

TELANGANA STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

1st Floor, DTCP Building, Opp. PTI Building, AC Guards, Hyderabad – 500 004

CIRCULAR

No.526/TSEC-ULBs/2015

Date:31.07.2015

Sub:- TSEC - Elections - Elections to **Urban Local Bodies- Appointment of Micro Observers** – Selection, Guidelines & Check List etc – Regarding.

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In elections to Urban Local Bodies Micro Observers shall be appointed in selected sensitive / hyper sensitive/critical polling stations in order to see that the elections are conducted in a free, fair and orderly manner. The Micro Observers appointed shall oversee the polling that takes place from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm during elections to Urban Local Bodies. The following instructions are issued with regard to selection and appointment of Micro Observers:-

1. All the Collectors & DEAs, and the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation shall well in advance take an inventory of suitable employees of Central Government and Central Public Sector Undertakings for being appointed as Micro Observers. The Collectors & DEAs and the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation are also given option to appoint Gazetted Officers of State Government and State Public Sector Undertakings, Retired Government of India and State Government Officials having unblemished track record and considerable experience in overseeing elections where Central Government / Central PSU employees are not available in sufficient number.
2. All the Collectors & DEAs, the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, GHMC are therefore requested to workout the availability of above mentioned category of personnel and incorporate the same in a computerized database, category wise, with full particulars viz. name, designation, rank, present pay, scale of pay, address, contact no., their elector details etc. A plan of action should be drawn out for training and orientation to the persons to be deployed as Micro Observers. Training materials and handout should be prepared, logistical requirement should be worked out and adequate financial provision should be made in the budget provisions.

3. The officer to be appointed as Micro Observer should **not** be posted in the Urban Local Body, of their residence. However, in case of GHMC, the officer to be appointed as Micro Observer should not be posted in the circle where he/she resides or works and only those who reside or work outside the circle should be appointed as Micro Observer.
4. To facilitate the whole exercise of identification, appointment and drafting duties to Micro Observers, the Collectors & DEAs and the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation may identify a nodal officer to each of the ULB. The name and designation, office and residential address, telephone numbers including mobile number and e-mail ID, if any, of the nodal officer shall be mentioned in the election management plan.
5. The contact numbers of election machinery such as Returning Officer/Election Officer, District Election Authority, Observers and State Election Commission should also be brought to the notice of all micro observers drafted. The Collectors & DEAs and the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation should also hold a separate review on the subject and identify the areas of concern and take necessary advance measures to address the facilitation issues.
6. Training may be organized to all Micro Observers in the presence of General Observers appointed by SEC and brief them their duties to be performed on the day of poll. Proper arrangement shall be made at the training venue and care should be taken while choosing the venue for training purpose to ensure amenities such as drinking water and toilet facilities.
7. Advance measures should be in place to ensure that transport facility is provided for them for to be picked up and dropped off.
8. On poll day they will be provided food on par with the polling teams.
9. Besides the above, for poll duty, an appropriate honorarium shall be paid to each Micro-Observer. The Collectors & DEAs, the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation may take action for payment of honorarium to the Micro Observers appointed on duty on poll day as was paid in the latest elections held to APLA and HOP.
10. This payment of honorarium should be made by the Returning Officer / Election Officer, to the extent possible, on completion of duty at the EVM receipt center itself, after receipt of Micro-Observer's report by the Observer.

11. The guidelines and checklist for the Micro Observers are enclosed as Annexure – I and II, which may be provided to the officials who are appointed as Micro Observers and also to Observers appointed by the Commission.

(BY ORDER AND IN THE NAME OF THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONER)

**Sd/-M. Ashok Kumar
SECRETARY**

To

- 1) The Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation
- 2) The EA & Commissioner & Director of Municipal Administration, Telangana, Hyderabad.
- 3) All the Collectors & District Election Authorities.
- 4) All the Commissioners of Police.
- 5) All the Superintendents of Police.
- 6) All the Commissioners of Municipal Corporations.
- 7) All the Municipal Commissioners of Municipalities and Nagar Panchayats.
- 8) The Regional Directors-cum-Appellate Commissioners of Municipal Administration of Warangal and Hyderabad.
- 9) All Deputy Commissioners of GHMC.

Copy to the Principal Secretary to Govt., MA & UD Department, Telangana, Secretariat, Hyderabad.

