By Speed Post/Email

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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निर्वाचन सदन
अशोक रोड, नई दिल्ली–110001
Nirvachan Sadan
Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

Dated: 16th March, 2026

No.464/INST/ETPBMS/2026/EPS

To

The Chief Electoral Officers of
Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry

Subject: General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, 2026 - **Carrying of mobile phone by Returning Officers/ Assistant Returning Officers inside the Counting hall** - regarding.

Reference: Instruction No.464/Counting Arrangements/2023/EPS dated 18.07.2023

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to refer to the subject cited and to apprise that the Commission has announced the General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, 2026 vide Press Note No. ECI/PN/029/2026 dated 15.03.2026 available on the Commission's website under URL https://www.eci.gov.in/issue-details-page/press-releases The date of Counting of Votes in all the poll going States and UT has been fixed on **04.05.2026(Monday).**

2. In this regard, your attention is invited to the Commission's instruction cited under reference and to state that in view of inception of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot Management System (ETPBMS) wherein One-Time Password (OTP) is received on the Returning Officer's mobile phones, the Commission has directed that on the day of counting: -

a) Only that mobile phone of the RO/ ARO/ Counting Supervisor (s), linked to ETPBMS, be used to receive 'OTP' to log into ETPBMS to start counting thereof shall be brought inside the counting hall;
b) The mobile handset will be switched on only to receive 'OTP' and be switched off once the system is logged in to ETPBMS;
c) Inside the counting hall, such mobile handset is to be kept in the custody of ARO/RO/Observer, whosoever is the senior most officer in the Counting Hall for ETPBMS counting, in switch off mode till the counting is over.
d) In case the login is closed for some reasons, Counting Supervisor can get the mobile from the officer to whom the mobile set was submitted to receive OTP once again for enabling him to re login. After re login, he shall return the mobile to the same officer in switched off mode.

e) A declaration is to be signed by all users separately about Do's and Don'ts for mobile usage.

f) Specific approval must be obtained from the respective Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) for the number of users in each instance, along with the necessary mobile phone numbers being used. Mobile phones are to be allowed inside the Counting hall for all such users.

The above instructions shall be brought to the notice of all concerned for strict compliance.

Yours faithfully,

16/3/2021

(SANJEEV KUMAR PRASAD)
SECRETARY

Copy To: DG(IT), ECI for information and necessary action