

New Rules for Postal Ballot

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In News

The Election Commission has announced that it will allow **those above the age of 65 as well as those under home or institutional quarantine to vote using postal ballots** during the Bihar elections. A restricted set of voters can exercise postal voting. Through this facility, a voter can **cast her vote remotely** by recording her preference on the ballot paper and sending it back to the election officer before counting.

More About the New Rules

- **Members of the armed forces** like the Army, Navy and Air Force, **members of the armed police force of a state** (serving outside the state), **government employees posted outside India and their spouses** are entitled to vote only by post. In other words, they can't vote in person.
- Voters under **preventive detention** can also vote only by post.
- **Special voters such as the President of India, Vice President, Governors, Union Cabinet ministers, Speaker of the House and government officers on poll duty** have the option to vote by post. But they have to apply through a prescribed form to avail this facility.
- Recently, the Law Ministry, at the Election Commission's behest, introduced a new category of **absentee voters**, who can now also opt for postal voting. These are voters employed in essential services and unable to cast their vote due to their service conditions.
- Currently, officials of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, Northern Railway (Passenger and Freight) Services and media persons are notified as absentee voters.

Working of Postal Ballot

- The **Returning Officer is supposed to print ballot papers within 24 hours of the last date of nomination withdrawal and dispatch them within a day.** This is done so that the ballot papers reach the concerned voter well before the polling date and she has enough time to send it back before the counting day.
- Postal ballot papers for members of the Armed Forces are sent through their record offices.
- For members of the armed police force of a state (serving outside the state), government employees posted outside India and their spouses, the ballot paper can be sent through post or electronically.
- For remaining categories ballot papers can be delivered personally or through post.
- After receiving it, the **voter can mark her preference with a tick mark or cross mark** against the candidate's name.
- They also have to fill up a **duly attested declaration** to the effect that they have marked the ballot paper.
- The ballot paper and the declaration are then placed in a sealed cover and sent back to the Returning Officer **before the time fixed for the commencement of counting of votes.**