

**OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER: MANIPUR**

PRESS RELEASE

**ECI COMMITTED TO CONDUCT FREE, FAIR, ACCESSIBLE AND
INDUCEMENT FREE ELECTION: CEC**

Imphal, 8th February, 2022 (PMC): Chief Election Commissioner Shri Sushil Chandra reiterated that the Election Commission is committed to conduct the forthcoming elections in a free, fair, accessible, inclusive and inducement free manner. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) was briefing the media in a press conference held at Hotel Classic Grande, Chingmeirong today.

Shri Sushil Chandra continued that the Commission has zero tolerance towards abuse by money power and misuse of government machinery and would also not tolerate any mistakes from officers with malafide intentions and who behave in a biased manner. He further stated that the Commission had harnessed technology to facilitate empowerment of Voters to report violations of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and abuse of money power by activating the cVIGIL App. The cVIGIL is a simple, Android-based- Mobile App and a powerful tool to promptly report unlawful campaigning activities and violation of MCC within minutes of having witnessed them and without having to rush to the office of the returning officer. Users can also report complaints anonymously and action will be taken within 100 minutes.

Appreciating the State for promoting gender participation despite obvious logistics challenges, the CEC informed that at least 487 All-Women Managed Polling Stations (16.4% of the total polling stations) would be set up in the state which will have all women polling staff, also including women security personnel in many of these stations. The initiative had been taken up to provide a comfortable experience to women voters. He also informed that five Assembly Constituencies namely **13-Singjamei, 31-Thoubal, 14-Yaiskul, 15-Wangkhei, 58-Churachandpur** will have all polling stations, managed exclusively by women. Apart from these, 115 Model Polling Stations will be set up in the state. The Commission has also directed the Chief Electoral Officer and District Election Officers of all Electoral Districts to ensure availability of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) like water, electricity, toilets, ramp at all polling stations, he added.

Stressing on measures taken to make the elections truly accessible, Shri Sushil Chandra informed that appropriate facilitation including pick up/drop, wheelchairs, volunteers support and postal ballot facility are being provided to all the mapped PwD and 80+ senior citizen voters in the state. Webcasting will be arranged in 2400 out of 2968 polling stations (over 80%) being set up in the state and the remaining will be covered with offline videography to ensure smooth conduct of election, he added.

The Chief Election Commissioner further asserted that a new initiative for facilitating Absentee voters by way of Postal ballot facility, for Sr citizens, Covid-19 suspects or affected

persons and persons related to notified Essential Services, is being provided. He also added that the postal ballot facility is an optional facility and ensures total secrecy of voting and representatives of candidates will be present and the total procedure to be videographed. Regarding service voters, he stated that an Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System had been instituted and 21,935 service voters have been mapped in the state for the same. The CEC was delighted on learning that the state has **749** centenarian voters with Senapati district having the maximum number of centenarian voters i.e 110 and added that he had directed to CEO/DEOs to felicitate such centenarian voters who can act as role models for the youngsters.

Stating on the objectives taken up to further improve the voter turnout in the state, Shri Sushil Chandra informed that 300 Low Voter turnout Polling booths have been identified under Mission 300 Programme by CEO Manipur and Focussed Booth Level Action Plan had been prepared by engaging BLO, local clubs, women clubs and elderly voters. The Commission had also directed the CEO and DEOs to prioritize low voter turn-out pockets for targeted SVEEP interventions to ensure inclusive and participatory elections.

Speaking on the importance of publishing Criminal Antecedents, the CEC stressed that candidates having criminal antecedent (whether independent or sponsored by a Political Party) and Political Parties sponsoring such candidates are required to publish detailed information including their Criminal antecedents. Instructions have been issued that candidates will have to advertise thrice in newspapers and TV Channels during Campaign period. It is also mandatory for political parties to publicize in the newspaper, social media and upload on their website detailed information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases selected as candidates, along with reason for such selection, as also why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates, he added.

The CEC continued that for informed and ethical voting, the Commission had launched 'Know Your Candidate' mobile App which will have all details of the candidates including their criminal antecedents, if any. He added that voters should use the App and access all details regarding the candidates contesting in their constituencies. On Covid protocol and vaccination status, he stated that all polling officials and police personnel are fully vaccinated and those left with a second dose will be necessarily covered in the next 10 days. Precautionary doses are being administered to all eligible polling personnel.

Mentioning that conducting Inducement free & ethical elections is of prime importance for the Election Commission of India, the CEC stated that the District Officers and enforcement agency officials have been instructed to monitor expenditure sensitive Constituencies and ensure comprehensive, coordinated actions. He informed that seizures worth Rs. 97.6 crores have been made in the state including Rs 1.48 crores of cash, liquor worth Rs. 40 lakhs, Narcotics worth Rs 81.5 crores, freebies and gold worth 14.2 crores since the announcement of elections.

The Press Conference was attended by Election Commissioners Shri Rajiv Kumar, Shri Anup Chandra Pandey, Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur Shri Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy

Election Commissioners Shri Nitesh Vyas, Shri T. Sreekanth and Director General, ECI Smt. Sheyphali B. Sharan among others.

It may be mentioned that the Election Commission team led by the Chief Election Commissioner was on a two day visit to the State to review the status of poll preparedness for the forthcoming 12th General Election to Manipur Legislative Assembly, 2022. The Election Commission team met representatives of National and State Recognised Political Parties and interacted with Chief Secretary, Director General of Police, Director General, Assam Rifles and other top Officials of the State during their visit. The team also met the delegates of All Manipur Christian Organisation (AMCO) today.

NGM/LKP/CS/Coordinator (PMC)

PR No.36

08-02-2022