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ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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Nirvachan Sadan
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001
Dated: 21st June, 2023

No.464/L&O/2023/EPS (VM)

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
All States/UTs

**Subject: Instruction on Vulnerability Mapping, Critical Polling Stations
and preventive measures – regarding.**

Reference:

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| (i) | Letter No. 464/INST/2007-PLN-I | dated | 12.10.2007 |
| (ii) | Letter No. 464/INST/2008/EPS | dated | 24.10.2008 |
| (iii) | Letter No.464/INST/2009-EPS | dated | 22.03.2009 |
| (iv) | Letter No. 464/BR-LA/2010 | dated | 16.10.2010 |
| (v) | Letter No.464/INST/2011/EPS | dated | 05.03.2011 |
| (vi) | Letter No. 464/INST/2011-EPS | dated | 30.12.2011 |
| (vii) | Letter No.464/INST/2014/EPS | dated | 12.03.2014 |
| (viii) | Letter No. 464/L&O/2015-EPS | dated | 21.10.2015 |

Madam/Sir,

The Election Commission of India has issued various instructions on measures to be taken to ensure free and fair elections. One such measure is the exercise of Vulnerability Mapping and identification of Critical Polling Stations to focus efforts and resources for confidence building measures and to create secured environment for every elector to access the Polling Station without being obstructed or being unduly influenced or intimidated by anybody to exercise the franchise without any fear.

2. In view of the above and in supersession of all previous instructions issued by the Commission under reference above, a revised consolidated instruction is hereby issued.

A. VULNERABILITY MAPPING:

Vulnerability in the context of elections may be defined as the susceptibility of any voter or section of voters, whether or not living in a geographically identifiable area, to being wrongfully prevented from or influenced upon in

relation to the exercise of his or her right to vote in a free and fair manner through intimidation or use of undue influence or force of any kind.

The exercise of **Vulnerability Mapping (VM)** is to identify, in advance, such voters or section of voters who are likely to be vulnerable, the persons or other factors causing such vulnerability and/or to identify the villages/hamlets/habitats and segments of electorate vulnerable to any threat, intimidation or interference *against* the free exercise of electoral right and taking adequate corrective action thereof.

A.1 STAGES OF VULNERABILITY MAPPING EXERCISE:

- (i) Identification of the voters/voter segments, village/hamlets/ area wise, vulnerable to threat or intimidation or undue influence.
- (ii) Identification of the persons causing such vulnerability using muscle/ money power.
- (iii) Initiating preventive measures against the persons responsible for causing vulnerability.

A.2 PARAMETERS OF VULNERABILITY:

The exercise of Vulnerability Mapping shall start 6 months before the date of poll fixed for the last held General Election. District Election Officer (DEO) shall collect inputs on parameters of vulnerability in prescribed proforma (**Annexure-I**) based on present and past elections in the district. The DEO shall provide this information in **Annexure-I**, along with the information on pre-poll verified complaints and cases of defacement of private properties, if any, to the Sector Officers and Sector Police Officer as appointed according to para **A.3.1**.

A.3 ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER VULNERABILITY MAPPING:

A.3.1 APPOINTMENT OF SECTOR OFFICER:

A Sector Officer and Sector Police Officer shall be appointed 4 months before the date of poll fixed for the last held General Election. Suitable training shall be imparted to the Sector Officer and Sector Police Officer on their roll, responsibilities and timeline of activities for Vulnerability Mapping as provided in the Manual on Vulnerability Mapping (*latest edition*).



A.3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF VULNERABLE VOTERS/SEGMENTS AND THE PERSONS CAUSING SUCH VULNERABILITY:

On the basis of the inputs provided by the DEO in *Annexure-I*, The Sector Officer along with Sector Police Officer shall make field visits at regular intervals and give inputs on Vulnerability Mapping and identify voters/voter segments vulnerable to threat or intimidation or undue influence etc. These Officers shall also identify the persons responsible for making the voters / areas vulnerable, at each polling station indicating the name of village, hamlet, names of the potential troublemakers, including their contact numbers, address etc. This work has to be done by maintaining complete confidentiality of the informers/sources, if so desired.

A.3.3 OTHER AVENUES FOR COLLECTING INPUTS:

The DEO shall consider the worry lists submitted by political parties/candidates for Vulnerability Mapping, to take a holistic view. The inputs from political parties/candidates, so received may be validated at the SDM level (and not below it) before it goes up to the level of DEO. Similarly, a channel shall be created through Call Centers/Control Rooms to gather information from the voters as they are the largest stakeholder in the elections. Inputs from District Intelligence Branch of the District Police shall also be taken.

In order to ensure authenticity of the Vulnerability reporting, a mechanism of collecting, cross verifying, validating and collating information at a relatively higher administrative/ police level shall be ensured.

