

Covid-19 effected or suspected(AVCO) :

- Should be accompanied by certificate/ instructions from competent health authorities.

Essential Services(AVES) :

- Service should be notified by ECI in consultation with the Government.
- **Form-12D** along with a certificate by the Nodal Officer of the organization concerned in **part-2 of Form-12D**.

Contd...

Process for applying for PB by absentee voters – Contd.

Timelines and documents required for Absentee Voters:

- Intimation is given to RO/ARO in **Form 12D**, giving all particulars in the form.
- Intimation should reach the RO/ARO within **5 days from issue of notification**.
- In cases of **Covid patients** - **Form 12D**- should be accompanied by certificate/instructions from competent health authorities.
- In case of **PwD** voters, who opt for PB, **Form 12D**, should be accompanied by **Benchmark Disability Certificate** issued by the competent authority.

NB 1: Please note that date of notification will not be included while calculating the timeline.

Contd...

Absentee Voter (AVSC, AVPD, AVCO)

Distribution of **Form 12D** by BLO – contd.

Distribution and collection of **Form 12 D**:

- Immediately after the announcement of elections, BLO will visit the houses of potential absentee electors (AVSC and AVPD) and deliver **Form 12D** and obtain acknowledgment.
- BLO shall deposit all the acknowledgments with the RO/**ARO**.
- If elector is not available, BLO will share his contact details and visit again.
- The elector may or may not opt for PB.
- If the elector opts for PB, then the BLO will collect the filled-in **Form12D** from the house of the elector within 5 days of the notification and deposit it with the RO
- Sector Officer shall supervise it under the overall supervision of RO.

NB 1: The above is a checklist of role BLO w.r.t Absentee Voters. Please note that AVPB is an option available to those who can't visit the polling station due to their physical condition. The ECI policy is to encourage all voters to come to polling Station. Hence, adequate publicity through SVEEP should be made about facilities such as wheelchair, volunteers, ramps, sign language etc. provided at the Polling Station

NB 2: Please note the timelines in relation to announcement of elections and notification of elections Contd...

Absentee Voters - Role of RO in dispatch of PB – contd.

Preparation of list of Absentee Voters and issue of PB by RO:

- On receipt of **Form 12D**, RO will draw a *list* of all Absentee Voters in the 4 categories, i.e. (a) 'AVSC', (b) 'AVPD' (c) AVCO and (d) AVES whose applications have been received in time and are in order.
- All the electors, whose particulars are found correct shall be issued **PB** as Absentee Voters

Absentee Voters - Role of RO in dispatch of PB to COVID 19 suspect or affected persons – contd.

Special procedure for AVCO cases:

- The RO on being satisfied about the genuineness of the application, **issues the PB to the AVCO** concerned
- The RO to make **arrangement to deliver PB** and to get the same **collected back** before the date fixed for poll in the Constituency.
- The RO shall **check certificate of competent authority**, duly appointed by the State Government/UT administration to the effect that the elector is under home quarantine or institutional quarantine due to COVID-19.
- Indicate **entry 'PB' in the marked copy** without recording therein the Sl. no. of the ballot papers issued to them.
- The RO shall ensure that such elector **is not allowed to vote in Polling Station**

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Sr. Citizen and PwD - dispatch of PB - Role of RO – contd.

Sharing Absentee Voter list and schedule of visit with candidates:

- RO shall *share list* of all such **Absentee voters**, whose applications in **Form 12D** for availing PB facility have been approved by him, with the Contesting Candidates of recognized political parties in printed hardcopy.

NB 1: Complete transparency is vital and therefore must be ensured

NB 2: Candidates/agents have a right to know the schedule of visit of mobile polling parties and to accompany them. However, under no circumstances can the secrecy of the vote be violated.

NB 3: It should be ensured that the voter is not exposed to any influence or intimidation.

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

Constitution of Mobile Polling Teams:

- Separate teams of poll officers, comprising two officials be formed.
- At least one not below the rank/level of the official appointed as polling officer for PS and a micro-observer also.
- No. of teams of Polling Officials to be appointed depend on the number of such Absentee Voters.
- The team shall visit the electors at the address mentioned in **Form 12D** for facilitating their voting by PB paper.
- Each team be provided with the list of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO electors, adequate number of postal ballot papers, envelopes, pen, ink-pad (for thumb impression wherever required), canvas bag etc.

