

COUNTING GUIDELINES FOR THREE TIER PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS

I. Counting Venue

- (a) It is expected that the counting venue in each Block has already been identified. Such venue shall be a secured place with relatively easy accessibility. The main building should have a large front space for parking vehicles and also for a large number of people waiting. The entire premises should preferably be surrounded by a compound wall so that security arrangements may be made satisfactorily. Arrangements for drinking water and toilet facilities are necessary on the site. Counting Centre & RC at same venue
- (b) Counting centre should preferably be used as a distribution centre and reception centre as well. However, if for some compelling reasons, distribution centre is located somewhere else, the reception centre and the counting centre should be at the same place. Preferably on same building as DC
- (c) The buildings where counting shall be held should have a few large and small rooms for use as counting halls and strong room or rooms for storing the polled ballot boxes. The counting halls should preferably have passage for easy entry and exit for a large number of people without disturbing other activities in the counting process like taking polled boxes from strong room to the counting hall. Venue Infrastructure
- (d) Polled ballot boxes alongwith Ballot Paper Account, Paper Seal Account, Presiding Officer's Declarations, and any other paper that may be considered necessary shall be kept in the strong room or rooms. Other papers that may be required for post poll scrutiny may be kept in a separate strong room. In a centre there may be one to three strong rooms for polled ballot boxes depending on availability, suitability from security angle, closeness to counting hall and other factors. If all boxes are kept in one room, the sequential arrangement shall be such that boxes may be brought out easily in the order of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad constituencies. If polled boxes of more than one tier are kept in one room, they may be kept in same sequential order so that there is no mix up. Clear record of boxes kept in any strong room shall be maintained. Strong Room(s)
- (e) After polled boxes and other records are put inside, strong room(s) shall remain under lock & key and sealed by the Returning Officer who will also invite the candidates or their election agents present to put their seals. The room/ rooms shall also be under constant vigil of the security guard who will maintain a log-book for noting the time and reason for opening and closing of the strong room. If it is necessary for the Returning Officer to open the room (like putting polled boxes after re-poll if any, on such dates as may be fixed by the Commission), the candidates shall be given advance intimation and the doors shall be opened and closed in presence of such candidates who may remain present and they should be invited

to put their seals again on the closed lock.

- (f) The Panchayat Returning Officer (RO) shall put one competent officer in charge of the strong room. If there are more rooms than one, more officers may be given the charge. He shall place the boxes and records in proper order and monitor the movement of boxes from strong room to the counting hall to ensure that no wrong box goes to any counting table. A log book is to be maintained for each of the strong rooms and records of each opening and closing of the strong rooms and every time anything is kept inside or taken out of the said rooms shall have to be recorded in the said log books. Officer in-Charge, Strong Room
- (g) Care should be taken to post security guards and the fire brigade (or other arrangements for extinguishing fire) as precaution against any mishap. A medical team should also be set up. Security, Fire Fighting Arrangements & Medical Team

II. Security arrangements at counting venue prior to counting

- (a) The counting venue shall come under round the clock surveillance of the security staff with effect from the night before the date of counting. No one shall be allowed to enter the premises before the counting day except without express permission of the Returning Officer under pressing circumstances. Night before
- (b) The candidates have been allowed, under the provisions of the Act, to follow the vehicle which will carry the polled ballot boxes and other materials from polling station to the Reception-centre-cum-counting –venue. The candidates have also been allowed to keep regular watch over the sealed doors of the strong room either by himself or his election agent or through one or more counting agent specially appointed for the purpose. It is stated that not more than one person on behalf of one candidate shall be allowed to stay at any point of time. However, if they so desire, the candidates or the agents may be allowed to have a look at the sealed door from a little distance without touching the door or the lock to find whether the seal is unbroken, at an interval of every two hours. Unless there is a suitable structure within the premises but outside the main building, a small temporary covered structure with a few pieces of furniture (a table & chairs) for the candidates and /or their agents may be erected. Facilities for candidates for watching transit & storage of polled ballot boxes
- (c) The counting halls shall be opened and the seal on the locks of the strong room or rooms shall be broken about one and half hours before the counting starts. The candidates shall be intimated to remain present at the appointed hour. The seals of the locks shall be broken and the doors opened by the Returning Officer in presence of the candidates attending at the appointed hour. Opening of Strong Room before counting
- (d) Entries to the counting premises shall be regulated by the security personnel under the direction of the Returning Officer. Anyone entering or leaving the premises shall be required to display Restrictions for entry

