

**Press Release**

The counting of votes for General Elections to Lok Sabha, 2019 from 38 parliamentary constituencies and bye elections to 22 Assembly Constituencies in Tamil Nadu will be taken up on 23.5.2019.

2. The counting of postal ballot and pre-counting of ETPBS (Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballots) will start at 8 AM on 23.5.2019. Pre-counting of ETPBS by QR Code reading of all received ETPBs will be completed before the valid ETPBs are transferred to the Postal Ballot counting table.

3. Each Parliamentary Constituency consists of 6 Assembly Segments and the postal ballot counting for the parliamentary constituency will be taken up in one of the Assembly Segment counting halls. In the counting hall, where Postal Ballots are being counted, the commencement of votes polled in EVMs can start after 30 minutes. In the remaining 5 assembly segment counting halls, counting of votes polled in EVMs will begin at 8 AM.

4. In case of bye elections to the 22 Assembly Constituencies, counting of postal ballots will commence at 8 AM on 23.5.2019 and the counting of votes polled in EVMs will start from 8.30 AM.

5. The EVM counting will be conducted round wise in a pre-determined order. In cases where the Control Unit is not working, due to low battery, result will be retrieved by replacing the battery. Control Units, from which results cannot be retrieved, even after replacement of battery, will be kept in the custody of the Returning officer in the counting hall and the counting of VVPAT slips in respect of such EVMs (malfunctioned EVMs) will be counted, after completion of counting of votes from all control units.

6. As per ECI's recent instruction, counting of EVM votes can continue, without waiting for completion of counting of postal ballots. All rejected postal ballot papers will be mandatorily re-verified by the Returning Officer before the declaration of result, in cases where the margin of victory is less than the number of Postal Ballot papers, rejected as invalid.

7. Counting of VVPAT paper slips will be done in the following order.

- a) VVPAT slips of EVM units in which results are not retrieved even after changing batteries.
- b) VVPAT slips counting ordered by ECI, due to non-clearance of mock poll data in Control Unit or mock poll VVPAT paper slips
- c) In cases where total votes polled in CU does not match the record of votes in Form 17-C
  - i) In case of State Assembly Elections, if the winning margin is more than the total votes polled in all such polling stations, will not be

taken up for counting. In case the winning margin is equal to or less than the total votes polled in these polling stations, counting of VVPAT slips alone will be done.

- ii) In case of Lok Sabha Elections, the CU will be discarded and counting of respective VVPAT slips will be done.
  - iii) In cases where VVPAT slips pertaining to mock poll have not been taken out from the drop box of the VVPAT, all VVPAT slips will be counted and the candidate wise votes from mock poll certificate will be deducted to arrive at correct count of candidate wise votes polled.
- d) VVPAT slips counting allowed by the Returning Officer, under Rule 56 (D) of the conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- e) Mandatory re-verification of 5 polling stations in each Assembly Segment.

8. Selection of 5 polling stations in each Assembly Segment for VVPAT slip counting, by drawal of lots.

- i) The draw of lots will be conducted immediately after the completion of the last round of counting of votes recorded in EVMs and VVPAT paper slips count due to non-display of result from Control Unit or under Rule 56(D) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961
- ii) Written intimation is given about the conduct of draw of lots to the candidates/agents
- iii) White colour paper cards of postcard size will be used for conducting the draw of lots.
- iv) Total number of paper cards will be equal to the total number of polling stations in the Assembly Constituency. The polling station(s) whose VVPAT slips have been counted for reasons stated in (a) to (d) of para 7 above shall not be included in the draw of lots for mandatory verification.
- v) Pre-printed cards with Assembly Constituency/Assembly Segment number and name, date of polling, polling station number of at least 1" x 1" (1 inch by 1 inch) size and printed in black ink will be used.
- vi) The cards will be four folded in such a way that polling station number is not visible.
- vii) Each paper card will be shown to the candidate/their agents before folding and dropping in the container.
- viii) The paper cards will be kept in the big container and shaken before 5 slips are picked up by the Returning Officer.
- ix) The verification of the VVPAT paper slips will be done in a "VVPAT Counting Booth" specially prepared for this purpose inside the Counting Hall.

9. The counting of VVPAT paper slips for categories (a) to (d) mentioned in para 7 above will be taken up first, followed by the mandatory verification and counting from the five polling stations, which will be done sequentially, strictly following the ECI instructions in this regard.

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