NB: Candidates/agents have a right to know the schedule of visit of mobile polling parties and to accompany them. However, under no circumstances can the secrecy of the vote be violated. It should be ensured that the voter is not exposed to any influence or intimidation.

Contd...

Subscriber Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

Other persons accompanying Mobile Polling Team:

- **Police Security cover** shall be provided to the poll officers for their visits.
- **Videographer** should accompany the poll officers who shall record the proceedings at the electors house **without violating the secrecy** of vote.
- Visits by teams of poll officers should be completed by **1 day prior** to the date fixed for polls
- Authorized Media Personnel, if any, accompanying the poll team are also required not to breach the secrecy of ballot
- Candidates and their agents, if any, accompanying the poll team are also required not to breach the secrecy of ballot
- **Appropriate protection equipment** including PPE kit for the poll officers going to COVID-19 infected electors home. This should be done in consultation with the Nodal Health Officer for AVCOs.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

Intimation of schedule of visit of Mobile Polling Teams:

- Intimate electors, in advance, date and approximate time of visit of Poll Team through SMS. If mobile no. not available, intimation be given by post and /or through the BLO.
- If elector is not present at the 1st visit, the team shall leave intimation about the time of 2nd visit. If the elector is not present even at the 2nd visit, no further visit or action required.
- Inform candidates about schedule of visit for the delivery and collection of PB. They may depute their authorized representatives, with prior intimation to the RO.

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

On-site procedure during visit before handing over PB:

- The POLL Team shall ascertain the identity of the elector before issuing PB
- Name of elector and the document produced for identification be entered in a register and signature/thumb impression of the elector obtained therein.
- A tick mark shall be placed against the name of the elector in the list of AVSC, AVPD and AVCO to indicate that the person has voted.

NB: Compliance to the corresponding instruction in respect of AVCO must be ensured

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

Briefing of voter regarding Form 13 A, B & C procedure:-

- Making declaration in **Form 13A** and getting it attested by the poll officer himself
- Entering sr. number of PB paper, both on **Form 13A** and on the smaller envelope (**Form 13B**)
- **Manner of marking vote, folding** and placing the marked ballot in the smaller envelope and closing the envelope
- Placing the declaration in **Form 13A**, duly filled up, signed and attested along with closed envelope (**Form 13B**) containing the marked ballot paper inside the larger envelope (**Form 13C**), Closing the larger envelope and handing over the same to the poll officer.

NB: Please ensure that during training the polling team is clear about the sequence of statutory declaration, of marking, folding and closing of Ballot Paper and envelopes

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

On-site process for recording of vote:

- The counterfoil with the serial number and part number of elector duly filled up shall be got detached and kept in safe custody by the team.
- Poll team will -
 - issue* PB to Voter
 - Brief* about procedure to be followed for voting through PB
 - iii. Make sure that the elector votes *without anyone influencing* his/her choice, and ensuring the *secrecy* of voting
 - iv. If any elector is not able to cast vote by himself due *to blindness or physical infirmity*, he/she be allowed to take the *assistance* of any adult person for casting vote.
 - v. *Videography* of above all activities/steps at the *address* of the elector concerned is *mandatory*

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Process of collecting PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCU electors – contd.

Attestation of Declaration (**Form 13A**) and collection of PB:

- Poll officer is authorized by ECI to attest the declaration in **Form 13A**. While attesting the declaration, the poll officer shall write his full name and also the designation 'poll officer'.
- In the case of a COVID affected person on treatment in Hospital, the **MO** attending to the person also authorised to attest the declaration.
- After vote is cast on PB and envelope in **Form 13C** is ready, the Poll Officials will collect the same.

Absentee Voters - Process of Deposit of PB from AVSC, AVPD, AVCO electors – contd.