or show his card to the security personnel on duty. No one shall be allowed to enter the premises until a little before the appointed time. No one shall also be allowed to loiter in the counting hall or on the ground of the premises who has no business or whose business has been over. Any unusual gathering in or around the premises or just outside the gate should not be allowed.

III. Counting Hall

- (a) Counting halls or rooms shall be situated as near to the strong room as possible and under the same roof with the strong room. If anywhere the counting hall(s) and the strong room do not share the same roof; a temporary, well-protected covered passageway may be erected for movement of polled ballot boxes. Easy and quick movement of polled ballot boxes from the strong room to the counting hall is essential and should be ensured. Location of counting hall(s) vis-à-vis strong room
- (b) A counting hall shall generally have not more than 20 (twenty) counting tables in addition to the table for the Returning Officer. Additional counting tables, if considered necessary, may be placed in the hall after obtaining prior approval of the Commission. At any counting table, there shall be sitting arrangement for (i) one Counting Officer and (ii) 2 (two) Counting Assistants. In addition, a little away from the table – at a viewing distance but beyond reach – by the side of wall, there shall be sitting arrangement for one Counting Agent for each contesting candidate, Election Agent or candidate (one person at any point of time). Number of tables in a hall may be determined taking into consideration the aforesaid sitting accommodation, size of the room, ventilation and other factors involved. Counting Hall tables arrangement
- The Table of the Returning Officer, preferably on a raised platform, shall be chaired by the Returning Officer or an Assistant Returning Officer authorized by the Returning Officer. He shall be provided two or three Assistants (of whom one will be a tabulator) and Group D employees.
- (c) There is no limitation imposed on the number of counting halls in a venue. Such number shall primarily depend on the number of rooms/ halls available as also the Counting Officer and Counting assistants. No. of Counting Halls
- (d) Efforts should, however, be made to set up such number of counting tables in all the halls taken together as may make counting relating to each tier completed in two rounds. This means that the number of tables in a given counting venue shall be at least half of the number of polling stations in the block. A Returning Officer may however complete counting in less than 2 rounds by increasing the number of halls. Rounds
- (e) However, situation as obtained in some of the counting centres may not permit completion of counting of one tier in two rounds. In such cases, arrangements shall be made to complete the counting

positively in 3 (three) rounds. It is emphasized that under no circumstances, counting for one tier in any counting centre shall go beyond 3 (three) rounds. If such possibility occurs, the District Panchayat Election Officer is requested to bring the matter to the notice of the Commission and obtain orders.

- (f) There may be occasions when counting with respect to one tier will be completed in 2.5 (two & half) rounds or thereabout having half of the tables unoccupied. In such cases, while last leg of counting of the forerunning tier is being completed in a few tables or halls counting in respect of next tier may be taken up simultaneously. This will avoid the situation of available manpower being kept idle and will not waste time. It is necessary to be careful that ballot papers of two tiers do not get mixed up at any stage. It may be advisable to arrange so that two types of ballot papers do not go in the same hall at a particular time. Since halls are likely to be of different sizes with different number of tables, it may be possible to work out such arrangement. The entire arrangement for supply of boxes to the table shall be planned, monitored and supervised at every stage. The Hall-in-Charge (RO or ARO) shall always regulate flow of boxes to the hall.