A.3.4 REPORTS ON VULNERABILITY MAPPING:

The formats of all the Vulnerability Mapping reports to be used by Sector Officers, Returning Officers, DEO and CEO respectively are given in the Manual on Vulnerability Mapping (*latest edition*) along with a timeline for each activity. The same may be referred to for scrupulous compliance. Concerned Zonal Division of the Commission shall scrutinize the report from CEO by taking specific and focused inputs from the Observers before poll day.



A.4 PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN VULNERABLE AREAS OR AGAINST PERSONS CAUSING VULNERABILITY:

Following actions need to be taken to ensure that the vulnerable persons, if any, are able to vote without fear, threat, undue influence or intimidation:

- (i) The DEO and the CP/SP of the District through a joint review shall finalize an action plan to deal with the potential threats and intimidation points identified. The action plan may include *inter alia* bounding down the identified trouble makers under appropriate section of the law; seizure of illegal arms; preventive detention, if required; forcing their appearance in local police stations at reasonable intervals to ensure their good behaviour; deposit of licensed arms; placement of police pickets and carrying out confidence building measures. Special efforts should be taken in the last 72 hours to ensure that intimidation or obstruction of electors does not happen on the poll day.
- (ii) It has to be ensured that all such measures are undertaken in absolutely non-partisan manner without fear or favour towards any particular political party or candidate.
- (iii) The VM4-RO Reports (*Ref: latest edition of Manual on Vulnerability Mapping*) with reference to vulnerable locations, list of vulnerable voters and voters causing vulnerability may be used for undertaking any preventive measures etc.
- (iv) The Sector Officers and the mobile security forces shall visit such villages/hamlets/dwelling areas which are identified as vulnerable areas, at least once on poll day. The Sector Officers and Sector Police Officers shall provide adequate security cover to the vulnerable voters wherever required.
- (v) Observers and other senior officers, while visiting the Polling Stations on poll day, shall pay special attention towards the turnout of vulnerable voters and take necessary measures to provide access to their respective polling stations.
- (vi) The police patrolling parties shall keep track of the vulnerable locations and keep the control room informed.

- (vii) The Commanders/Assistant Commanders of the CAPF shall make it a point to visit such vulnerable pockets as a confidence building measure till the day of poll. In case they come across any suspicious activities, they shall take note of it and immediately inform any of the officials such as DEO/SP/Observer/RO/Sector Officer.

B. CRITICAL POLLING STATIONS:

The Commission has prescribed for categorization of polling stations into **critical** and non-critical based on certain objective criteria (**Annexure-II**) to ensure enhanced security measures such as deployment of sufficient CAPF personnel or provide additional civil measures like webcasting etc. in order to create a secured environment for conduct of elections. **It shall be noted that one of such objective criteria for determining any Polling Station to be a Critical Polling Station is presence of vulnerable pockets/hamlets/ villages etc. in that Polling Station or Polling Station located in identified vulnerable areas. Therefore, all Polling Stations identified under Vulnerability Mapping shall be designated as Critical Polling Stations.**

Just to further clarify, Vulnerability Mapping is *pro-active* pre-poll exercise to identify vulnerable voters and areas and enforcing preventive measures well before poll day to mitigate the factors causing vulnerability, whereas critical polling stations are identified, based on the past electoral history, to provide focused enhanced measures at identified Polling Stations to prevent poll process vitiation and electoral violence.

B.1 MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR CRITICAL POLLING STATIONS:

- (i) All critical Polling Stations shall have CAPF deployment to safeguard the Polling Stations to the maximum possible extent.
- (ii) The list of all such critical Polling Stations shall be given to the Commanding/Assistant Commanding Officers of CAPF so that they can keep a watch on such Polling Stations.
- (iii) Deployment of webcasting or videography and any other monitoring system shall be positioned in the Polling Station as a civil measure. **Webcasting shall be done in all critical polling**

stations or at least in 50% of total polling stations including auxiliary polling stations, whichever is higher.

- (iv) Critical events in and around the polling station shall also be videographed.
- (v) A Micro Observer may be deployed inside the critical Polling Station, as additional civil measure, to enhance monitoring.
- (vi) The Presiding Officer of critical Polling Station shall be specifically briefed to ensure that the EPIC/ approved identification document, if any, are properly verified and reflected in the 'Remarks' column of Form 17 A.

C. ROLE OF OBSERVERS/ DEO/RO:

- (i) The DEO/ RO shall interact with the candidates and representatives of political parties to gather regular feedback. The District Intelligence Branch shall also give regular feedback on the subject of vulnerability of voters and critical Polling Stations to the DEO through SP.
- (ii) Upon the arrival of the General Observer, Police Observer and Expenditure Observer in the Constituency, the DEO/RO shall brief and hand over the details of polling station-wise Vulnerability Mapping of the relevant Assembly Constituency/Segment and a list of critical Polling Stations to the Observers. The final list shall be approved by the senior most General and Police Observers.
- (iii) The Observers shall visit such locations and interact with the voters in order to constantly monitor the developments.
- (iv) At the time of dispatch of the polling parties from the dispatch centres, the RO shall brief the Presiding Officer concerned regarding the critical Polling Stations and vulnerable locations within the Polling Station area.
- (v) The DEO/RO shall take the inputs on mass scale intimidation/ threat/obstruction, if any, into consideration while submitting their report after the poll.



