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Most Immediate/Date Bound
Panchayat Raj Institution Election

No.SEC/4E-II/2022/5093-5114

Dated: 04th November, 2022

To

All the Deputy Commissioners-cum-District Election Officers (Panchayat) in the State.

Subject: Panchayati Raj Institutions general elections, 2022 – Instructions on Media related matters.

Sir/Madam,

I have been directed to refer to the above subject and to say that the State Election Commission, Haryana has prepared instructions/guidelines in respect for issuance of passes to media persons, signing authorities, coverage in polling stations, entry procedure, coverage inside the counting hall etc. which are produced here as under:

1) Passes for Counting

For electronic media teams not more than two passes should be given to one channel (one cameraman and one news anchor) for one Counting Centre and it is emphasized that each individual member will need a separate authority letter. For print media only one pass per news agency/newspaper should be given.

2) Signing of Authority Letters

The Deputy Commissioners-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned or any other officer authorized by him/her may sign each Authority Letter in his own hand (no facsimile or rubber stamps shall be used. He/she is further authorized to refuse an entry pass to any person if in his/her opinion, there are sufficient reasons to do so or if such person(s) indulge in any unlawful activity.

3) Coverage of actual polling inside the Polling Stations

For coverage of actual polling inside the polling station, the entry of media person inside the polling booth in manageable groups will be permitted by the Presiding Officer on the basis of authority letters issued by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned/Returning Officer on behalf of State Election

Commission, Haryana only subject to restriction that media persons will not be allowed to go near voting compartments to take photograph/video coverage so that the secrecy of the vote is not violated under any circumstances. It is expected that all media persons will extend necessary co-operation in this regard and under no circumstances, the process of polling will be allowed to be disturbed.

4) Entry procedure

- i) No person can enter into any polling station and counting centres as matter of right. In addition to the persons directly connected with the polling and counting, such persons as are specifically authorized by the State Election Commission, Haryana or by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned on behalf of the State Election Commission, Haryana, can alone enter the polling station and counting centres.
- ii) Representative of the Government owned media like AIR and Doordarshan, and officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, PIB, Public Relations Department, Director of Information, field publicity unit etc. either of the Central or of any State Government are not entitled to any special facilities or preferential treatment whatsoever in the matter of entry into a place of polling and counting. They are totally at par with other media persons and can be allowed entry only if they are in possession of valid authority letters issued by the Commission. The same restrictions as applicable to other media persons with authority letter will be applicable to them as well. Similarly the same restrictions will also apply to foreign media/journalists etc.
- iii) For print media, only one pass per news agency/newspaper should be given. The Returning Officer and other election related officers have absolute right and responsibility to keep person(s) without such authority letters away from the place of polling and counting.
- iv) Authority letters issued will be subject to the conditions that media persons are not allowed to go near voting compartment, photographers not to take photographs/video coverage which may violate secrecy of vote etc. Any violation of such conditions will automatically invalidate the Authority letter and will also invite penal action under provision of relevant Act/Rules.
- v) The premises where the counting takes place is fully under the control of the State Election Commission, Haryana. Entry of media person into any such place of counting shall be allowed only on the basis of valid entry pass issued by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned or any other officer of the district administration specifically authorized by him/her in this behalf on behalf of the State Election Commission, Haryana and not by any other authority. Entry passes issued by any other authority to any

media persons for covering Panchayati Raj Institutions do not entitled them to enter the places of counting during elections.

5) Media Room inside the counting centre

- i) It may be clearly stated that Media persons with valid passes issued by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned or any other officer authorized by him/her in this regard on behalf of the State Election Commission, Haryana, inside the counting premises will be allowed to sit in a separate Media Room, and not in the actual counting hall itself. The media room/hall will be near the counting hall.
- ii) Entry of Media persons into the counting hall will be regulated. They will be taken inside the counting hall in small batches at regular intervals by an officer/official designated for this purpose by the officer in charge of counting, in advance.
- iii) The Media Room in the counting centres should have the required personnel and infrastructural facilities and other basic facilities like drinking water etc. Since counting is time bound task, no special arrangements can be made to answer queries telephonically.

6) Procedure for coverage inside the counting hall

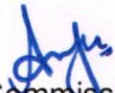
- i) As for coverage of actual counting inside the counting hall, media persons with authority letters can be allowed to enter the counting hall by the Returning Officer after verification of their authority letters. However, they will be allowed inside the counting hall in very small numbers and in batches and the actual numbers will be determined taking into account the size of the counting hall, the space available and other relevant factors. The Returning Officer and other election related officers will have full discretion regarding the entry of the media persons inside the counting hall, taking into account the situation obtaining at the relevant time and all other relevant factors as he/she alone will be able to do so on the spot. While allowing such media persons inside the counting hall, the Returning Officer may also further regulate the actual coverage by indicating a definite position (by means of a line or string) beyond which they should not proceed.
- ii) It is reiterated that media persons will be escorted in small batches inside the counting hall by officials designated for the purpose by the officer in charge of counting in advance; and these officials who escort the media persons with their Identity Card/Duty Slip on display will remain with the media persons throughout their stay in the counting hall and will escort them out after coverage by them to the Media Room. It is, therefore, important that adequate numbers of officials are available for this purpose in the Media Room. They must have their Identity Cards/Duty Slips on their possession.
- iii) It may also be noted that no static (fixed) camera – still or video of the media is allowed inside any counting hall. No, camera stand should therefore be allowed to be taken inside counting


halls. Further, while taking audio visual coverage of the counting process with camera carried in hand or on shoulders, under no circumstances, the actual votes recorded on individual ballot papers, or the actual votes polled in each EVM, is to be photographed or covered by audio visual coverage, even by accident.

- iv) It is expected that in counting centres, which are likely to attract large media attention, appropriate additional arrangements for security and law and order would have been made (by the concerned authorities). Under no circumstances, in whatever manner would the actual counting process be disrupted or hindered by the presence of Media persons inside the counting centres.
- v) The Returning Officer will also be free to use regulatory measures, as he/she may feel necessary in this regard, taking into account the situation at hand. It is expected that all media persons will extended necessary co-operation in this regard. This will be ensured by each Returning Officer in a suitable manner.
- vi) The holders of authority letters while covering the counting process can and should be allowed to come out of the counting hall(s) if they so desire, during the counting. They should be allowed to re-enter on the basis of the very same authority letter. All entry at all times, however, is subject to the overall requirement of maintenance of law and order, proper decorum and conduct of peaceful counting. Substitution of media personnel should be allowed only when the substitute also carries a valid authority letter in his/her name.
- vii) No person can be given any special facilities of access etc. by the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (Panchayat) concerned or anyone else who gives or permits extra facilities in violation of the directions of the State Election Commission to Central Government or State Government media or to foreign press and media or members of any State Department connected with information and publicity, by whatever name known, will do so at his/her own risk and will face the consequences thereof.

2. Kindly bring these instructions/guidelines into the notice of all concerned for information and strict compliance.

Yours faithfully,


Assistant State Election Commissioner
for State Election Commissioner, Haryana
Panchkula.


4/21/22