IV. Additional Arrangements

- (a) It is considered necessary to keep the Counting Officers and staff entirely separated from the Counting Agents. For this purpose, a row of chicken-meshwork of about 6' (six feet) height between the counting table and the Counting Agents shall be the best possible solution. Such chicken-meshwork shall be erected where possible. If, however, it is not possible to erect chicken-meshwork, a barricade of same height by bamboo poles should be erected for such separation. No counting agents shall be allowed to come around the barricade to the other side of the table.
- (b) There shall be no requirement of pigeon-holes at the table of the RO/ ARO and no doubtful ballot papers shall come from the counting table. Any question of doubt about the ballot papers shall be settled at the counting table itself. If considered necessary, the RO or ARO in-charge present in the counting hall shall go down to the counting table and settle the dispute then and there.

Separated sitting
space for
Counting
Personnel &
Counting Agents

V. Counting Personnel

- (a) One Counting Officer and two Counting Assistants shall be appointed for each table at the Counting hall. Any person eligible for appointment as Presiding Officer may also be appointed as Counting Officer. Anyone eligible for appointment as 1st or 2nd Polling Officer may also be appointed as Counting Assistant. The Counting Officer and Counting Assistants shall preferably be Government employees. However, in case of non-availability, Counting Assistants

Scale

may be recruited from Semi-Govt. offices. Arrangements may be made for keeping a 10% reserved personnel. District Panchayat Election Officer may take steps for a one day training of Counting personnel.

- (b) The Counting Personnel shall be given a thorough training on all aspects of the counting process by the Panchayat Returning Officer. Training

VI. Candidates

- (a) All entries to the counting premises shall be regulated by entry card to be issued by the Returning Officer or the Assistant Returning Officer authorised for the purpose. Their specimen signatures should be made available to the officer or officers in charge of security for their familiarization with the signature. Entry into premises
- (b) Cards for the Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Counting Officers, Counting Assistants and other officers and employees entrusted with various duties relating to counting as may be issued, may be made distinctly different from the cards issued to the candidates or their counting agents. Entry Cards
- (c) Since counting of votes of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti or Zilla Parishad constituencies shall be taken up in phases in different hours of the day, it will be convenient to issue cards of different colours for different times. In each card for the counting agents, hall No. and Table No. should be clearly specified. Time for admission into the counting premises should also be clearly printed on the card for each tier separately. This procedure may avoid unnecessary crowding in front of the counting centre. Different times of admission for different tiers
- (d) For Gram Panchayat there is no requirement of Counting Agents as one constituency consists of one polling station and the candidate or election agent will seat at the counting table at the place designated for Counting Agent. For Gram Panchayat the ballots of auxiliary polling station should be counted at the same table where the ballots for the main / original polling station. Scale of Election Agents: GP
- (e) A candidate for the Panchayat Samiti constituency shall be allowed to have one counting agent for each table assigned to count ballot papers for his constituency. The cards shall specify in each case the hall No. and the table No. There will be no additional counting agent for the Returning Officer's table in the hall. The candidate or his election agent shall attend the Returning Officer's table. Scale of Election Agents: PS
- (f) A candidate for the Zilla Parishad may appoint one counting agent for each counting table where counting of ballot papers of his constituency will be taken up. In addition, he may appoint one additional counting agent for Returning Officer's table at each hall Scale of Election Agents: ZP

where any table has been assigned for counting ballot papers for his constituency. In each case, the hall No. and the table No. shall be clearly specified. In addition, the candidate and the election agent may be allowed to enter the hall where ballot papers of his constituency are being counted.

VII. Arrangements at Counting Table

- (a) Every counting hall and every table at a counting hall shall be serially numbered and prominently displayed at the entrance of the hall and on either side of the table. Numbering of halls and tables
- (b) Each table and also the Returning Officer's table shall be supplied with the following articles of stationery : Stationeries at table
- (i) a knife or razor blade;
 - (ii) a dot pen;
 - (iii) a pencil;
 - (iv) two sheets of paper;
 - (v) a sharp needle;
 - (vi) two/three wet sponge;
 - (vii) twine ball and/or rubber band;
 - (viii) two or three improvised paper weight (small pieces of stone);
 - (ix) rejection stamp for ballot papers;
 - (x) any other item that the District Panchayat Election Officer or the Returning Officer may consider necessary;
 - (xi) a few cardboard boxes/pigeon holes of different sizes;
 - (xii) "Rejected" rubber stamp.
- (c) Each table including the Returning Officer's table shall also be supplied with the required forms, viz, counting sheets, result sheets and certificates of election.

