

28 October 2019: PIB Summary & Analysis

Postal ballot facilities for Absentee voters

Context:

Postal ballot facilities for absentee voters of essential services, senior citizens of more than 80 years and marked PwD electors.

Details:

- The [Election Commission of India](#) has started working on detailed guidelines to facilitate the process of postal ballot paper for absentee voters of essential services, senior citizens of more than 80 years and marked (Persons with Disabilities) PwD electors.
- These guidelines will include the identification of such voters, the manner of outreach, the methods of collection as well as voting in the specified centres in each constituency.
- The Commission is also taking a number of steps including personal contact under its SVEEP initiatives to make the electors aware of this new facility so that such electors can exercise their voting right in the manner they intend to do.
- In order to facilitate this, the following amendments to the Rules have been made:
 - A concept of 'absentee voter' has been introduced and defined for the elections.
 - An 'absentee voter' means a person belonging to such class of persons as may be notified, and who is employed in essential services as mentioned in the said notification, and includes an elector belonging to the class of senior citizen or persons with disability.
 - A 'person with disability' means a person flagged as person with disability in the data base for the electoral roll.
 - A 'senior citizen' for the purpose of this Part means an elector belonging to the class of absentee voters and is above 80 years of age.
 - In the case of absentee voter, postal ballot paper shall be returned to the centre provided for recording of vote.
- These two categories of voters - senior citizen of more than 80 years of age and PwD electors marked in the electoral roll, will have now the choice of voting either as an absentee voter or as a regular voter on the poll day.

Voting through Postal Ballot:

- In 2013, the EC decided to expand the ambit of postal ballot voting in the country. Previously, only Indian staff in missions abroad and defence personnel in a limited way, could vote via postal ballots.
- Categories of voters who can use the postal ballot: service voters; special voters; wives of service voters and special voters; voters subjected to preventive detention; voters on election duty and Notified voters.

To read more on electoral reforms in India, click [here](#).

Indo-French Joint Exercise Shakti-2019

Context:

The Indo-French joint bilateral **Exercise Shakti** will commence in October 2019 in Rajasthan.

About Exercise Shakti:

- This joint bilateral exercise between the armies of India and France commenced in the year 2011.
- It is a biennial exercise (takes place once every two years) and occurs alternatively in India and France.
- The joint exercise will focus on counter-terrorism operations in the backdrop of semi-desert terrain under the United Nations Mandate.
- The training will focus primarily on high degree of physical fitness, sharing of drill at tactical level and learning of best practices from each other.
- The exercise aims at enhancing understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the two Armies.