



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Villianur Main Road, Lawsthottam, Reddiarpalayam, Puducherry-605 010

Phone: (0413) 2292204, 2292205 / Fax: (0413) 2292206

Web: <http://ceopuducherry.py.gov.in> Email: ceo_pudicherry@eci.gov.in

No.E.47/2021

Puducherry, dt. 26/02/2021

GENERAL ELECTIONS TO PUDUCHERRY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2021

PRESS NOTE

Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the Schedule for General Elections to Puducherry Legislative Assembly, 2021 on 26.02.2021 as follows :-

Sl. No.	Poll Event	Date
1.	Issue of Notification	12.03.2021
2.	Last date for making Nominations	19.03.2021
3.	Scrutiny of nominations	20.03.2021
4.	Last date for withdrawal of candidature	22.03.2021
5.	Date of Poll	06.04.2021
6.	Counting of Votes on	02.05.2021

2. MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

- The Model Code of Conduct comes into effect immediately from today the 26.02.2021 and shall remain in force till the completion of election process.
- The Model Code of Conduct will be applicable to all Political Parties, all Candidates and the Government servants.
- The Political Parties are requested to abide by the Model Code and extend their co-operation for conduct of free, fair and peaceful election that is free of hostilities, acrimony and does not give room for bitterness.
- The Hoardings and Banners displaying political advertisements are being removed.

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- In terms of Section 4 of The Pondicherry Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act, 2000 (POPPD Act, 2000) “*no person shall deface any place open to public view by writing or marking with ink, chalk, paint or any other material except for the purpose of indicating the name and for such other purpose as may be specified in the said notification*”. Action for violation of this provision will be initiated on the basis of complaint from the owners. The police is also bound to register cases.
- The Political Parties are requested to extend their full co-operation for removal of advertisements and defacements in public places.
- Attention of the Political Parties and Candidates is invited to the Manual on Model Code of conduct of Elections and shall ensure strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the Election Commission in this regard.
- Government Servants have been warned not to participate in any political activity. Any complaint against erring Government servants will be dealt sternly. Besides taking disciplinary action under Service Rules against those Government servants participating in political activities, criminal action would also be instituted under section 188 of IPC.
- All Officers / officials, including Police engaged in the conduct of elections shall be deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission of India and would discharge their duties in an impartial manner without fear or favour. Their performance would be under constant scrutiny of the Commission.

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3. *ELECTORAL ROLLS*

- As on date, the total number of Elector is 10,02,414. 4,71,863 (Male), 5,30,438 (Female) 113 (Transgender). This includes 352 No. of NRI voters. No. of Service voters is 303.
- The Continuous updation is in progress. Applications for inclusions that are received 10 days before the last date for nomination of candidates will be included in the Second Supplement containing new inclusions.

4. *SEARCH FACILITY*

- To facilitate the electors to verify and ensure their name is included in the Electoral rolls, an online search facility to verify their names in electoral roll has been provided in the voter helpline mobile app, voterportal.eci.gov.in and nvsp.in portal.
- Voter helpline mobile app provides search facility and identifying polling station location.

SMS facility is also available for the following:

- **To verify the presence in the electoral roll**
 - Send SMS to 1950 as follows
 - ECI<EPIC NUMBER>
 - Receive SMS with Name, Father's Name, Address
- **To know Polling Station Address**
 - Send SMS to 1950 as follows
 - ECIPS<EPIC NUMBER>
 - Receive Polling Station Address
- **To know DEO, ERO & BLO**
 - Send SMS to 1950 as follows
 - ECICONTACT<EPIC NUMBER>
 - Receive DEO'S Name, ERO's Name & Phone number, BLO's Name & his mobile number.

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5. POLLING STATION

- As per the directions of Election Commission of India, the elector strength of polling station has been restricted to 1000 electors to ensure safe election in view of Covid-19 pandemic.
- Accordingly 607 new polling stations have been set up taking the total number of polling stations in the U.T of Puducherry from 952 to 1559.
- 9140 Staff will be involved in election duties. 3098 police personnel of Puducherry Police will be involved.

Assured Minimum Facility (AMF)

- It will be ensured that all the polling stations are provided with basic minimum facilities such as ramps, electricity, separate toilets, shades, approach roads etc.,

Additional Facilities for PwDs

- All polling stations will be mapped with the disabled voters in their respective polling stations.
- Facilitation services such as wheel chairs and adjustable tables will be provided for orthopedically handicapped.
- For Blind, deaf and Dumb, Trained volunteers who have undergone special education will be stationed at selected booths.
- Braille ballot papers will be kept in each Polling Station for the use of blind electors and they will also be permitted to take one companion if they desire so.
- Student volunteers with vehicles will provide one to one service to the disabled right from taking them to the Polling Station till their return back to home.