VIII. Counting Sequence

- (a) Counting of votes shall begin on the date fixed by the Commission at 8-00 AM sharp. Counting shall be continuous and shall not be postponed or deferred until counting including recount, if any, in respect of all 3 (three) or any tier(s) is completed. There shall be tier-wise counting and counting of one tier shall have to be completed before counting of next tier is taken up. Time
- (b) The sequence of counting shall be in the order as shown below: Sequence
- (i) Gram Panchayat
 - (ii) Panchayat Samiti
 - (iii) Zilla Parishad
- Following the aforesaid sequence, a particular counting table shall receive polled box of a pre-fixed polling station for Gram Panchayat first, for Panchayat Samiti second and for Zilla Parishad

next. For each tier, the order in which the polled boxes (of the polling stations) shall be sent to a particular counting table shall be worked out carefully earlier. This allocation for each tier shall be declared in the hall before start of counting of that tier and this allocation for each table shall be pasted on that counting table.

IX. Counting Process

A. Initial Steps

- (a) All Counting Personnel, candidates and their agents should take their seats at least half an hour before counting. Before commencement
- Before commencement of counting, the Returning Officer or the Assistant Returning Officer-in-charge shall explain the counting process in brief, ask everybody to maintain discipline during the entire process and also announce the sequence of polled ballot boxes to be counted at each table.
- (b) Then Returning Officer or the Assistant Returning Officer-in-charge shall read out and explain the provisions of Section 108 of the West Bengal Panchayat Elections Act, 2003 to the persons present in the hall. Section 108
- (c) The auxiliary booths may be counted at a separate table adjoining the main one i.e. counting for main/ original booth and auxiliary will have to be kept in the same round and in the same room at the adjacent tables. The counting supervisor of the booth will hand over the counting sheet to the supervisor of the main table and the latter will prepare a consolidated result sheet of the Gram Panchayat Constituency for submission to RO or ARO. Auxiliary booth
- (d) The votes cast by persons on election duty (herein after referred to as ED votes) before the Returning Officer shall not *repeat* not be sent to the polling station. Those will be retained by the Returning Officer for opening on the day of counting. Election Duty votes (ED votes)

B. Counting of Election Duty Votes

- (a) A hall wise and constituency-wise list showing numbers of ED votes shall be prepared beforehand for each tier separately. Copies of such lists shall be hung up by the side of the entrance of hall, just before counting of such constituencies are taken up in the hall. ED votes: List to be displayed
- (b) Counting of ED votes for any tier shall be taken up first before ballot boxes for that tier are opened for counting. ED votes: To be counted first
- (c) ED votes cast in a Gram Panchayat or Panchayat Samiti constituency shall be counted at the same hall where ballot papers of that constituency or of majority polling stations of that constituency, are being counted. ED votes: Allocating to halls
- (d) ED votes for the Gram Panchayat constituencies shall be ED votes: Gram

supplied to the Counting Officer concerned at the counting table for counting before opening the polled ballot box or boxes. In other words, the ED votes will be counted first and then entered in the relevant result sheet in appropriate columns.

Panchayat

- (e) ED votes for Panchayat Samiti constituencies shall be counted by the RO / ARO at his table before commencement of counting of votes in the polled ballot boxes. After counting the RO/ ARO shall enter the figures in the appropriate columns in the result sheet.
- (f) For a Zilla Parishad constituency, ED votes shall be counted by the Block Development Officer in the capacity of Assistant Returning Officer at a pre-appointed place within the counting centre. Following the actual counting candidate-wise, the votes secured shall be recorded in Form 19.
- (g) After completion of counting of ED votes all the valid ballot papers and all the rejected ballot papers shall be bundled and kept together in a packet separately for each tier in a sealed cover with the seal of Returning Officer. The candidates, election agents or counting agents may also affix their seals thereon on the packets. The sealed packets shall be recorded the name of constituency, the date of counting and the brief description of the contents.

