

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION
TRIPURA: AGARTALA.

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Guidelines for conduct of Local Bodies Election in Tripura during COVID-19 Pandemic

In the wake of spread of COVID-19 Pandemic throughout the country many steps have been taken to prevent and slowdown the transmission of COVID-19 virus. Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India have been issuing guidelines time to time to contain the pandemic in the Country. Similarly, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Tripura has also issued orders on disinfection, sanitization, and prevention for containing COVID-19 in the State.

Taking into consideration of the present scenario of COVID-19, the State Election Commission, Tripura has sought for views and suggestions from the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Tripura and the Department of Revenue (Disaster Management), Government of Tripura to draw up a guideline in connection with conduct of local bodies Election during Pandemic. The State Election Commission has considered the views and suggestions of the Departments and also studied carefully the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conducting Poll during Pandemic and has drawn up a guideline as bellow.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF ELECTION DURING COVID -19 PANDEMIC

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1	Nomination Process and Scrutiny:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Nomination forms to be uploaded in the Website of State Election Commission & DEOs (District Magistrates). The Nomination form can be downloaded and printed from the said websites and filled up form may be submitted before the Returning Officer as per Rule.ii. Not more than 2 (two) persons can accompany with an intending candidate during submission of Nomination Paper to Returning officer.iii. Not more than two light vehicles may be permitted during submission of nomination papers.iv. While receiving Nomination Paper form the intending candidates, the Returning Officer may make all necessary arrangement in his office to ensure compliance of the guidelines issued by the Government of Tripura in Health Department and Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India time to time to prevent spread out of COVID 19.v. Similar Action may be taken by Returning Officer during scrutiny of Nomination.
2	Appointment and Training of Polling/Counting officials and other election officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Sufficient number of reserve polling/counting officials should be appointed to replace any official if infected by COVID 19 during performing duties.ii. Training of Polling/Counting officials may be done in phased manner and care should be taken to maintain appropriate distancing. Soap/ water/ sanitizer etc. may be made available in adequate quantity in the training


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		<p>venue.</p> <p>iii. Training Materials etc may be uploaded in the District portal so that Election Official may access it as per requirement.</p>
3	Preparation & distribution of materials including EVMs/Boxes.	<p>i. All Returning Officers may arrange for appropriate spaces for sorting of polling materials and ensure all safety measures as specified by MoHFW</p> <p>ii. First & Second randomization and preparation of EVMs may be done in large hall/ halls.</p> <p>iii. Sanitizer and disposable hand gloves may be supplied to each official handling EVM/ Ballot Boxes.</p> <p>iv. In case of Ballot Boxes, it may be sanitized before handing over to polling team and also on the day of poll before preparation of Ballot box for polling.</p> <p>v. Distribution of materials to polling teams may be arranged in such a manner so that large gathering of officials at a time may be avoided.</p>
4	Dispersal and transportation of Polling team	<p>i. DEO (District Magistrate) may arrange sufficient number of vehicles for transportation of polling teams and security personal as per COVID norms.</p> <p>ii. During dispersal, RO may select different venues and time for polling teams to avoid large gathering.</p>
5	Measures to be taken at Polling Station for conduct of poll.	<p>The State Election Commission had issued earlier detailed instructions for arranging assured minimum facilities at each polling station. Now, in view of COVID-19 situation, following additional facilities/steps may be taken:</p> <p>i. Mandatory sanitization of the polling station, preferably before the day of poll.</p> <p>ii. Thermal checking of voters and officials may be done at the entry point of polling stations by utilizing service of Para Medical staff, ASHA worker etc.</p> <p>iii. In case of Body temperature of Elector(s) is observed above the set norms of MoHFW at first reading, then temperature to be checked again and if it remains same, then the Elector may be provided with token/certificate and may be asked to come for voting at the last hour of poll. At the last hour of poll, such electors shall be facilitated voting, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures.</p> <p>iv. For distribution of token/certificate to the voters a help desk may be set up. One additional staff may be engaged by the DEO for this purpose. Token to the voters to be issued on first come first serve basis so that they need not wait in the queue.</p> <p>v. The services of BLO or any other official may be utilized to monitor and regulate social distancing norms strictly.</p> <p>vi. Proper marking at the polling station may be arranged to demonstrate social distancing for voters queue.</p> <p>vii. There should be one shaded waiting area for voters within the polling station premises.</p> <p>viii. Hand Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit</p>

