

We Must Vote!!!

Voter helpline will be in place on October 25

The Central Election Commission is aiming to encourage voters and draw them to the polling booths—the CEC will launch a helpline soon. This helpline will address the problems of non-issuance of voter identity cards, or names missing in the electoral rolls following the change of residence and all other poll-related issues. Under the model code of conduct, we have brought down 660 banners and hoardings, 12 cut outs, taken out more than 31,000 sq. feet of graffitis in Ahmedabad. All election officers in the district have also been told to ensure the compliance with the model code of conduct. Ahmedabad district has 19 Assembly constituencies and 4,461 polling booths. A letter seeking the sanction of 92 new polling booths in the district has also been sent to the Chief Election Commissioner.

One thousand five hundred and eighteen booths have been identified as sensitive and 233 as hyper-sensitive. The sensitive and hyper-sensitive distinction is not relevant anymore. The CEC has decided that all polling booths will now be manned by Central paramilitary forces with the local police providing back up. There has been a unique exercise afoot in Gujarat-- 'mapping of vulnerable areas' The CEC announced on October 15, 2007 that the Commission was in the process of identifying groups, people and areas where people feel vulnerable to vote. In these areas the CEC will provide all assistance, including personal security escort, if needed, so that such people can cast their vote without any fear or favour. Door-to-door collection of photos for voter identity card is going on. It will be completed by October 23 and thereafter the election helpline will be activated. The last date for filing nomination papers is November 28 and the last date for withdrawing nomination papers is December 1.

It is the Right and the Duty of every citizen above the age of 18 years to exercise his/her vote. Here are some pointers which may be helpful:

I. THE ELECTORAL ROLL:

- * If you are above 18 years and a citizen of India, you must have your name of the Electoral Roll (ER).

- * It is the basic identity requirement for an adult citizen of India
- * check immediately whether your name is on the ER (at your Taluka Office / Collector's Office / the local branch Office at a National political party).
- * for inclusion of ones name of the ER, you will have to fill Form 6.
- * ask the concerned officer on what date you should return to check whether your name is in the ER or not.
- * for any objection on inclusion of name / s, you will have to fill Form 7.
- * for correction of entries in the Electroal Rolls you will have to fill Form 8.
- * If there are problems, you must feel free to write your complaints to the Chief Electoral Official (CEO) of Gujarat and to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Delhi
- * You must retain copies of your application / letters, signed by the receiving officer, for further reference.
- * You must ensure that you have the Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC). (For the present, you may be required to provide your own Passport Photos in order to receive an EPIC).

II. Get Involved in the Process

- * get involved in choosing the kind of people you want to govern us
- * encourage / support candidates and political parties which focus on rights for all, peace between peoples and communities, transparency, accountability, human rights and justice against all crimes.
- * check out about the candidates and the parties that you wish to choose for a particular seat.
- * organise public debates / dialogues with them and assess their views / opinions / promises and whether they are sincere
- * study their Election Manifesto and the commitments made at previous elections and, based on this manifesto, check out whether the ruling party / sitting candidate has fulfilled the promises made.

- * assess their views on vulnerable groups like the tribals, dalits, women, minorities and also on critical subjects like water, education, food, security, environment, employment, agriculture, health and economic and social rights of the poor.

For instance, is there a state school run well in your area, district or village?

Is there a grievance cell at the taluka place or district place or city level so that you can take your complaints, register them and get redressal?

Is there a Public Health Clinic or hospital?

Are there clinics that train women and men on health and hygiene so that diseases like chickengunia, malaria, dengue, viral fevers, polio can be avoided?

III. ON VOTING DAY:

- * cast your vote
- * encourage all others to cast their votes too
- * vote for a party / individual that is not corrupt, criminal, casteist and / or that spreads division and hatred between peoples and communities
- * if you notice any bogus voting, rigging or booth capturing, bring it to the notice of the police / election officers immediately and preferably in writing.

IV. AFTER ELECTIONS :

- * find out the details of your elected representative (name, address, telephone / fax nos., email, etc.
- * arrange that organisations, villages / groups invite the person to share his / her views about the area for the next five years.
- * ensure that you keep in touch with him / her constantly
- * remember that they have budgetary allocations for their constituency; find out for what programmes the money is being utilized.
- * insist that your views / concerns are voiced in the assembly / parliament
- * remind the representative that as a voter you have a right to recall, or to ask for his / her resignation.

V. REGARDING CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS:

- * any concern / complaint in the context of the electoral rolls must be sent in writing (registered post / courier) immediately to : The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Election Commission, General Administration Department, Block No. 7, II Floor, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar 382 010 [Tel.: (079) 23250316 / 23250318 Fax: (079) 23250317] email: ceo_gujarat@eci.gov.in ; www.ceogujarat.nic.in
- * serious concerns like the disenfranchisement of a whole community / village must also be brought to the notice of : The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi 110 001 [Tel.: (011) 23717391 – 98 Fax: (011) 23713412 email: feedback@eci.gov.in]
- * the above two may also be informed about any irregularities regarding the elections.
- * The Election Commission of India also has a website : www.eci.gov.in
Please visit it very specially "A GUIDE FOR VOTERS"
- * use "The Right to Information Act" – to get essential information

CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE has been at the forefront of the battle for the victim survivors of the carnage of 2002.

CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, through its secretary Teesta Setalvad would be happy to

- Assist you in addressing the problem
- Provide you with legal advise and help
- Send out high profile independent teams to investigate
- Receive press clippings complaints and evidence and help you draft complaints and process them
- Assist you in your struggle for Justice, and Peace and Harmony

Contact:

Citizens for Justice and Peace, Rais Khan Pathan, Teesta Setalvad
Ahmedabad: 32, 2nd Floor, Opp. Vishwabharati School, Shahpur, Mill
Compound, Ahmedabad – 380 001. Ph: Tel/Fax: 079-25511887.

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