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JOINT DIRECTOR

ANNEXURE – I

Guidelines for Micro-Observers

1. Observers have a very crucial role to play in the conduct of an independent, free and fair election. To strengthen the system of observation, the Commission has consciously decided to deploy Micro-Observer at the selected sensitive / hyper sensitive polling stations. These Micro-Observers would directly work under control and supervision of the General Observer.
2. For deployment as micro-observer, the Collectors & DEAs, the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation shall obtain the list of employees of Central Govt., and Central Public Sector Undertaking in the State. In case sufficient number of employees of Central Govt., and Central Public Sector Undertaking are not available, Gazetted Officers of State Government and State Public Sector Undertakings may be utilized for this purpose.
3. The Collectors & DEAs, the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation shall prepare a list of critical polling stations under the supervision of the Observer concerned and in consultation with the Commissioners of Police / Superintendents of Police concerned, where these Micro Observers would be deployed. Such polling stations would be short-listed on the basis of various factors which contribute to the vulnerability of the voters. Such factors, for example, domination of one social group over other, inaccessibility of the area, EPIC non-availability, previous history of violence, etc. would have been taken into consideration while doing the vulnerability mapping. The list of such polling stations where Micro Observers are to be deployed shall be finally approved by the Observer and kept confidential in a sealed envelop till the last moment of deployment.
4. In multi-polling station buildings, each location will have one micro-observer instead of one Micro Observer per polling station. The Micro Observer can oscillate between and visit the polling stations within the same campus at frequent intervals.
5. There shall be a nodal officer identified by the Collectors & DEAs, the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation for Micro-Observers to handle logistics and deployment related tasks of Micro-Observers in each Urban Local Body. General Observers will be in close touch with them for their requirements of Micro-Observers relating to their wards.

6. Each Micro Observer shall be given a photo-pass and identity card by the Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation / District Election Authority / Returning Officer / Election Officer to ensure his access to the polling stations.
7. Observers will arrange and train their Micro Observers. The officer selected for the job of Micro-Observer may not be aware of different aspects of election process. Therefore, a basic training of election processes on the day of the poll shall have to be given to them. This should enable them to understand and observe the activities relating to election on the day of the poll. An illustrative training material for the Micro Observer is attached with this circular. Since the Micro Observer shall be reporting to the Observer alone, it will be the responsibility of the Observers to ensure that they are trained properly on the relevant and crucial issues. The Commissioner & Special Officer & Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation / Collectors & DEAs / Returning Officers / Election Officers shall organize the training of these Micro Observers.
8. The required number of officers for deployment as Micro Observer would be picked up randomly from the list of all eligible Officers. Further the assigning of critical polling stations also will be done in random manner a day prior to the day of departure in presence of the Observer and duly approved by him. However, the exact polling station would be given to them on the day of departure.
9. The Commissioner & Special Officer and Election Authority, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation / Collectors & DEAs / Returning Officers / Election Officers should ensure that the Micro Observers are separately dropped to their destinations or may be with Zonal Officers. Micro-Observer should be provided with an Identity card, entry pass to his/her polling stations and such other requirements as may be necessary for discharge of duties as per the direction of the Commission.
10. On the day of poll, the Micro Observer should reach the polling station at least one hour before the commencement of the poll, i.e., at 7 O'clock in the morning. If for certain reason, it is not possible to reach in the morning, he should reach in the evening of the previous day.
11. Having reached the polling station, he should assess the preparedness for the poll. During the poll day, he should regularly note down the important points on the pre-printed Proforma (a Proforma for this is appended). It is made absolutely clear that in no case, the Micro Observer will act as Presiding Officer or the Polling Officer. His task is to observe that election process is being carried out in a free and fair manner and there is no vitiation of any kind.

