Postal Ballot

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Indian Polity and Governance*

Why in News?

Election Commission of India enabled postal ballot facility for elderly, PwDs, service voters and election duty staff in upcoming Assembly Elections.

- **Postal Ballot -** It is a mechanism that allows eligible voters to ***vote remotely without visiting polling stations*** to ensure inclusive voting for those unable to be physically present.
- **Eligibility –** Service Voters, Absentee Voters, and Voters on Election Duty.
- **Service Voters –** Armed forces and Government employees posted abroad.
- **Absentee Voters –** Voters unable to be physically present at polling stations includes –
  - **Senior Citizens** → Above 85 years.
  - **Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)**
  - **Essential Services Personnel** - Health, Fire, Electricity, Transport, Aviation.
  - **Media Personnel** (authorized by ECI).
- **Voters on Election Duty –** Polling staff, Security personnel.
- **Voting Process –**

Voting Method	Eligible Voters	Application Process	Voting & Return Process
Ordinary Postal Ballot	Voters on election duty, essential service workers, and voters under preventive detention.	Submit Form 12 (duty staff) or **Form 12D** (essential services) to the Regional Officer.	Vote at Facilitation Centres or return by physical post.

ETPBS (Electronic)	Service Voters (Armed Forces, CAPF) and Govt employees posted abroad.	Automated for registered service voters; no separate application needed for each poll.	Receive ballot electronically via secure PDF, return physically by post.
Home Voting	Senior Citizens (85+) and PwDs (40%+ benchmark disability)	Submit Form 12D to the RO via the BLO within 5 days of notification.	A polling team visits the home to collect the secret vote in person

- **Governed under** – Representation of the People Act, 1951 (Section 60(c)).
- **Supplemented by** – Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.
- **Constitutional foundation** – **Article 326** (Universal Adult Suffrage).
- **Responsible Authority** - **District Election Officer (DEO)** → Returning Officer (RO) who Issue ballots, collect votes, Ensure counting.
- **Time & Counting Rules –** Ballots must reach RO by: 8:00 AM on counting day.
- **Counting sequence –** Postal ballots counted **before EVM votes.**
- Similar confidentiality as EVM voting.

References

1. PIB | Postal Ballot
2. India Today | ECI enables postal ballot facility

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering