Ministry of Home Affairs
Police-II Division
(Pers-Coord)

Meeting Notice

Subject: De-novo revision of last parts of electoral rolls relating to service personnel – with reference to 1st January, 2018 as the qualifying date-updating – schedule of Summary Revision

JS (P-II) will hold a meeting on the subject matter on 19th December 2017 (today) at 3:00 PM in his office. The agenda of the meeting is enclosed.

2. The undersigned is directed to request you that a senior officer well conversant with the issue not below the rank of DIG to attend the said meeting alongwith the action taken note/status paper on the enclosed agenda.

3. After the meeting, the participants will further attend the meeting scheduled to be held at 4:00 PM with Deputy Election Commissioner in ECI.

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Director (s) General – CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB, CISF, NSG and Assam Rifles

ID No. 128/MHA/Pers-Coord/2017/1610

Copy for information to:
PS to JS(P-II)
Agenda and Briefing Points for Online Service Voter System & ETPBS

Election Commission of India has been taking pro-active actions for sorting out the issues in registration of service voters for including their name in the last part of electoral roll. The correct electoral roll ensures proper delivery of postal ballots in a time bound manner to respective service voters. Since there were some issues in the last part of Electoral Roll, broadly enumerated below, de-novo registration was carried out recently:

1. Non-deletion of retired persons or persons who left services.
2. Improper address of Record Officers.
3. Improper linkage between service voters, unit officers, record officers and concerned EROs of Assembly Constituencies.

Using IT solution of online registration system, it was tried to provide a seamless system connecting Returning Officers with concerned EROs. As per the protocol of the system, national level Nodal Officers were appointed and authority was provided to them to create Record Officers login into the system. If required, Record Officers further could create login record for Unit Officers. Unit Officers or Record Officers could submit registration form (2, 2A, 3 as the case may be) online and get the service voters registered. The same channel was used by Returning Officers to dispatch postal ballots electronically to the service voters through ETPBS.

Such a system was tried recently as a proof of concept in one of the bye-election in Puduchery (November, 16, 2016) and select constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa (February, 2017). The issues were observed in the proof of concept, implementation and the Commission decided to have de-novo registration of service voters, in which the complete list of existing electors is nullified and atresh registrations were carried out, through online registration system. For implementing this system, number of training programmes, feedback meetings and documentations were created and distributed. However, there are some issues were observed which need to be deliberated and brought to the knowledge of senior official of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs. A meeting being convened with this objective, therefore, has following agenda points:

1. Discussion on Summary of last part of Electoral Rolls with 01.01.2018 as qualifying date.
2. **Discussion on the Issue of online Registration of Service Voters.**

(i) In online registration system, filled and signed forms of the applicants are to be submitted with due authorization by Record Officers, which will be received and processed by Electoral Roll Officers. The submission of the Information along with the scanned copy form needs linkage of the applicant with the Unit Officer and linkage of the Unit Officer with Record Officer. Such a linkage for authentication purposes needs their mobile numbers so that system can operate with OTP number bringing in desired security. It has been observed during de-novo that about 20 lakhs records were submitted indicating eligible service voters list but about 7 lakhs scanned forms were submitted. The slow process of submission of scanned copy forms has been periodically reviewed and indicated to concerned officers but still the progress is not satisfactory. The reasons thereof need to be identified, deliberated and protocol needs to be established.

(ii) Incorrect personal information such as incomplete name of the service voters, wrong spellings of the name, improper or incomplete addresses of service voters is causing a concern since for such cases, identifying appropriate Assembly Constituency becomes difficult and such form get rejected for enrolment.

(iii) It is desired that applicants mobile number or e-mail id, wheresoever available, should be captured. It is not happening.

(iv) It has been reported that many service voters are already registered as general voters. It was instructed to collect EPIC numbers of such electors along with the forms so that their names from the general electors list could be deleted and the EPIC number would be preserved, so that whenever service voter exists has right to be service voter, he can again be enrolled as general voter with the same EPIC number. Very few EPIC numbers have been received so far. Personnel in service could be a general voter if his posting is in the key station or he can be a service voter as per the law. Further, it has been observed that many personne working are having their registration as a general voter done for the constituency of their birth place. Such cases need to be identified and electors need to be educated about law and rules position.

