

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/ 38 /2005/MCPS

Dated 20th September, 2005

PRESS NOTE

**Sub: General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, 2005 –
Deployment of Observers.**

The Commission today held a briefing meeting for the Observers (both General and Expenditure) who are being deployed for General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar.

The meeting was addressed by Shri B. B. Tandon, Chief Election Commissioner, Shri N. Gopaldaswami, Election Commissioner and Shri Naveen Chawla, Election Commissioner.

About 281 officers are being appointed as Observers (243 General and 38 Expenditure) to supervise the election process in forthcoming Bihar Legislative Assembly Elections, 2005. To ensure close monitoring and supervision one General Observer is being appointed for each assembly constituency and one Expenditure Observer for each District as was done during the last assembly elections in Bihar. The senior most General Observer in the District has been nominated as District Observer for the purpose of co-ordination. The Election Observers will stay in the constituencies assigned to them during their first visit continuously till the end of poll day with a short break of 4 days. This would ensure immediate redressal of complaints that are received from various political parties/candidates.

During the first visit, they will supervise the processes of nominations, scrutiny, withdrawal, campaign and poll. They would also be supervising preparation of Electronic Voting Machines, training of polling personnel and conduct of voter awareness programmes. All Observers have been asked to look into deployment plan of forces in the constituency. They will also be critically examining classification of hypersensitive and sensitive polling stations.

During second visit, all Observers will monitor counting and declaration of results. Observers, who are appointed under Section 20B of the Representation of the Peoples Act, play an important statutory role to ensure free and fair elections. They act as crucial link between the field and the Commission. These officers remain under disciplinary control of the Commission till the end of elections.

During the forthcoming elections, not more than three vehicles will be allowed to come within 100 metres of Returning Officer's/Assistant Returning Officer's office at the time of nomination. To curb the tendency of overcrowding, the Commission has issued directions that at the time of nominations only candidates, their proposers as prescribed by law and four others will be allowed to enter the office of Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officer.

The Observers have been asked to make sure that the affidavits that are filed by the candidates at the time of nomination detailing their movable/immovable assets, qualifications, convictions, cases pending in Courts, are displayed prominently and made available for public scrutiny without any loss of time. Observers have specifically been asked to tour their respective allotted Assembly Constituency extensively and build confidence among weaker and disadvantaged sections.

The Observers will constantly review execution of non-bailable warrants, recovery of illicit arms and collection of licensed arms from undesirable elements. They would also ensure that preventive arrests are made totally objectively and on merits. The Observers will strictly enforce implementation of Model Code of Conduct. The Observers were informed that during the forthcoming elections, no videography or photography be allowed inside the polling stations and secrecy of vote will have to be maintained at all costs. The Observers were directed to make sure that extensive videography is done of all critical events that may take place during the election process, and polling at hyper-sensitive/sensitive polling stations.

During these elections, Central Government employees will be engaged for poll duty to the extent possible. The Observers were also asked to ensure that all those officers who stand transferred (because they were in their home districts or they had completed three years of tenure at last station during last four years or they were charged of misconduct during previous elections) physically move out.

The Commission has asked all District Election Officers to prepare a comprehensive communication plan in consultation with Observers to ensure proper and effective communication on the day of poll.

The Commission also directed that in cases where start of poll has been delayed for more than two hours for any reason, a repoll should be recommended.

The Expenditure Observers were asked to monitor the expenditure closely and check the accounts submitted by candidates regularly. The accounts submitted periodically by the candidates shall be displayed by the Returning Officer prominently.

(A.K. MAJUMDAR)
SECRETARY