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**Elections
to
Village Councils
&
Local Councils
in Mizoram**

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVERS

2015



**State Election Commission
Mizoram**



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**State Election Commission, Mizoram.
Guidelines for Observers.**

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION MIZORAM

GUIDELINES FOR ELECTION OBSERVERS DEPLOYED FOR ELECTIONS TO VILLAGE COUNCILS & LOCAL COUNCILS IN MIZORAM, 2015.

1. As provided under Rule 4 of the Mizoram (Election to Village Councils) Rules, 2014 and the Mizoram Municipalities (Election to Local Councils) Rules, 2015, the Election Observers are appointed to be in a position to assist the Commission in the conduct of free and fair polls. They will be able to oversee the efficient and effective management of the electoral process at the field level. For all purposes, they will act as the 'eyes and ears of the Commission' during the period of the election and provide direct inputs to the Commission from the field as an interface with the election machinery, the candidates, parties, and electors to ensure that the acts, rules, procedures, instructions and guidelines related to elections are strictly and impartially complied with by all concerned. They should always clearly and firmly bear in mind the fact that they are only the eyes and ears (and not the mouthpiece) of the Commission. Their inputs/observations are confidential and solely for the use of the Commission and not for any other agency including media.
2. The Observers should specially take a closer look at the arrangements at the polling stations/polling booths, deployment of police forces/engagement of members of civil society, the observance of model code of conduct, in particular misuse of Government personnel, Government vehicles, Government buildings, etc. Special attention will be needed to the observance of the statutory restriction of stoppage of campaign 48 hours before closure of the poll, state of readiness and

preparedness about the availability of polling materials like statutory forms, non-statutory forms, etc. and the polling personnel to commence polling in the polling station, as scheduled. Random questions can be asked to the polling personnel during training and at polling stations to check up about their understanding of the procedure for the conduct of poll such as filling up of Ballot Paper Account, the use of Ballot papers, use of indelible ink, etc.

3. The Observers shall closely see whether the counting staff are properly geared up for the work, the arrangements for counting at the Counting Centre including security and law & order are satisfactory, the counting personnel have been adequately trained in the procedure for counting. They may visit the selected counting centres and check on the training given to the counting staff on counting procedure. The Observers may confirm that the Returning Officers (ROs) are well-conversant with the Counting procedures and that the preparations for counting have been made accordingly.
4. The action taken for issue of passes to Election Agents / Counting agents and their presence during the counting should also be observed, as also the manner in which objections are heard and finalized by Returning Officer (RO) before declaring the outcome of counting including formal speaking orders being passed by him to ensure that there is absolute objectivity, fairness and transparency in the counting process as well.
5. The Commission has requested the concerned District Election Officer/District Municipal Election Officer (DEO/DMEO) to take all necessary steps regarding maintenance of law and order and security in the run up to the elections and more particularly on poll day. The

Observers will discuss this aspect in detail with the DEO/DMEO and concerned Superintendent of Police (SP) and take stock of action taken. In case they find any major slackness or lacuna in this respect, they may immediately bring it to the notice of the Commission by personal contact and / or through separate reports. The time being short, immediate and prompt action in this regard will be essential.

6. One of the most important responsibilities of the Observers is to oversee the actual poll which takes place on the Date of Poll as approved by the Commission. Since the polling starts very early in the morning, the Observers should plan to start their work from DEO/DMEO's office sufficiently before the start of the poll. They should look for any unusual activity or lack of activity around a polling station to sense whether any electoral malpractice has vitiated or is likely to vitiate free and fair polls. They should constantly remain in touch with the Returning Officer (RO), Presiding Officer (PrO) and other officers on duty to get feedback as well as to convey anything specific for corrective action to be taken by the concerned authorities on the basis of what the Observers have actually taken note of.
7. They should also go inside the selected Polling Stations and check for the progress of polling, the compliance of prescribed procedures by the polling officials in conducting the poll, the presence of polling agents and such other matters that need verification.
8. The report of the Observer is the most important input for the Commission for taking a decision on ordering re-polls. The Observers should, therefore, be vigilant and alert about any incident or activity which might or might have vitiated the poll process so that they can send a specific report to the Commission on this matter.

9. The DEO/DMEO will ensure that all necessary arrangements are made for the Observers and the place of their stay, their phone numbers, etc are duly publicized in all the Village Councils/Local Councils area. The Observers shall double check this. They have to make themselves easily accessible to whoever wants to meet them with an election-related complaint or information.
10. The State Election Commission and DEO/DMEO will take all practicable steps to ensure that the Observers are protected against any victimisation due to their reports.
11. The Commission expects the Observers to visit their assigned District at least twice i.e. during Scrutiny of Nominations and Poll Eve/Poll Day. Accordingly, they should submit 4(four) Reports to the Commission as under:-
 - 1) **The First, District Level poll preparedness**
 - 2) **The Second, Polling Station Level preparedness on the eve of poll day**
 - 3) **The Third, after the polling is over; and**
 - 4) **The Fourth, after the declaration of results.**

All the reports must reach the Commission at the earliest by Fax/E-mail or any other fastest means of communication. The submission of Faxes should be invariably followed by sending a post copy.

12. In addition, the Observers shall keep the Commission informed of the developments during the date of poll / counting through spot reports through any other faster means of communication if there is an urgent need of intervention by the Commission.

First report of Observer- between 3rd and 5th day of last day of nomination.