(v) Through online registration system, switching between service voter to general voter (at key station) and vice-versa has been made easier. Therefore, whenever personnel transfers from key station to field or field to key station, concerned officer need to get his registration switched over between service to general and vice-versa.

(vi) It is expected that different wings falling under the Arms Act and having right to provide service voter capabilities to their personnel, need to maintain a record of all personnel so that the category of registration of each person as a service voter or general voter at key station or general voter at birth place (normal residency), is available.
3. **Discussion on the Issues of Postal Ballot transmitted electronically to the Service Voters.**

(i) Service voters can opt for postal ballot or proxy method of voting. If they opt for postal ballot, then postal ballot is dispatched by Returning Officer to them. However, such postal ballots are sent under the address of Record Officers, and Record Officer is expected to deliver these ballots to individual service voter well within the timeline. Record Officers are also expected to monitor the election of casted postal ballot and deposition in the Post Office for their travel to the destination of Record Officer for counting. Since the postal ballot is a legal entity, the methodology of casting vote of postal ballot is specific and Record Officers are also expected to impart training of casting the vote to their personnel so that the received casted ballot will be eligible to be included for counting, specifying right of the elector in participation in election process. It has been observed that although the system is well defined, its implementation has many issues.

(ii) In ETBPS, ballots are electronically transmitted to Record Officers on secured portal. Access to this portal by Returning Officers is governed by OTP on their mobile numbers. This demands that the concerned authority as Record Officers should have mobile width proper connectivity of service provider. During registration itself, such mobile numbers of Record Officers are requested but it has been observed that there is lot of change in mobile numbers and once postal ballots are issued, updation in mobile numbers of concerned authority is not possible for security reasons.

(iii) Each postal ballot is encrypted, which can be decrypted by specific PIN to postal ballot. PIN is ideally provided to individual service electors but since postal ballot is to be printed and since each of the service voter may not have access to internet-connected PC (or device), as per the request, Record Officers or Unit Officers are expected to download a postal ballot and open the postal ballot on behalf of individual service voter using the PIN assigned to that postal ballot. This can be done only after getting authorization from the individual service voter to Record Officer or Unit Officer permitting the authorities to use PIN on their behalf to open the postal ballot.

(iv) Since the postal ballot is tightly time bound, Record Officers need to download electronically transmitted postal ballots and after taking print, immediately hand over such ballots to respective voters. A record of when postal ballot was downloaded and when it was handed over to the individual, needs to be maintained by Record Officers.
(v) Record Officers need to get sealed casted postal ballot from service voters along with signed copy of declaration. Declaration is also be certified by Record Officer or any designated officer and these two documents need to be further sealed in an envelope. Such envelopes are to travel back to Counting Centres through postal service. Therefore, Record Officer is to maintain records of when such document has been submitted to Post Office for its transmission towards the destination.

(vi) The outer and inner envelopes are provided by election officials well in advance to Record Officers so that these can be used by service voter. Although, envelopes are provided, usage of any other envelope is also permitted.

4. General Issues

i. To make the system effective, in enrollment, handling postal ballot transmission and providing training to the service voter, it is desired that periodical training be imparted to service voters, Unit Officers and Record Officers so that the system would work in a time bound manner.

ii. Monitoring mechanism should be in place to monitor to and fro travel of such postal ballots.

iii. Collection of EPIC numbers for correlation with general electors’ electoral roll.

iv. Submitting proper copies of forms along with photographs which are scanned with appropriate scale so that enrolled records would be clean.

v. So far, as per the Commission’s directives, two times updation of electoral roll was being undertaken, for the completion date of 1st January and 1st July of every year. However, since online system is simple enough, it is being proposed that the finalization is done once in a year, on a matching data of publication of general electors list. It is being proposed that Record Officers should submit new enrolment required, deletion of the name from electoral roll on the ground of retirement or demise or leaving services by registered service voters. This could be done from 1st to 10th of every month. Between 10th to 15th of every month, EROs will get these records processed and create a draft copy and finalize their enrolment by 20th of every month. Between 20th to 25th, record officers can review such a list and monitor balance records which are not processed if any. This way, by 1st of every month records will have to be updated.

5. Any other point with the permission of the chair.