

# ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA LAUNCHES VOTER AWARENESS FORUMS(VAFS) ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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Election Commission

## Election Commission of India launches Voter Awareness Forums(VAFs) across the country

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Voter Awareness Forum(VAF) was launched by Election Commission of India in New Delhi today. Similar VAFs were also launched by the Chief Electoral Officers in the State capitals and by District Election Officers in the Districts simultaneously.



Voter Awareness Forums are informal Forums for generating awareness around electoral process through activities like discussions, quizzes, competitions and other engaging activities. All employees of the Organisation are expected to become members of the VAF with the Head of the Organisation acting as the Chair.

Addressing the Nodal Officers from 44 Ministries, Government of India, and representatives from Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi today, the Commission exhorted them to immediately set up VAFs and facilitate enrolment of all employees and officials on the electoral roll.

Chief Election Commissioner Shri Sunil Arora said that the founding fathers of the Constitution had an instinctive faith in the citizenry of our country and therefore gifted Universal Adult Franchise to the Indian populace while other democracies took years before extending this right to all its citizens. "It is therefore our collective responsibility to value and preserve this right and in this endeavour Voter Awareness Forums have a crucial role to play" Sh Arora said. He asked the Nodal Officers to commit themselves to the aims of the VAFs which is to promote informed and ethical electoral participation, beginning from the first step ie voter registration.

Election Commissioner Shri. Ashok Lavasa said thousands of unnamed and faceless Government officials undertake the task of preserving the electoral process, in different capacities and roles. Hailing the Officers as “Ambassadors of Democracy”, Shri Lavasa said that as Nodal Officers, now they are invested with the additional responsibility of educating colleagues and staff in their work place and ensuring that all the members of their Ministry and Departments are familiar with the electoral procedure right from enrolment to the casting of the vote.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner, briefed all present about the ‘Voter Verification and Information’ drive that the Commission is taking up and asked VAF to facilitate members to check their names and details on Electoral Roll through online NVSP portal of ECI and the Voter Helpline No 1950.

The half-day briefing was conducted to familiarise the Officers from various Ministries and Federations with the concept of Voter Awareness Forum and to brief them about their role as Nodal Officers of the VAFs. Similar briefing sessions are being held across the country by the Chief Electoral Officers and District Election Officers across the country where nodal officers of Departments, Non-Govt Departments, CSOs, Corporate and Media Houses in the State and District were briefed respectively.

VAF is part of the Electoral Literacy Club programme of ECI. Launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> National Voters Day, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the ELC programme envisages setting up of Electoral Literacy Club in every educational institution and Chunar Pathshala at every booth to cover those outside the formal education system. Around 2.11 Lakh ELCs have already been established across the country in the first year of the launch of the programme.

**SBS/AC**

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