- (vi) The Observers shall give their full attention to the issue of Vulnerability Mapping and critical Polling Station. They shall verify and make a mention of the situation in their final report.

D. ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

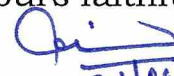
The Commission directs that accountability of various civil and police officials for Vulnerability Mapping and critical Polling Stations and follow-up at every stage shall be clearly defined with reference to each Polling Station/Constituency. Disciplinary action shall be initiated in case of dereliction of duty on the part of any civil/police officials in this matter.

It is to be noted that during elections, no press conference of any kind shall be held to furnish any type of details relating to critical Polling Stations, Vulnerability Mapping exercise, vulnerable areas, deployment of security forces etc. Field machinery shall be sensitized in this regard. Any information to media about vulnerability, if required, would be given only by the Commission or by the Chief Electoral Officers of the State/ UTs concerned on instructions of the Commission.

Detailed instructions on Vulnerability Mapping and Critical Polling Stations are contained in Manual on Vulnerability Mapping (*latest edition*) and Manual on Force Deployment in Election (*latest edition*), respectively. These Manuals may be referred for details and clarifications.

This shall be brought to the notice of all concerned for strict compliance.

Yours faithfully,


21/06/2023

(SANJEEV KUMAR PRASAD)
SECRETARY

Copy to:

All Sr.DECs/DECs/Sr.Pr.Secy/Directors/Pr.Secy/Secretary/Zonal Divisions

Format VM-1

Information on each AC/Sector to be provided by DEO to Sector Officer before he/she undertakes the exercise of VM

1. Number of election offences registered in the last parliamentary elections in the AC/Sector (give details wherever required)
2. Number of election offences registered in the last assembly election in the AC/Sector (give details wherever required)
3. Number of election offences registered in the last local body election in the AC/Sector (give details wherever required)
4. Number of serious criminal offences, caste conflicts, and communal incidents registered in the area, if any, in the last one year (give details wherever required)
5. Model code of conduct violations if any in the last parliamentary election (give details wherever required)
6. Model code of conduct violations if any, in the last assembly elections (give details wherever required)
7. Number of incidents of cash/kind seized/intercepted by FSTs/SSTs in the last parliamentary election (Give details whenever required) and details of expenditure sensitive pockets in the last parliamentary election
8. Number of incidents of cash/kind seized/intercepted by FSTs/SSTs in the last assembly election (Give details whenever required) and details of expenditure sensitive pockets in the last assembly election
9. Details of re-poll if any in the last general election of parliament or assembly or any bye-election
10. Details of Prohibition laws related cases in the last parliamentary/assembly and local elections.
11. Names of persons from AC/Sector currently under externment /detention.
12. No. of cases & details of important cases registered in the area under relevant State Excise Act:
 - (i) In the last parliament election.
 - (ii) In the last Assembly election.
 - (iii) In the last one year
13. Arms related information
14. Details of cases violating the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act
15. List of warranties of area in election related cases.
16. List of habitual offenders (with details of crime) of that area

- 17.** Details of pre-poll complaints if any related to electoral rolls of the AC/sector
- 18.** Details of any other pre-poll complaints
- 19.** Information regarding more than normal migration in the last 06 months to and from the AC/Sector, if any
- 20.** Voter turnout and % in the last Parliamentary elections along with voter turnout details of allocated Polling Stations:
 - Male:
 - Female:
 - Overall:
- 21.** Voter turnout and with % in the last assembly elections along with voter turnout details of allocated Polling Stations:
 - Male:
 - Female:
 - Overall:



Annexure-II

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL POLLING STATIONS:

- (i) PSs having vulnerable pockets and PSs located in identified vulnerable area.
- (ii) PSs where polling was more than 90% and where more than 75% of votes have been polled in favour of one candidate in last election.
- (iii) PSs where polling is less than 10%
- (iv) PSs where Re-poll conducted owing to vitiation of poll process and electoral offences such as booth capturing, during any election for Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly in last five years
- (v) PSs where any sort of violence took place on poll day leading to lodging of FIR, during any election for Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly in last five years.
- (vi) PSs with higher than constituency average % of Absentee, Shifted and Dead (ASD) voters (*Ref: Constituency Average % of ASD Voters=Total number of ASD Voters in the constituency/ Total number of polling station*)
- (vii) Information regarding abnormal law and order situation in any particular area.