

Structure of Government



Notes

18.2.2 Preparation of Electoral Rolls

Each constituency has a comprehensive list of voters. It is known as the Electoral Roll, or the Voters' List. The Commission prepares the Electoral Roll for Parliament as well as Legislative Assembly elections. The Electoral Roll of every constituency contains the names of all the persons who have right to vote in that constituency. The electoral roll is also revised from time to time generally before every general election, by-election and mid-term election in the constituency.

General Election	Election to constitute a new Lok Sabha or Assembly is called General Election.
By-Election	If at any time there is a mid-term vacancy due to the death or resignation of a member either in Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly only one seat falls vacant. The election for that seat is known as by-election.
Mid-term Election	If the Lok Sabha or State Assembly is dissolved before completion of five years and the election is held to constitute new Lok Sabha or new State Assembly, etc. is called mid-term election.

The revision is carried out from house to house by the enumerators appointed by Election Commission and all eligible voters are registered. A person can be registered as a voter if he/she fulfils the following conditions:

1. He/she is a citizen of India.
2. He/she is 18 years of age.
3. He/she is resident of the constituency.

18.2.3 Recognition of Political Parties

One of the important functions of the Election Commission is to recognise political parties as all India (National) or State (Regional) Political Parties. If in a general election, a particular party gets four percent of the total valid votes polled in any four states it is recognised as an all India (National) Party. If a party gets four percent of the total valid votes in a state, it is recognized as a State or regional party. (You will read in details about Political Parties in the following Lesson No.19). The Indian National Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), The Communist Party of India (Marxist) the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Nationalist Congress Party are at present (2006) major recognised national parties.

18.2.4 Allotment of Symbol

Political Parties have symbols which are allotted by the Election Commission. For example, Hand is the symbol of the Indian National Congress, Lotus is the symbol of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Elephant is the symbol of Bahujan Samaj Party. These symbols are significant for the following reasons:

1. They are a help for the illiterate voters who cannot read the names of the candidates.
2. They help in differentiating between two candidates having the same name.

18.3 Officers on Election Duty

To ensure that elections are held in free and fair manner, the Election Commission appoints thousands of polling personnel to assist in the election work. These personnel are drawn among magistrates, police officers, civil servants, clerks, typists, school teachers, drivers, peons etc. Out of these there are three main officials who play very important role in the conduct of free and fair election. They are Returning Officer, Presiding Officer and Polling Officers.

18.3.1 Returning Officer

In every constituency, one Officer is designated as Returning Officer by the Commission in consultation with the concerned State government. However, an Officer can be nominated as Returning Officer for more than one constituency. All the nomination papers are submitted to the Returning Officer. Papers are scrutinised by him/her and if they are in order, accepted by him/her. Election symbols are allotted by him/her in accordance with the directions issued by the Election Commission. He/she also accepts withdrawal of the candidates and announces the final list. He/she supervises all the polling booths, votes are counted under his/her supervision and finally result is announced by him/her. In fact, the Returning Officer is the overall incharge of the efficient and fair conduct of elections in the concerned constituency.

18.3.2 Presiding Officers

Every constituency has a large number of polling booths. Each polling booth on an average caters to about a thousands votes. Every such booth is under the charge of an officer who is called the Presiding Officer. He/she supervises the entire process polling in the polling booth and ensures that every voter gets an opportunity to cast vote freely. After the polling is over he/she seals all the ballot boxes and deliver them to the Returning Officer.

18.3.3 Polling Officers

Every Presiding Officer is assisted by three to four polling officers. They check the names of the voters in the electoral roll, put indelible ink on the finger of the voter, issue ballot papers and ensure that votes are secretly cast by each voter.

[*Indelible ink* – This ink cannot be removed easily. It is put on the first finger of the right hand of the voter so that a person does not come again to cast vote for the second time. This is done to avoid impersonation.]



Intext Questions 18.1

Tick mark (✓) the appropriate alternative out of the four alternatives.

1. Responsibility for conducting free and fair elections rests on:
 - a) The Chief Justice of India
 - b) The Election Commission
 - c) The President
 - d) The Comptroller and Auditor General



Notes