Delivery and safe custody of polled PBs and record – maintenance:

- At the end of each day of visit by poll team, (i) envelopes in **Form-13C** containing postal ballot paper etc. and (ii) counterfoils of PB shall be collected by the ARO designated for this purpose.
- The ARO shall make arrangements to have the same delivered at the HQ of the RO for keeping them in **safe custody**.
- The ARO shall **maintain the record** indicating the number of ballots sent on each day. This should also be shared with the RO on a **daily basis**.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by Absentee Vote on Essential Service (AVES) – Application, verification, issue of PB – voting in PVC – timelines – intimation to candidate - Declaration in **Form 13A - close of poll– making of packets – sealing**

Application for PB by AVES through Nodal Officer:

- Absentee Voters on Essential Service (AVES) has to make application to RO in **Form-12D** giving all requisite particulars.
- Their application (**Form 12D**) should be verified by the **Nodal Officer** appointed by the organization concerned.
- **Form 12D** should reach the RO within **five days of notification** of the election.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES – contd.

Verification of application, listing of AVES and marking PB in ER by RO:

- On receipt of **Form-12D**, the RO shall verify their names with the existing electoral roll and prepare a list of all AVES whose applications have been received in time and are in order
- The RO shall thereafter arrange to issue PB to them at Postal Voting Centers (**PVCs**), to be specially setup for voting by AVES
- After the list of this category is finalized, entry 'PB' shall be made in the marked copy of the electoral roll against the names of such electors.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES – contd.

Setting up of PVC and intimation of details to AVES:

- The RO will set up a Postal Voting Centre (**PVC**) to be used as the place for issuing of PB paper and for facilitating their voting and for collection of the PB paper.
- AVES shall be duly intimated about the (i)The full address of the PVC venue where PB ballot voting is to be arranged ; (ii)Dates on which the PB voting facility will remain open;(iii) The hours fixed for postal ballot voting, through SMS/by post/ or through the BLO.
- They may come for casting vote on **any of the three days** during the hours fixed for the purpose and service identity card is must for identification.
- Those who have been approved for voting though this facility can only vote at such PVCs and not in any other manner

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES – contd.

Intimation to candidates, personnel and SOP at PVC:

- **Candidates** to be given **prior** intimation about PVC by RO. They may appoint **agents** for watching the proceedings in the PVC.
- **Appropriate number of staff may be appointed for PVC.** Each centre should have at least one gazetted officer for attesting the declaration of elector in **Form-13A**.
- **Identity** be verified before issuing PB paper. Name and document produced for identification be entered in a register and **signature/thumb impression** be obtained.
- A **tick mark** be placed against the name of the elector in the list of AVES.
- The **counterfoil** with the serial number and part number of elector duly filled up shall be got **detached** and kept in **safe custody** to be sent to the **RO** along with envelopes containing polled postal ballots.
- Declaration in **Form 13A** will be attested by the gazetted officer present in the PVC
- After closing the large envelope, the voter will drop it in the box kept in the PVC.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES – contd.

Schedule for Voting at PVC:

- After closing the large envelope, the voter will drop it in the box kept in the PVC.
- PVC shall be open for up to three consecutive days in each of the constituencies.
- The three days period shall be so fixed that it **is completed at least 3 days** before the date fixed for poll in the constituency.
- On each of the three days, the PVC shall remain open from **9 AM to 5 PM**

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES –close of poll– contd.

Daily end-of-poll procedure at PVC:

On each day after the *poll closes*, the envelopes in **Form 13C** in the drop box shall be taken out, and sealed in a larger packet superscribed “Postal Ballots in PVC”. On the *outer packet*, the following particulars should be clearly mentioned:

- (i) Name and number of Constituency,
- (ii) Name of location of PVC,
- (iii) The date on which the votes were cast,
- (iv) The number of envelopes in **Form 13C** in the packet.

Contd...

Absentee Voters - Guidelines for Voting through postal ballot by AVES –close of poll– contd.

Sealing of counterfoils, sending packets of polled PBs and other materials to RO

- (i) The **counterfoils** of PB shall also be **sealed** in a separate packet **super-scribed** “Counterfoils of PBs in PVC”.
- (ii) Both the packets containing the polled PBs and the counterfoils be **sent to the RO** in **same evening**.
- (iii) **Signature** of the **agents of candidates** present in the PVC should be obtained on each day of voting in the PVC.
- (iv) At the end of the **3 days** voting period, all other material supplied to the PVC be collected by the ARO in charge of the PVC and retained at the HQ.
- (v) If any AVES **does not turn up** for voting in PVC, there is **no requirement** of sending the PB **by post**.

