

New rules by Election Commission for polling agents

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In news: Recently, Election Commission of India revised its rules with respect to polling agents

What are the new rules?

According to the new regulations, a political party can now nominate a polling agent for any booth within the assembly segment he/she is a voter from. Earlier, the polling agent had to be a voter of the booth or an adjoining booth that he/she is working at.

This new norm will help the political parties to appoint one polling agent to each booth. It will help any political party to appoint a polling agent amid the COVID-19 pandemic since getting one agent at this hour may be difficult

Polling agent

Polling agent is a person appointed as a representative of a political party as it is not possible for a candidate to be physically present at every polling booth on the day of the elections. Therefore, the Election Commission allows a candidate to appoint a polling agent who keeps an eye on the voting process.

Role of polling agent

- A polling agent should be familiar with the rules and procedures for conducting elections using EVMs and VVPATs, as well as how these machines operate, according to the Election Commission's rules.
- Therefore, the polling agent attends the demonstrations arranged by the Returning Officer, where the functioning and operation of these machines are explained.

- The polling agents play a very important role in the actual conduct of the poll, which is the most vital part of the entire election process.
- The task of the Presiding Officer and the Polling Officers at the polling station will be made easy and smooth if the polling agents discharge their duties with a spirit of co-operation. For this purpose, they should know their functions clearly and carry them out intelligently under the law

Who is not allowed to be a polling agent?

Those holding government positions and those who have been given security cover at the state's expense, including Ministers, are not allowed to be polling agents.

Appointment of polling agents

According to earlier rules, polling agents had to be voters of the same polling stations or at least the neighbouring polling stations of the booth where she has been posted at.

Criticism of the new rule

The Trinamool Congress has alleged that the poll body has formulated the new rule to favour the BJP.

It is also said that the new instructions were formed with "mala fide intentions".

Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.