Voting of Service Voters / Government Servants on Election Duty

- All Service voters will be provided ballots through Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)

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- All the Government Servants on duty will be provided postal ballot to enable voting.

6. *ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES*

- Bharath Electronics Limited M3 model EVMs will be used in all Polling stations. The First Level Checking of the EVMs had been carried out in the presence of Political Parties. Adequate stock of EVMs and Power Packs are available to meet the requirement.
- Special awareness and hands on training will be conducted to sensitize people on the use of VVPATs.

7. *LAW & ORDER*

- Police Department in co-ordination with District Election Officer will be putting in place Bandobust arrangements at all Polling Stations.
- 154 vulnerable hamlets and 233 vulnerable polling stations and 16 critical polling stations have been identified. These will be constantly monitored by periodically reviewing the ground level situation.
- Police have been directed to execute NBWs and impound all arms except those used for bank security.
- They have been directed to invoke Section 107 & 110 Cr.PC for binding down trouble mongers.
- Sufficient strength of CAPF (Central Armed Police Force) will be sought. 6 companies CAPF have reached Puducherry and Yanam for area domination. Another 4 companies are expected to reach Puducherry shortly.
- Police Department will be holding Inter-State Co-ordination meeting.

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8. *ELECTION EXPENDITURE MONITORING*

- The UT of Puducherry is one of the sensitive State/UT.
- Flying Squads, Static Surveillance Teams, Video Surveillance Teams will start functioning.
- Apart from this Expenditure Monitoring Cell, Video Viewing Team, Accounting Team will function from the date of Notification of Elections.
- The ceiling of election expenditure has been increased from Rs.20,00,000/- to Rs.22,00,000/-
- The State Level / District Level Media Certification and Monitoring Committee for pre-certification of Political advertisements and to keep tab on Paid News will start functioning.
- No advertisement shall be published or telecast including social media websites without prior certificate obtained from DL-MCMC.
- Media is requested to ensure strict compliance. Failure will lead to taking legal action as per law.

9. *COMPLAINT REDRESSAL MECHANISM-CALL CENTER*

- Toll free Number 1950 will be operational on 24 X 7 basis. 1950 will be a single source for availing the bundle of electoral services apart from registering complaints.
- Complaints can also be lodged through **cVIGIL app and whatsapp number: Puducherry - 890 333 1950**

Karaikal - 890 369 1950

Mahe - 808 980 1950

Yanam – 738 249 1950

by supporting photos, videos and audios. The Complainants' details would be kept confidential.

- The complaints can be lodged online through voter helpline mobile app or through <https://eci-citizenservices.eci.nic.in/default.aspx> web portal.

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cVIGIL

cVIGIL app can be downloaded from Google Play Store

This Mobile App.,

- Enable citizens to report MCC/ Expenditure violation
- Provide time-stamped evidentiary proof of Model code of conduct / Expenditure Violation by empowering every citizen to click a photo, audio or video using his or her smart phone
- Within 100 minutes the complaints will be redressed
- Citizen can Anonymously i.e. without sharing personal details or by registering personal details, including name, address and mobile number, can lodge complaint.
- The registered citizen can see the count and status of complaints lodged by him and will have a chance to become a “Star Performer” by lodging more number of genuine complaints.

10. *SYSTEMATIC VOTER EDUCATION & AWARENESS PROGRAMME (SVEEP)*

- The focus of the SVEEP campaign would be on “Ethical Voting” “Voter Participation” and “Safe Elections”
- Various awareness programmers targeting youth, women, senior citizens, disabled, urban elite and rural power would be undertaken.
- A Mobile van has been touring all over Puducherry which will act as mobile EVM/VVPAT awareness vehicle and also enroll left out residual electors.
- U.T. specific designed Audio Visuals have been produced and will be widely telecast through Cable TV.
- State/District SVEEP Plan has been conceptualized by factoring in the survey report of Knowledge Attitude and Practices of Voters.

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11. I.T. INITIATIVES

- As in the previous elections, the Poll Day happenings in all the Polling Stations in the Union Territory will be web cast. The important events and Poll data will be captured online by customized software application.
- I.P. Cameras will be installed in critical polling stations to monitor the happenings at the vicinity of the polling stations.