NB: The mode of voting prescribed for AVES is voting at PVC only .

Voters on Election Duty - Issue of PB – eligibility – printing – application – database - Facilitation Centre - Drop Box - design thereof – Sorting AC-wise – presence of representatives of candidates - Account Register – sealing in envelopes and dispatch to RO

Preparation of database of employees working in the district:

- Every district has to prepare a database of all Govt. Employees posted in the district for the purpose of deploying them on election duty.
- Include all employees of State Govt., Central Govt. and Central and State PSUs., all police personnel posted in the district including Home Guards etc. and drivers, conductors and cleaners of Govt. vehicles, vehicles of State Road Transport Corporation etc. in the database.
- Include drivers, conductors and cleaners of private vehicles in the district like trucks, buses, minibuses etc. with the help of vehicle owners associations.
- All electoral information of the employees – like complete residential address where the staff is enlisted in the electoral Roll, No. & name of Assembly Constituency, Part No. and the serial number at which the name is registered, **EPIC No.**, and Cell Phone numbers and email Ids etc. needs to be incorporated in the database.

Contd...

Voters on Election Duty - Issue of PB/EDC – contd.

Application for PB/EDC and issue of PBs/EDCs

- Issue *call letters for training* along with pre-printed **Forms 12 or 12A** , requesting employees *to bring* signed applications in **Form 12** (for PB) or **Form 12A** (for EDC) and a passport-size photograph for preparation of I-Card on the *date of the first training*.
- The District Election Officer shall appoint a Nodal Officer for facilitation centre who shall provide **Form 12** to such Voters on Election Duty, if pre-filled **Form 12** has not been received by them, collect duly filled-in **Form 12** from them.
- The Returning Officers shall provide the list of such voters to the Nodal Officer who shall maintain AC wise and date wise record of **Form 12** distributed and received from them.
- The Nodal Officer will send **Form 12** immediately to the respective Returning Officers for issuing postal ballot to such voters through the Nodal Officer.
- As per newly inserted **Rule 18A**, a Voter on Election Duty, shall receive his postal ballot, record his vote thereon and return the same at the Facilitation Center as specified, in writing by the Returning Officer. It is, therefore, clarified that all the Voters on Election Duty shall cast their votes at the Facilitation Centers and not in any other manner.

Voters on Election Duty - Issue of PB/EDC – contd.

- The Facilitation Centres shall be set up at the Training Venue and at the office of the Returning Officer. One facilitation centre shall be set up at the training centre for each of the Assembly Constituencies comprised in that district, while for Voters on Election Duty from other districts; one additional facilitation centre shall be provided at the training venue.
- The polling parties and the other associated civilian staff put on election duty accompanying the polling parties shall vote at the respective Facilitation Centres set up at the training venue.
- In addition to these facilitation centres, the Returning Officer will set up a facilitation centre at his office also.
- The Voters on Election Duty other than the those in polling parties and others accompanying polling parties (as mentioned above), shall vote at the facilitation centre set up at the Returning Officer's office. This may include all the police personnel, videographers, cleaners and other staff engaged in election duty.
- The Returning Officer shall appoint an officer of the level of Group-B or above as incharge of the Facilitation Centre for conducting postal balloting. He shall be assisted by three officials in conducting voting through postal ballot at the facilitation centre.

Contd...

Voters on Election Duty - Issue of PB/EDC – contd.

- One or more officer of the level of Group B or above, depending on requirement, *shall remain present* at the Facilitation Center for verification/attestation of declaration in **Form 13A**.
- The Facilitation Centres at the training venue shall function during training hours on the second and subsequent training days.
- The facilitation centre at the office of the Returning Officer shall function from P-3 to p-1, day during normal office hours. Where deployment of police personnel for election duty is done prior to P-3 day, the Returning Officer may set up facilitation centre at his office accordingly to facilitate postal balloting by the police personnel deployed on election duty.
- Training should be conducted in batches. Those voters who have completed training shall cast vote at the facilitation center immediately.
- **NB 1: No PB prepared for issue should remain unissued with the RO/any other official.**
- **NB 2: The EDC applies only in the case of officials on duty in the same constituency in which they are enrolled**

Voters on Election Duty - Issue of PB – contd.

