

**STATE ELECTION COMMISSION
PUDUCHERRY**

No.1-30(7)/SEC/CE/Dir./2021/ 605

Dated. 9.09.2021

DIRECTION

Sub: Appointment of Polling Agents – Comprehensive directions – Regarding.

Section 24(4) of the Pondicherry Municipal Councils (Conduct of Election of Councillors) Rules, 1974, and Section 20(3) of The Pondicherry Village and Commune Panchayat (Conduct of Election of Members of Commune Panchayat Councils and Presidents and Members of Village Panchayats) Rules, 1978, provide that at every election, each candidate or his election agent can appoint one polling agent and two relief polling agents at each polling station.

The purpose of appointing polling agents is to serve as an instrument for ensuring transparency in the conduct of free and fair poll.

In the matter of appointment and functioning of polling agents the following are the areas of concern:

- The presence of more than one polling agent of the same candidate at a time in a polling station.
- The identity of polling agents in a polling station not being verified and established properly.
- Threat and intimidation to the polling agent resulting in their inability to function as polling agent and protect the interest of the candidate whom they represent which has a serious bearing on the free and fair election.

The Commission having considered the above issues hereby issues the following instructions to be followed scrupulously:

1. In order to ensure that not more than one polling agent or relief agent remain present inside the polling station at any given point of time, a system of "Entry Pass" needs to be introduced. As the number of contesting candidates is already known, the presiding officer should be issued with that many number of entry passes by the RO/ARO. When the polling agents make over their appointment letters in Form 10 (Municipal)/ Form 8 (Panchayat) at the polling station, the presiding officer shall issue the Entry Pass in favour of the polling agent of each of the candidates remain present after filling the details on the body of the entry pass. If any of the relief agents remain present, then he should be sent out immediately. It is made clear that the polling agent or relief agent can enter and remain present inside the polling station only after showing his entry pass and displayed on his person. For this purpose, the polling officers should be suitably briefed to ensure that no agent or relief agent enters the polling station without entry pass. The observers and sector officers shall verify the

compliance of the above arrangement. Further, in order to ensure that system works as stipulated, the sector officers shall verify well in advance as to whether the presiding officers have received the required number of entry passes as per this guideline. This item of work should form part of their checklist. For the smooth implementation of this arrangement adequate number of entry passes shall be printed as per the format given in Annexure I in advance and kept in readiness. Adequate care should be taken at the time of distribution of poll materials to ensure proper compliance to this order.

2. The Commission has further decided that candidates should appoint only such persons as their polling agents who are registered electors and who have an EPIC or any other document issued by the Government, and that the polling agents shall display their EPIC or other identification document prominently on their persons on the day of poll for easy and quick identification.

3. The presence of the polling agents of the contesting candidates during the poll is a sure indicator of transparency in the process. It also reduces the scope for malpractices and thereby scope for complaints. Hence, it becomes imperative on the part of electoral machinery and observers to keep a vigil and observe whether the polling agents of the contesting candidates remain present during the poll or not. As per the instructions enumerated above, there is no question of more than one agent of any candidate remaining present inside polling station at an given point of time. However, it would be the duty of the sector officers and the observers to keenly observe this aspect. Wherever they come across any scenario anomalous with regard to the presence or absence of the polling agents, they should further verify the situation from the point of view of possible threat of intimidation to the polling agents of any of the contesting candidates.

4. Copies of these instructions shall be forwarded to **all the political parties in the UT as well as the candidates**, and brought to the notice of the voters as well through a suitable press release.

5. The DEOs/REOs and ROs/AROs shall ensure strict compliance of this direction without fail.

✓

STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONER

To

1. The District Election Officer, Puducherry / Karaikal.
2. The Regional Election Officer, Mahe / Yanam.
3. All Returning Officers / Assistant Returning Officers of Municipality and Commune Panchayat.

ANNEXURE I

Specimen of Entry Pass

To be issued by Presiding Officer on poll day

Sl. No. _____
ENTRY PASS
Ward No. & Name _____
P.S. No. & Name _____
Name of Candidate _____
Name of Polling Agent _____
Name of Relief Agents, if any _____

SIGNATURE OF PRESIDING OFFICER