ED votes:
Panchayat Samiti

ED votes: Zilla
Parishad

ED votes:
Sealing

C. Counting of Ballots in Polled Ballot Boxes

- (a) All polled ballot papers lodged in sealed boxes shall be counted finally at the counting table without sending any ballot paper for rejection by the ARO.
- (b) When sealed ballot box(s) are received at the table as per pre-arranged allocation, Counting Officer shall check and show to all counting agents that the seals including the paper seal are intact and not tampered with. It may be noted that for Gram Panchayat Med type boxes are used for which paper seals are not required. However for the other tiers boxes will have paper seals.
- With the Box ballot paper account and paper seal account (except in case of Gram Panchayat) shall come to the counting table and Presiding Officer's declaration shall come to RO's table.
- (c) On opening the ballot box or boxes, the ballot papers shall first be sorted out. If there is any ballot paper / papers of any other tier mixed up in it, such ballot papers of other tiers shall be kept in a separate bundle in a sealed packet and on the packet so sealed shall be recorded the name of the specific tier of the Panchayat Body. After segregating theses ballots, the main counting of votes may start for that specific tier of Panchayat constituencies. For this, there should be a few paper cartons or Pigeon Holes on each table. When sorting is completed, the ballot papers in the stack for each candidate shall be made into bundles of 25 or 50. With bundles of 25 or 50 ballot papers

Counting:
Ballots in polled
ballot boxes

Ballot boxes,
ballot paper
account, paper
seal account &
PrO's Diary

Bundles of 25/
50 candidate-
wise

there is likely to be a shorter bundle whose number should be written in a small slip of paper and kept with the bundle. Thus the number of votes secured by each candidate in respect of that ballot box shall be ascertained.

- (d) While sorting the ballot papers candidate-wise and then making bundles of 25 ballot papers, the Counting Officer and the Counting Assistant shall carefully check whether (i) the arrow cross mark on the ballot paper is rightly placed against that candidate and (ii) the ballot paper and the vote cast is valid and not subject to rejection . Valid votes

D. Rejections

- (a) It may be noted that as per Rule 88 of the West Bengal Panchayat Elections Rules, 2006 a ballot paper shall be rejected only when – Grounds for rejection

- (i) if it bears any mark or writing by which the elector can be identified, or
- (ii) there is no mark at all or the mark is made otherwise than with the instruments supplied for the purpose, or
- (iii) if votes are given on it in favour of more candidates than the number of candidates to be elected , or
- (iv) the ballot paper is mutilated beyond recognition , or
- (v) the ballot paper is not genuine or it is spurious, or
- (vi) the mark is in blank area, i.e., at an area not within the panel assigned to any candidate, i.e. at the back side of ballot paper or shaded area, or
- (vii) if it is found in a ballot box other than the ballot box in which it should have been inserted, or
- (viii) If it does not bear both the mark and the signature which it should have borne under the provision of sub-rule (3) of rule 57.

- (b) All ballot papers shall be carefully checked in the light of the aforesaid ground and may be rejected where necessary. However, every rejection should be carefully weighed before decision is taken. Careful scrutiny

- (c) However, it is further to state that, the ballot papers shall not be rejected on the ground that the mark indicating the vote is indistinct or made more than once, if the intension that the vote shall be for a particular candidate clearly appears from the manner the paper is marked and where a Counting Officer is satisfied that any such defect as in mentioned in clause (viii) has been caused by any mistake or failure on the part of the Presiding Officer or any Polling Officer the ballot paper shall not be rejected merely on the ground of such defect.

- (d) Before rejecting any ballot paper, the Counting Officer shall allow the candidate or his election agent, and each counting agent present a reasonable opportunity to inspect the ballot paper but shall not allow him to handle it or any other ballot paper.