12. In the process of observation on the day of the poll, the Micro Observer should specially observe: -
 - a. Mock Poll procedure,
 - b. Presence of Polling Agents and observance of SEC instructions with regard to them,
 - c. The observance of entry pass system and access to Polling Station,
 - d. Proper identification of electors in accordance with SEC guidelines,
 - e. Application of indelible ink,
 - f. Noting down particulars of electors in register XXXIV in respect of Municipal Corporation / XXI in respect of Municipalities and Nagar Panchayats,
 - g. Secrecy of voting,
 - h. Conduct of polling agents, their complaints, if any, etc
13. During the poll, if the Micro Observer feels that the poll is being vitiated for any reason, he will immediately bring it to the notice of Observer through whatever means of communication is available, for example, phone or wireless or any other means.
14. After the poll process is over, the Micro Observer will report to the Observer in the format as enclosed as **Annexure II** at the collection center and hand over his envelop containing the report for the day personally to the Observer and brief him/her on anything of importance that had happened during the day.
15. Observers will go through the report and if any further clarification is required then he should arrange for the Micro Observer to be called for ascertaining those further details. These reports along with the other reports will be taken into consideration for taking a decision on repoll or disciplinary action against any delinquent polling staff.

ANNEXURE - II

Checklist for Micro-Observers

Name of the District : _____

Name of the Urban Local Body : _____

Ward No : _____

Polling Station No. _____

1	Whether mock poll has been conducted in presence of Micro Observer?	Yes / No
2	Whether data of mock poll from the balloting unit was cleared and the EVM count was set to zero after the mock poll and before the beginning of real poll?	Yes / No
3	How many polling agents and of which contesting candidates, were present during the mock poll?	
4	Whether more than one polling agent for a contesting candidate / political party were present inside the polling station at any time?	
5	Whether polling agents were allowed to note the serial numbers of balloting unit and control unit and green paper seal?	
6	Whether the entry pass system was enforced properly? Whether any unauthorized person was inside the polling station at any point of time?	
7	Whether marking of indelible ink on left forefinger was done properly?	
8	Whether the identification document particulars were being filled up meticulously in Register of Voters (Form XXXIV in respect of Municipal Corporation / Form XXI in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats)?	

9	Whether the list of voters issued with Postal Ballot was available with the Presiding Officer & Polling Agents? Did any person already issued with Postal Ballot appeared to vote again in person?	
10	Whether events are recorded from time to time as and when they occur in the Presiding Officer's Diary?	
11	Whether the Presiding Officer or Polling Officer was going towards voting compartment or giving any undue instructions to the voters?	
12	Whether copies of accounts of votes recorded in Form-XXXVI in respect of Municipal Corporations / Form-XXIII in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats have been given to the polling agents?	
13	Whether voting compartment was properly placed to ensure secrecy of voting?	
14	Whether sealing of voting machine was done according to instructions?	
15	Whether any complaint by polling agent, election agent or any political party was received? If yes, it's substance.	
16	Any other incident or issue that you would like to highlight.	

Signature of Micro-Observers :

Name (in full) :

Designation :

Date & Time :

Phone No. / Cell No.:

Illustrative Training Material for Micro Observers

Introduction

- Poll is conducted in designated **polling stations** specifically prepared for this purpose;
- Poll is conducted by a team of officials identified randomly and trained. It comprises a **Presiding Officer** and **4 Polling Officers**;
- Representatives of the candidates (called **Polling Agents**) also sit inside the polling station and watch the poll proceedings;
- Electronic Voting Machine (**EVM**) used for recording of votes has two units – **control unit** which is with **4th** Polling Officer and through which he allows a voter to vote and second – **balloting unit** which is in secluded corner with a voting compartment and in which a voter votes;
- A voter enters the polling station, identifies himself to the **1st** Polling Officer, who will be incharge of marked copy of electoral roll and then goes to the **2nd** Polling Officer who will inspect the elector's left forefinger and put a mark with the indelible ink and gets signature of the elector in the Register of Voters (Form-XXXIV in respect of Municipal Corporations / Form-XXI in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats) and then allows him to go to the **3rd** Polling Officer who keeps his Voter's Slip, and then allows the elector to go to the **4th** Polling Officer, who will be incharge of the control unit. The **4th** Polling Officer will allow the elector to proceed to the 'voting compartment', on the basis of the Voter's Slip issued by the **3rd** Polling Officer duly activating the Control Unit to cast the vote of the elector on the balloting unit.

Arrangements Outside the Polling Stations:-

- (i) Outside each Polling Station (PS) there shall be displayed prominently–
 - Notice specifying the polling area, the electors of which are entitled to vote at the polling station and, when the polling area has more than one polling station, the particulars of the electors so entitled; and
 - Copy of the list of the contesting candidates.
 - A Card Board display of Balloting unit explaining a voter how to vote on an EVM
- (ii) Enough space for the voters to wait outside the polling station;
- (iii) Separate waiting space for men and women as far as practicable.