Facilitation Centers – arrangements to be made:

- Postal ballot papers shall be distributed to the polling officials at the **second round** of training after verification of ID.
- A **Facilitation Centre** with **Drop Box** shall be opened for issuing PB, facilitating voting and collection of PB from polling personnel at the training venue **during all** training sessions.
- **The FC at the office of RO shall function from P-3 to P-1 day during normal officer hours (It may be setup prior to P-3 day to facilitate Postal Balloting by the Police Personnel).**
- One or more officer of the level of Group B or above depending on requirement, **shall remain present** at the Facilitation Center for verification/attestation of declaration in **Form 13A**.
- **Separate time** should be allocated in the training **for explaining** the procedure of marking and depositing of postal ballot papers.
- Training should be conducted in batches. Those voters who have completed training shall cast vote at the facilitation center immediately.

Contd...

voters on Election Duty – Voting at Facilitation Centre – contd.

- RO shall maintain record of all Voters on Election Duty to whom PBs have been issued. This list of Electors can be shared with candidates if any request is received from them.
- The list should not contain the serial no. of the PB issued.

List of Voters on Election Duty

Name of State :

Name of Election :

Name of Constituency :

S. N.	Name of District	No. & Name of AC/ PC	Name of Elector	Part No.	Serial No. in the part	EPIC No.

voters on Election Duty – Voting at Facilitation Centre – contd.

Conduct of PB voting at facilitation center and sealing of Drop Box

- Voting compartments similar to voting compartments in PS shall be provided in each Facilitation Center.
- This is done so that employees are able to mark their PB in complete secrecy. More than one such voting compartment can be provided if necessary. Arrangement of glue/gum shall also be made to seal the envelopes.
- A large steel trunk with one opening at the top for casting of PB shall be used as Drop Box at the facilitation center.
- Before the casting of postal ballots is started the empty Drop Box will be opened and shown to all present.
- The Drop Box will then be sealed by the officer in-charge of the Facilitation Center.

NB: Every voter shall cast his or her PB in the Drop Box after marking it and sealing it in the envelopes.

NB 2: Candidates are permitted to appoint their agents to watch the voting process, at the facilitation center. ROs shall intimate the candidates about the schedule of the facilitation centre in advance

voters on Election Duty – Voting at Facilitation Centre – contd.

Register of Voters on Election Duty issued with Postal Ballot (to be used at FC)

Name of State :

Name of Election :

Name of Constituency :

Name/ Address/ Venue of FC :

S. N.	Name of Elector	Sl. Number in the list of Voters on Election Duty	Detail of the documents produced by the elector in proof of his/ her identification	Date on which voted	Signature/ TI of elector

Voters on Election Duty – Sorting of Postal Ballots

End-of-poll procedure at facilitation center on each day:

- After all postal ballots for the day have been cast; the drop box will be opened by the officer in-charge of the Facilitation Center in the presence of the representatives of candidates, who may be present.
- All the postal ballots will be taken out of the box and the empty box will be shown to the said representatives of political parties.
- The postal ballot envelopes will be sorted Assembly Constituency wise and the number of postal ballot envelopes received for each Assembly Constituency will be entered in a register in a **Format** to be maintained for this purpose at the facilitation center.

voters on Election Duty – Sorting of Postal Ballots – contd.

AC-wise sorting of polled PBs and dispatch to ROs

- Representatives of candidates present will be requested to put their signatures on the register and will be given a copy of the relevant pages of the register.
- All postal ballot envelopes for one AC will be kept in a **large envelope** meant for that AC. The name of the Facilitation Centre, the date of Facilitation and the number of PBs contained therein will be clearly written on this envelope.
- This envelope will then be **sent to RO** of the concerned AC along with a copy of the relevant pages of the register through **special messenger** appointed by RO for this purpose not below the rank of Deputy Tehsildar.

Voters on Election Duty – PB for Police Personnel on Poll Duty

Legal Provisions regarding police personnel on poll-duty:

- During election period, all police personnel of the State, from constable to DGP, are notified under **S 28A RPA, 1951** as on deemed deputation to ECI. Therefore, all police personnel, except those on leave during the election period, are treated as personnel on election duty and hence entitled to vote by PB.
- Have to submit application in **Form-12** for availing the facility of PB.