The Counting Officer shall decide on such matters but subject to overall superintendence and control of the ARO in-charge or the RO,

- (e) Every rejected ballot paper shall bear an order of rejection containing its ground. For this purpose, the rubber stamp containing the word "Rejected" with the reasons as given below may be prepared. The stamps should be supplied to all counting tables and the RO/ ARO's table.

Rejection:
marking with
reasons

| Rejected | |
|--|--------------------|
| i) | No Marking |
| ii) | Mark on Blank Area |
| iii) | Multiple Voting |
| iv) | Voter Identifiable |
| v) | Mutilated |
| vi) | Not Genuine |
| vii) | Other Reasons |
| Returning Officer/ Counting Officer | |

E. Counting in Case of a Double Member GP Constituency

- (a) In respect of double member Gram Panchayat constituency, the procedure in general as described in paragraph 3.4.0, shall apply. The points of differences are stated below :
- a. Two separate Form 19A and Form 21 – one for each candidate – shall be used by the Counting Officer.
 - b. For such constituencies, continuation of Form 19A shall be supplied to the related counting table and two separate sets of continuation sheets shall be used by the Counting Officer with the help of two Counting Assistants. If necessary, ARO in-charge may arrange for one more Counting assistant from reserved personnel.
 - c. Each ballot paper shall be taken up and the Counting Officer shall read out the names of candidate in whose favour the vote is cast against each seat. The vote shall be recorded against each candidate by the Counting Assistant concerned by putting 1(one) mark in the column of the candidate by putting the mark as stated one below the other. After putting 1(one) mark 4(four) times, for the next vote secured, a cross mark(X) shall be given. This shall be done for the convenience of totaling the number of votes secured by a candidate. The process shall go on upto the last ballot paper. In case of a ballot paper where a valid vote has been cast in favour of a candidate whereas no vote has been cast against any candidate in the other column or if vote cast is rejected for any of the grounds specified, the valid vote cast shall be recorded against the candidate concerned and no marking shall be made for the other seat. The order or rejection shall be recorded (rubber stamp provided may be used) by mentioning clearly "for seat No.....". Finally, the total No. of votes secured by each candidate against each seat shall be totaled and recorded in Form 19A and then in Form 21

separately for each seat. The declaration and issue of certificate of Election shall be handed over to the ARO in-charge in the hall for record and sealing.

- (b) For the purpose of implementing this procedure, the following steps shall have to be taken:
 - a. counting sheets in Form 19A in sufficient number should be supplied to the related table.
 - b. If possible, one additional Counting Assistant may be provided at the table.

F. Counting Sheet

- (a) When number of candidate-wise ballot papers and number of rejected ballot papers are ascertained, the counting officer shall check whether the total number of ballot papers actually found by him in the box and shown in the ballot paper account (Form 18) to be found in the box match. Tallying figures
- (b) If these two figures match, the counting officer shall sign part II of the ballot paper account (Form 18) with suitable entries.
- (c) If the two figures do not match and the difference is not more than five and the difference between the vote secured by the leading candidate and that by his nearest rival is more than discrepancy, he will verify the figures of ballot papers or if any ballot paper has been left out either in the box or elsewhere or whether the figures in the ballot paper account are correct in order to reconcile the discrepancy. After this exercise and as much of reconciliation of discrepancy, the counting officer shall sign suitable entries.
- (d) If the two figures do not match and the difference is not more than five but the difference between the vote secured by the leading candidate and that by his nearest rival is less than the discrepancy, he will first try to reconcile the discrepancy in the manner in subparagraph (c). If the discrepancy persists, he will bring the matter to the notice of the ARO in-charge of the counting hall. The ARO shall once again check up to satisfy himself that the figures in the ballot paper account and also those prepared by the counting officer are correct. If he, in consultation with the Returning Officer and examination of the declaration of the Presiding Officer, reaches the conclusion that the only explanation for discrepancy can be that a few voters had, with some deliberate motive or other-wise, left the polling stations, during some crowded moments without inserting the ballot paper in the box and that the logical step is to accept the figures as found after opening the box, he will then advise the Counting Officer to accept the figures as found by him and proceed accordingly.