Law & Order Around Polling Station:-

- No vehicles to be allowed inside the 100 meter perimeter of a Polling Station.
- No canvassing of any kind allowed in this perimeter. Offence under Section 604 of GHMC Act, 1955 / 343 H of APM Act, 1965.
- Voter's slips to be plain white slips without any party markings.
- No posters or banners.

Arrangements Inside a Polling Station:-

- Separate entrance and exit for voters;
- Easy flow of voters from the time they enter the polling station to the time they leave it;
- The polling agents to be seated in such a way that they can see the face of an elector as and when he enters the polling station and able to see the entire operation; BUT
- Polling agent not to be in the position to see voter actually casting his/her vote;
- Video covered Polling Station shall have Videography arrangements

Arrangement Inside a Polling Station:-

Placement of Voting Compartment

- The Voting Compartment has to be so placed that neither of the Presiding Officer, the Polling Officer and Polling Agents should be able to see the actual voting;
- For this reason, the voting compartment cannot be near to the Presiding Officer or even near any window where one can see from outside;
- For this reason only, care has to be taken that the compartment / partition of the balloting unit is not transparent or semi-transparent.

Who are entitled all can come (or be) inside Polling Station?

- Voters in manageable numbers
- Contesting Candidate's for that Ward
- Election Agent's of contesting candidates for that Ward.
- Polling Agents of contesting candidates in that Polling Station – maximum of one for each candidate

- Authorized Media Personnel
- Election Officials
- Micro-Observer's seating arrangement inside PS when deployed if any appointed in the Polling Station
- A child in arms accompanying an elector
- A person accompanying a blind or an infirm voter who cannot move without help
- Every one mentioned above must have a valid pass properly displayed.

Seating of Polling Agents:-

Polling agents shall sit in following order :-

- Agents of candidates of recognized National parties
- Agents of recognized state parties
- Agents of recognized parties of other states
- Agents of registered parties with a symbol reserved by the Commission.
- Agent of registered political party without reserved symbol.
- Agents of independents
- If less space, then take turns or sit out.

Polling Agents:-

- Polling Agents are appointed by the contesting candidates.
- Must have a valid photo-identity card.
- Person provided with security can't be an Agent
- The Presiding Officer shall, after due verification, give them entry passes for the Polling Station.
- For every Polling Agent, there may be a maximum of two relief agents. But only one person can be inside the polling station at one point of time. Entry pass system ensures this.
- Polling Agents cannot be relieved after 3 P.M.
- Polling Agents can challenge bogus voters.

Electronic Voting Machine:-

- Voting machine consists of two units – (1) Control Unit and (2) Balloting Unit interconnected by a cable.
- One balloting unit caters up to sixteen candidates and displays names of contesting candidates and the symbols.
- There is a blue button on balloting unit by pressing which the voter can record his vote.

Activities inside Polling Station:-

- Presiding Officer shall arrange for setting up of polling station, seating arrangements and EVMs.
- He shall give entry pass to the polling agents after due verification.
- He shall demonstrate the voting machine before the commencement of poll, to the polling agents.
- He shall also demonstrate the marked copy of the electoral roll and the Register of Voters to candidates or their polling agents present and take their signature.
- He will **conduct mock poll** by recording a few votes at random for each of the contesting candidates and tallying the result.
- After the mock poll, the votes recorded at such mock poll shall be cleared from the control unit of the voting machine. A certificate shall be given to the Zonal Officer (ZO) in the format prescribed.
- The control unit of the voting machine has then to be sealed by fixing the green paper seal (s) and special tag.
- Thereafter, electors shall be allowed to vote strictly in the order in which they have been entered in the register of voters.