Voters on Election Duty – PB for Police Personnel on Poll Duty – contd.

Arrangements to facilitate PB voting by police personnel:

- RO to ensure issue of PB to all police personnel whose application in **Form-12** are received in time through SP. This can be combined with **training** of police officials on poll duty.
- SP should then organize a **special Facilitation Camp** for police officers on poll duty for casting postal ballots.
- **One officer in the level of Group B or above** should be deputed for attestation of the Form of Declaration in **Form-13A** made by elector to whom PB is issued.
- Register should be maintained to keep correct account of PBs issued.
- A **drop box** shall be kept at the Facilitation Camp and police officers who have been issued postal ballot should be told to deposit postal ballot in this box after marking them.

Voters on Election Duty – Postal Ballot for Drivers/ Conductors/Cleaners

Nodal Officer to facilitate application for Postal Ballot for Drivers/ Conductors/Cleaners

- DEO to appoint a **Nodal Officer** for requisitioning of vehicles for poll duty. It shall be the duty of the Nodal Officer to **collect Information** needed to issue PBs to drivers /conductors / cleaners of requisitioned vehicles who shall collect information from Vehicle owners about No. and name of Assembly Constituency, EPIC no. and serial no. in electoral roll, no. and name of polling station where he is enrolled.
- Drivers/ Cleaners should **bring their EPIC** when they report for duty.
- One Officer well trained in the process of elector search should be deputed.
- From the EPIC details, information regarding complete address, No. and name of AC, Electoral Roll part no. where he is enrolled should be **entered in a register**. He may also use **search facility**.
- The Nodal Officer shall get the signature of Drivers/ Cleaners/ Conductors in **Form-12** and send to RO at least **7 days** before poll date, so that the RO issues PB to them and make the entry of “PB” in the **marked copy** of the roll.

Register of ALL Postal Ballot Papers

Maintenance, Sealing and safe custody of Register of all PB papers

- Record of issue of *PBs to all categories* and PBs *received back* should be maintained
- There are specified format of Registers for maintaining record of PB issued to voters on Election Duty and Absentee Voters. The Registers should be *sealed* in the same manner as the Register of Voters in **Form 17A** used in polling stations.
- Copy of this register can be given to the candidates who *demand* for it after the date of poll in the constituency.

ALL Postal Ballot Papers – Return - Procedure on Receiving Postal Ballots by Post

SOP for daily receiving of PB from Postal Dept.

- Details of total no. of postal ballots delivered by the post office everyday will be shared with the representatives of candidates.
- Acknowledgement of the number of postal ballots received by post will be prepared in duplicate. One copy to be given to the post office and other copy shall be kept in the record of the RO.
- The number of postal ballots received will be entered in the daily return in **Format-3** by the RO (**ECI Instruction - L. No. 52/2014-SDR dated 07/03/2014**).
- The entire process will be videographed.

NB: RO to make meticulous arrangements for ensuring compliance as above

Return of Polled PB - Role of CEO/RO

Arrangements for flawless delivery of returned PBs till start of counting:

- For receiving back postal ballots by post, the CEO will make arrangement with the Postal Department to nominate one post office for each Assembly Constituency which will deliver postal ballots every day to the Returning Officer.
- The time of delivery will be fixed at **3 PM** every day at the office of the RO, except for the counting day when the time for delivery will be at the counting center for that Constituency till the start of counting.

NB: A pass should be issued to the nominated postal department employee to enter the counting center on counting day for this purpose.

Monitoring of ALL Postal Ballots Received from facilitation Centers

Monitoring and reporting of returned PBs in [Format-2](#) on daily basis, attached to ECI letter No.52/2023/ SDR/ Vol. IV Dated 31th Oct., 2023

- DEO will prepare a return of the PBs received from facilitation centers in [Format-2](#) every day till he stops receiving postal ballots from facilitation centers.
- A copy of the return in [Format-2](#) to be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer every day
- A copy of the return in [Format-2](#) will also be given to all the candidates.
- The CEO will compile the information of the State in [Format-3](#) and transmit a copy to the ECI after each phase of election. The CEO will also send a copy of the compiled [Format-3](#) to all recognized political parties.

Storage of ALL PBs Received by post – process flow