- (e) If the discrepancy is more than five, the Counting Officer shall, irrespective of whether the difference between two leading candidates is higher or lower than the discrepancy, try to reconcile the discrepancy in the manner as stated in sub-paragraph (c). If the discrepancy persists, he shall bring the matters to the attention of the APRO who shall examine the matter in the manner as stated in sub-paragraph (d).

If he, in consultation with the RO, is satisfied that the process involved was not vitiated at any stage and that the ballot papers found in the box or boxes can be relied upon for arriving at the result, he shall direct the Counting Officer to accept the figures as found by him and proceed accordingly.

- (f) If on any of the occasions referred to in sub-paragraph (d) or sub-paragraph (e), the RO thinks that there is strong likelihood that there has some corrupt practice vitiating the election practice, he shall ask the Counting Officer to prepare the Result Sheet on the basis of ballot papers found by him. After the result sheets of all Counting tables of the constituency are finally prepared, the RO shall withhold declaration of result and refer the matter to the Commission through the District Panchayat Election Officer & District Magistrate, as quickly as possible within the same day.

- (g) After completion of the exercise stated in paragraph (e) and unless directed by the RO in the matters referred in sub-paragraph (f) of the Counting Sheet in Form 20A and the signed copy of the Counting Sheet, candidate-wise and rejected bundles of ballot papers, copy of ballot paper account and paper seal account, if any, shall be placed at the table of the RO/ ARO.

- (h) The ARO on getting the counting sheet shall examine it vis-à-vis ballot paper account and other papers and on being satisfied that the counting process is in order, shall get the figures in the counting sheet tabulated in the Result Sheet in Form 22.

G. Re-Counting of Votes

- (e) Recounting cannot be demanded by a candidate merely because he has been defeated. He will have to specify reason and also specify the particular round or rounds or particular polling station or any specific part thereof for which recounting is demanded. It is also mentioned that in case of Gram Panchayat, recounting may be demanded after the votes secured by the candidates and other particulars are inserted in Form 19A and declared by the Counting Officer and in case of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad, recounting may be demanded at the time of preparation of Counting Sheet in Form 20. No demand can be made after the Result Sheet is completed and signed by the Counting Officer or the Returning Officer as the case may be.

- (f) The provisions under Rule 106 of the West Bengal Panchayat Rule 106

(Election) Rules shall be applicable mutatis mutandis for considering and deciding on any demand for recounting. A copy of the said rule may be given to the Counting Officers at the time of training or later at the counting table.

H. Results

- (a) Results Sheets in Form 22 may come from different tables. They may be assigned consecutive serial nos. and then a finally compiled Result Sheet may be prepared by changing by hand the column for Polling Station as a column for sheet No. Result sheet
- (b) During the process of counting of votes in connection with Form 19A, 20
 - a. For a Gram Panchayat constituency, the counting officer shall count all the valid votes in the ballot box and record the total number thereof in counting sheet in Form 19A and announce the same, and
 - b. For a Panchayat Samiti or Zilla Parishad constituency, the counting officer shall count all the valid votes in the ballot box and record the total number thereof in counting sheets in Form 20 and announce the same.
 - c. After the counting of all ballot papers contained in ballot boxes used at the polling station have been completed, the counting officers shall make the entries in the result sheet in Form 21 in respect of Gram Panchayat Election and announce the same where a GP constituency has been formed amalgamating two assembly parts, counting shall be carried on in two tables for the said parts. However, the final result may be compiled and declared from the first table (such as from the table counting 25/1 etc.). Result sheet: Form 21
- (c) Declaration of results in Form 23 and the certificate of Election in Form 24 shall also be signed, declared & handed over to the candidate on acknowledgement of receipt by the Counting Officer at the table. In case of any difficulty, he may however contact the A.R.O. in-charge. Declaration of Result & Certificate of Election
- (d) After issue of certificate of Election, Counting Officer shall hand over all papers to the ARO in-charge of the hall for recording and sealing.
- (e) Apart from declaration by the Counting Officer at the table when the counting sheet is completed, the A.R.O in-charge of the hall may declare the position after each round of counting on the basis of Result Sheet completed and signed.
- (f) The Returning Officer may also announce the names of winning candidates and other particulars from time to time.