Verification of Voters:-

- Electors required to identify themselves – through EPIC or alternate document approved by SEC
- Minor discrepancies in voter's EPIC can be overlooked
- Voters without establishing their identity should not be allowed to vote

Duties of Polling Officers:-

The **identity of elector** should be verified by the 1st Polling Officer duly observing the instructions issued by the SEC on compulsory identification of voters in its order No.489/TSEC-ULBs/2015, dt.22-07-2015, and in the following manner:-

- The voter will give a slip (or announce his/her name) with his serial no. in **marked copy of roll**. The 1st Polling Officer will locate that serial no. of the elector in the roll and speaks the name of the elector loudly so that the polling agents can ensure the identity of the elector. This is first check on a bogus voter. Thereafter, the officer should ask for his identity document.
- After an elector has been identified, the entry relating to the elector in the marked copy of the photo electoral roll should be struck diagonally. The Sl.No. of the female voter has to be rounded off in addition.
- The voter should move to 2nd Polling Officer who will note the voter particulars in the Register of Voters (Form XXXIV in respect of Municipal Corporation / Form XXI in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats). The serial number (not the name) of the elector as given in the marked copy of the electoral roll should be noted.
- The type of Identity document and the Sl. No. of the ID-Document should be noted in the **"REMARKS"** column of the Form XXXIV in respect of Municipal Corporation / Form XXI in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats.
- Then the 2nd Polling Officer should apply **the indelible ink** on the left forefinger. If elector does not have left forefinger, ink should be applied to any other finger of left hand.
- If an elector refuses to put his signature or thumb impression on the Register of Voters, he shall not be permitted to vote and an entry 'Refused to vote' will be made in the 'Remarks' column of the Register of Voters.
- **Third Polling Officer** : will be in charge to issue Voter's slip and after issue of voter's slip, the 3rd Polling Officer will direct the elector to go to 4th Polling Officer, who will be incharge of Control Unit of the voting machine.
- **Now the 4th Polling Officer will allow the elector to proceed to the 'voting compartment', on the basis of the Voter's Slip issued by the 3rd Polling Officer duly activating the Control Unit to cast the vote of the elector on the balloting unit.**

Challenged Vote:-

- Polling Agents can challenge voter's identity by depositing Rs. 2/-
- Presiding Officer holds summary inquiry
- If challenge not established, voter proceeds to vote
- If challenge established, person is not allowed to vote and handed over to the police

Tendered Vote:-

- Situation when a voter finds that his/her vote is already cast by someone else
- Such voter can tender his vote if he/she can establish the credentials, by tender ballot paper – but not through EVM
- Tendered ballot shall be kept in separate cover
- The percentage of tendered votes recorded is not less than 2% of the total votes polled at the polling station, the matter shall be brought to the notice of the Observer / DEA / EA / State Election Commission. The State Election Commission in such case will take a decision whether to order for a repoll or not and issue orders.

Voting by blind & infirm:-

- Permitted a companion of 18+ aged
- Same person cannot be companion to more than one person
- Companion will be required to declare that he will keep secret the vote recorded by him/her
- None of the polling staff or polling agents shall act as companion

Presiding Officer's power to adjourn poll:-

Section 58 of GHMC Act, 1955 / Section 343 U of APM Act, 1965 can adjourn poll due to:

- Natural calamity like flood, storm, snowfall
- Damage to poll materials including EVM
- Disturbance of peace making it impossible to continue with poll
- Non-arrival of polling team due to serious difficulty
- Stoppage of EVM etc
- Any other unforeseen and sufficient cause

Supervisory Visits:-

- Observers/Micro Observers will visit
- RO/ARO/EO/AEO will visit
- Zonal Officers will visit frequently
- Candidates may visit
- Candidate's Election Agents may visit
- All of the above must record their visit and observations in the visit sheet

Closure time:-

- Presiding Officer to check whether electors are in queue at the time of closure of poll
- If they are, give numbered slips. Give slip no.1 to the last person in queue. This will ensure that no further person joins the queue thereafter
- When all electors have voted, press the close button on ballot unit
- Ballot unit will show the total votes polled—it should be noted in part -1 of XXXVI in respect of Municipal Corporation / XXIII in respect of Municipalities & Nagar Panchayats
- Then switch off the power/battery button
- Tally Form XXXIV (Mpl. Corpr) / Form XXI (Mpl / NP), Form XXXVI (Mpl. Corpr) / Form XXIII (Mpl / NP) and EVM count
- Seal the machine thoroughly
- Presiding Officer must complete his diary
- Presiding Officer must complete the additional report format
- Micro-Observer to complete his report in the prescribed format

Diary:-

- Presiding Officer shall tally the vote counts every hour and keep an **account of hourly poll.**