		<p>point of every Polling station.</p> <p>ix. At a visible location outside the Polling station area, awareness posters on COVID-19 may be displayed.</p> <p>x. In polling station, sitting arrangement for the polling personnel and polling agents may be made following the norms of social distancing.</p> <p>xi. In case any polling agent is found having temperature above the prescribed limit, then their reliever may be allowed by the Presiding Officer, who will keep a record accordingly.</p> <p>xii. For the purpose of identification of voter, the voter has to lower his / her facemask for identification.</p> <p>xiii. Only 1(one) voter may be allowed to stand in front of each polling official at a time maintaining social distance.</p> <p>xiv. Marking in finger as per statutory norms shall be made.</p> <p>xv. Disposable hand gloves may be provided to the voters, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.</p> <p>xvi. Inside the booth at appropriate locations sanitizer may be kept with clear direction for the use by voters.</p> <p>xvii. COVID-19 patients who are in isolation will be allowed to cast their vote at the last hour of the poll day at their respective Polling Stations, under the supervision of health authorities, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures. Sector Magistrates shall coordinate this in their allocated polling stations.</p> <p>xviii. Separate guidelines will be issued for the voters who are residing in the area notified as containment zone.</p> <p>xix. Every Polling Official may use hand gloves, face mask, face shield etc on the day of poll in the polling station.</p>
6	Receiving centre for Polled EVM/Boxes and other statutory papers.	<p>i. EVM/Ballot Box receiving counters may be increased by deputing more Staff(s), to avoid large gathering.</p> <p>ii. Separate counters may be set up for receiving various articles</p> <p>iii. One Help Desk may be set up at receiving centre for guidance to the Polling parties for depositing polled EVMs /Ballot Boxes and Polling materials.</p>
7	Strong room	<p>i. Strong Room for polled EVMs/Ballot Boxes should be properly sanitized before storing of EVMs/Ballot Boxes.</p>
8	Counting hall and counting arrangement.	<p>i. There should not be more than 7 counting tables in a counting hall. No of counting hall may be increased appointing additional Assistant Returning Officers.</p> <p>ii. Carrying cases of CUs should be sanitized before placing over counting table.</p> <p>iii. De-sealing of CUs displaying result on CU should be done by one official on each table.</p> <p>iv. Display of result from the Control Units may be displayed on a large screen to avoid accommodation</p>

		<p>of large number of counting agents.</p> <p>v. The counting centers shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting.</p> <p>vi. For counting of Postal Ballots, additional number of AROs may be required. If required, Postal Ballots may also be counted in a separate hall under the supervision of the Returning Officer/ Assistant Returning officer.</p>
9	Campaign, meeting etc Activities of Political Parties.	<p>i. Door-to-door campaign - subject to any other restriction(s), including extant COVID-19 guidelines, a group of 5 (five) persons including candidates, excluding security personnel, if any, may be allowed to do door to door campaign.</p> <p>ii. Road shows – Prior permission should be taken for Road shows by the Political parties giving details from the DEOs. The convoy should be broken as per directions of the Local Police authorities maintaining COVID guidelines. (Excluding the security vehicles, if any).</p> <p>iii. Election meetings - Public gatherings/ rallies may be conducted subject to adherence of COVID-19 guidelines.</p> <p>iv. Concerned authorities should, in advance, identify dedicated grounds for public gathering with clearly marked entry/exit points. In all such identified grounds, the concerned authorities should, in advance, put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees.</p> <p>v. District Election Officer and District Superintendent of Police may ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by the State Disaster Management authority for public gatherings.</p> <p>vi. The political parties and candidates concerned to ensure that all COVID-19 related requirement like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled during each of these activities.</p>

Non-compliance of Instructions – Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures will be liable to proceeded against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under relevant Sections of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable and specified in different orders of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Tripura. District Election Officer should bring this to the notice of all concerned.


 Secretary
 State Election Commission.
 Tripura.