OBSERVER REPORT-1

DISTRICT LEVEL POLL PREPAREDNESS REPORT (please indicate done or not done*)

Name of Observer :	
Name of District assigned :	

1	Is there any critical vacancy?	Yes	No	
2	Electoral roll published and handed over to the political parties?	Yes	No	
3	Arrangements for	Done	Not done	
	(a) Ballot Paper printing			
	(b) Procurement/transportation of Ballot Boxes.			
	(c) Providing ballot papers to voters on election duty			
4	Polling personnel list preparation			

5. Training

	Day	Month	Year
First Training Date			
Second Training Date (if any)			
6	Adequate preventive steps taken for maintenance of Law & Order		Yes No
7	Sensitive polling stations identified		Yes No
8	Arrangements for Model Code of Conduct implementation		Yes No
9	System for receiving complaints and monitoring of disposal of complaints done		Yes No
10	Communication plan done		Yes No
11	Establishment of control rooms done		Yes No
12	Arrangement for data management done		Yes No

Overall observation - (Indicate any arrangements not made, requiring improvements, overall coordination assessment) Indicate areas of concern at least three in order of priority

Signature of the Observer

Date & Time:

Place:

(This report must be received in the Commission before 1:00PM
on the eve of poll)

OBSERVER REPORT-2

POLLING STATION LEVEL POLL PREPAREDNESS REPORT

Name of Observer :	
Name of District assigned :	

1	Arrangement at the Polling Stations/Booths and Counting Centre	
2	Whether the recognized political parties have been given the same electoral rolls that are to be given to the polling parties for use at the polling station?	
3	Whether security arrangements in the polling stations; if any, were adequate?	
4	Whether public campaigning was stopped 48 hours before closure of poll and the Model Code of Conduct was followed by all contesting candidates and political parties	
5	Overall state of readiness and preparedness about the availability of polling materials like forms etc. and the polling personnel to commence polling in the various polling stations, as schedule.	

<p><u>Overall observation</u> - (Indicate any arrangements not made, requiring improvements, overall coordination assessment). Indicate areas of concern at least three in order of priority :-</p>

Signature of the Observer

Date & Time:

Place:

OBSERVER REPORT- 3

(After Polling is over)

Name of Observer :	
Name of District assigned :	
Name of Village Council/Local Council	

1	Whether the Security Forces/members of Civil Society deputed for the Polling Stations had been effectively deployed.	
2	Time of Commencement of Poll	
3	How many voters were standing at the queue at 4:00PM?	
4	What time the poll was actually closed?	
5	Details regarding -	
	a) Name of Village Council/Local Council.	
	b) Total Registered Voters	
	c) No. of Votes polled	
	d) Percentage of votes polled	
	e) Presence of election agents in the polling stations	
	f) Whether any complaint received during polls	
	g) If yes, then nature & source of complaint, follow up action and findings.	
7	If re-poll is recommended, then clearly state the reason for the re-poll and fax/send it straight to the Commission.	

Any special input:-

Signature of the Observer

Date & Time :
Place :

OBSERVER REPORT-4
(After the declaration of results)

Name of Observer :	
Name of District assigned :	

1	Whether it was ensured that the RO has received prior clearance from the DEO/DMEO/Commission (wherever applicable) before commencement of counting.	
2	When counting was going on, was it ensured that after every round, the figures from each table were being correctly posted in the Tabulation sheet on the Head Table.	
3	Whether it was ensured that the ROs announced the tally candidate-wise, taking into account objections, if any, disposed of the objections and only then posted the result of counting.	
4	Whether you observed any irregularity during the course of counting; if any, you should send your report immediately to the Commission and stop the declaration of results, pending receipt of Commission's direction.	
5	After counting is over and result declared, did you ensure that ROs had sent the Report and Result Sheet to the DEO/DMEO.	

Signature of the Observer

Date & Time:

Place:

DOs AND DON'Ts FOR OBSERVERS

DOs

1. Attend the Briefing/Training and Debriefing sessions fixed by the Commission from time to time.
2. Draw up your visit programmes sufficiently in advance and intimate to the Commission, District Election Officer/District Municipal Election Officer (DEO/DMEO) and the Returning Officer (RO) of the Constituency concerned.
3. Ensure that your visit programme is duly publicised within the Village/Local Council Constituencies allotted to you.
4. Identify villages / polling stations which might require closer attention.
5. Monitor that adequate stock of all election materials are actually available in adequate quantities.
6. Make an independent assessment of the Law and Order situation in general during the run-up to election.
7. Make a random check of as many polling stations as possible and verify them.
8. Monitor instances of violation of Model Code, ban on transfer etc.
9. Bring any development that merits immediate remedial action to the notice of the Commission / District Election Officer / District Municipal Election Officer / Returning Officer without any loss of time. Such information should not be deferred till the regular reports are submitted.
10. After sending your report by Fax/E-mail, also send your report in a closed envelope addressed to the Secretary, State Election Commission.
11. Attend meetings of the political parties called by the District Election Officer/ District Municipal Election Officer / Returning Officer, if any.
12. Speak to the local people and check posters, pamphlets etc. to arrive at an independent assessment.

13. Obtain prior permission of the Commission before leaving the headquarters.
14. Maintain proper conduct in the Village Council Constituencies as State Election Commission Observers are keenly observed.

DON'Ts

1. Do not ask for any exemption from the Briefing/Training session.
2. Do not visit to the Village Council Constituencies with your families.
3. Do not talk to the Press.
4. Do not call meetings of the political parties on your own.
5. Do not make any unreasonable demands to the District Election Officer/ District Municipal Election Officer / Asst. District Municipal Election Officer / Asst. District Election Officer / Presiding Officer /Returning Officer regarding facilities, vehicles, security etc.
6. Do not leave your headquarters without the prior written permission of the Commission.
7. Do not defer submitting reports of any development which requires immediate remedial action till submission of your regular report(s), but bring it to the Commission's notice by fastest means.

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