X. Sealing

- (a) The Panchayat Returning Officer, after completing the Counting of votes in a particular tier viz. Gram Panchayat Constituencies, Panchayat Samiti Constituencies and Zilla Parishad Constituencies Rules 93 & 113

shall make an arrangement for sealing all the papers relating to election specified in rule 93 and 113 of the West Bengal Panchayat (Election) Rules, 1974 for keeping it in his custody the following:


- (b) (i) The packets of unused ballot papers with counterfoils attached there to; Papers to be sealed
- (ii) The packets of used ballot papers whether valid, tendered or rejected;
- (iii) The packets of the counterfoils of used ballot papers;
- (iv) The packets of the marked copies of electoral rolls;
- (c) These packets will be sealed by RO by his own seal and the secret seal of the Commission immediately after counting of votes is over. The Panchayat Returning Officer for Gram Panchayat & Panchayat Samiti constituencies may use the secret seal as allotted to him for all the GP/ PS constituencies under his control. For the Zilla Parishad Constituencies the secret seal allotted to the Panchayat Returning Officer for Zilla Parishad Constituencies may be used at the time of sealing the election papers relating to Zilla Parishad Constituencies within his jurisdiction, or with the secret seal allotted to the RO for GP/ PS Constituencies, being an Assistant Panchayat Returning Officer for ZP Constituencies. In addition to these, if any of the candidates, their election agents and counting agents so desires, may affix his seals thereon. Seal of RO & Secret seal
- (d) While in the custody of the RO the aforementioned packets shall not be opened and their contents shall not be inspected by or produced before any person or authority except under orders of a competent court. Papers to be kept in custody
- (e) The Panchayat Returning Officer should point out to the candidates or their election agents present that it is in their own interest to affix their seals. They may also be permitted to note the number of the Commission's secret seal used. All these packets specified in preceding sub-paragraph (b) should be separated from the rest of the papers relating to the election to the constituencies concerned and kept in separate steel trunks. Candidates, their agents may note number of secret seal(s)
Storing in steel trunks
- (f) Apart from these the Panchayat Returning Officer shall make into separate packets of the Counting Sheets the result sheets and the declaration sheets in respect of Gram Panchayat election. Each such packet shall also be sealed with the seals of RO. and with the seal either of the candidate or of his election agent or of his Counting Agent who may be present at the counting centre and willing to affix his seal thereon. Other papers to be sealed with seal of RO
- (g) The sealed packets specified in sub-paragraph (F) should also be Storing in steel

kept in separate steel Trunks.

trunks

- (h) The RO should put a responsible Officer-in-charge for the supervision of the actual sealing of these packets as there is a possibility to mix up the election papers of other constituencies or categories; O/C Sealing
- (i) On each such trunk shall be pasted a piece of paper indicating the contents thereof specifying the constituency(s). Paper to be pasted indicating contents
- (j) Each steel trunk shall be locked properly. The lock shall also be sealed with the secret seal of the Commission Locking of trunks
- (k) The lock of such trunks will be sealed with the keys by the seal of the RO. Sealing of sealed trunks
- (l) After the packets sealed with the secret seal of the Commission, the secret seal should be put into a separate packet which should be sealed with the seal of the RO. Such candidates, their election agents or Counting Agents, as may desire to affix their seals thereon may also affix their seals on the packet. Thereafter the packet containing the secret seal of the Commission shall be returned immediately to the Commission by special messenger. The seals should reach the Commission without fail within 48 hours of the end of counting process. Sealing of Secret Seal & returning it to the Commission

By Order of the
State Election Commissioner
West Bengal State Election Commission

 12/5/18

Secretary
West Bengal State Election Commission