Suvidha:

- Suvidha is an on-line portal for candidates/political parties to enable them to submit on—line application seeking permission for the following activities
 - Holding meetings and use of loudspeakers
 - Opening of temporary party office
 - Use of vehicles
 - Procession, rally and use of loudspeaker
 - Street corner meeting and use of loudspeaker
 - Helicopter and use of helipad
 - Use of vehicle for inter-district movement
 - Construction of Rostrum / barricades
- Applications received through Suvidha will be processed immediately and permission would be accorded after verification.
- Applications submitted directly would be digitized and then processed.

Online filing of Nominations:

- Nomination form will also be available online in suvidha.eci.gov.in portal. Any intending candidate may fill in it online and its print out may be taken for submitting before the Returning Officer.
- The details of Affidavit may also be filled in online in suvidha.eci.gov.in portal and its print out after notarization to be submitted along with the nomination form before the Returning Officer.
- Candidate may optionally deposit security amount online. However, a candidate will continue to have the option of paying the security deposit in cash in the O/o. RO.

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12. LATEST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

A. Measures taken for Safe Elections:

- In view of spread of COVID-19, the Commission has issued broad guidelines, which is to be followed strictly during the conduct of election.
 - The number of persons accompanying the candidate for submission of Nominations is restricted to 2 (two) instead of 5 (five) persons.
 - The number of vehicles for the purposes of nomination is restricted to 2 (two) instead of 3 (three) vehicles.
 - Keeping the containment guidelines in view, the number of persons including candidate for door to door campaign is limited to 5 (five).
 - The convoy of vehicles in road show will be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour instead of gap of 100 meters.
 - Public meeting and road shows shall be permissible with suitable instructions subject to containment instructions issued by the MHA/State.
 - Face Mask, Sanitizer, Thermal scanners, gloves and Face shield shall be use during the electoral process ensuring social distancing norms.

B. Polling Station Arrangements

In view of COVID-19 situation, the following additional facilities/steps shall be taken:-

- Vaccination for all the polling personnel will be done before poll date.
- All Polling Stations will be sanitized one day before the poll.
- Thermal Checking of voters at entry point will be done.
- To ensure social distance by earmarking circle for 15 to 20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) distance for voters standing in the queue depending on the availability of space.

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- Hand gloves shall be provided to the voter, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.
- There shall be 3 queue for male, female and senior citizens and Persons with Disabilities.
- Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations.
- Proper mechanism of collection and disposal of waste / used gloves will be done in Polling Stations.

C. Campaign by the political parties/contesting candidates-

- **Door to Door Campaign-** Subject to any other restriction(s) including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 (five) persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, is allowed to do door to door campaigning.
- **Road Shows -** The convoy of vehicles should be broken after every 5 (five) vehicles instead of 10 vehicles (excluding the security vehicles, if any). The interval between two sets of convoy of vehicles should be half an hour instead of gap of 100 meters.
- **Election Meetings -** Public gatherings/ rallies may be conducted subject to adherence to extant COVID-19 guidelines. District Election Officer will take following steps for this purpose:
 - District Election Officer will identify dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked Entry/Exit points.
 - In all such identified grounds, the District Election Officer should, in advance, put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees.
 - District Election Officer will ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings. DEO will depute Sector Health Regulators to oversee that COVID-19 instructions/guidelines are being followed during these meetings.

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- The political parties and candidates concerned should ensure that all COVID- 19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities.
- Allocation of public spaces will be done using Suvidha app.
- **Non-compliance of Instructions – Anybody violating instructions on COVID- 19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable, as specified in Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29th July, 2020 of Ministry of Home Affairs.**

D. Issue of Postal Ballot:

- Option of Postal Ballot facility has been extended to the electors of following categories:
 - Electors, who are marked as Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
 - Electors above the age of 80 years
 - Electors employed in notified Essential services
 - Electors who are COVID- 19 positive/suspect as certified by competent authority and are in quarantine (home/institutional)
- All such voters in the above categories will have to apply for the Postal Ballot within 5 days of notification of election, if they wish to use the option of Postal Ballot for voting in form 12D which will be distributed shortly by BLOs.

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E. Candidates with Criminal Antecedents -

• Candidates with criminal antecedents are required to publish information in this regard in newspapers and through Television channels on three occasions during the campaign period. A political party that sets up candidates with criminal antecedents is also required to publish information about criminal background of its candidates, both in its website and also in newspapers and Television channel on three occasions. The period of publicity during the campaign will be in three blocks in following manner, so that electors have sufficient time to know about the background of such candidates:

- 1st publicity: Within first 4 days of withdrawal.
- 2nd publicity: Between next 5th- 8th days.
- 3rd publicity: From 9th day till the last day of campaign (the second day prior to date of poll)

SHURBIR SINGH, IAS
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