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Postal Ballot Facilities for Absentee Voters

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The **Election Commission of India** has recently made efforts to ensure that the electors who are unable to come to polling booth/ absentee voters are facilitated in every way to ensure their wider participation in the electoral process.

- Such absentee voters include:
 - **Persons with Disabilities (PwD),**
 - **Senior citizens,**
 - Persons employed in **essential services** e.g., railways, state transport and aviation etc.,
- There are two aspects of this issue viz., the creation of requisite infrastructure and suitable legal framework to facilitate the process.

Steps Taken to Ensure Wider Participation

- On the legal front, the Commission made a recommendation to the Union Government (Ministry of Law and Justice) on 2nd September, 2019 following which the Government amended the Representation of the People's Act, 1951 (RP Act), and the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.

- Salient features of these amendments are as follows:
 - A concept of **‘absentee voter’** has been introduced and defined for the elections;
 - ‘Absentee voter’** means a person belonging to such class of persons as may be notified, under clause (c) of section 60 of the RP Act, 1951 and who is **employed in essential services** as mentioned in the said notification, and includes an elector belonging to the class of **senior citizens or persons with disabilities**;
 - **‘person with disability’** means a person flagged as person with disability in the database for the electoral roll;
 - **‘senior citizen’** means an elector belonging to the class of absentee voters and is **above 80 years of age**;
 - These two categories of voters – **‘senior citizen’** and **‘PwD electors’** can vote **either as absentee voter or as a regular voter on the poll day**.
- 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.
 - Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation*** program (SVEEP), is the flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.

Representation of the People Act, 1951

This act provides for the **actual conduct of elections in India**. It deals with the following matters :

- Details like Qualification and Disqualification of members of both the Houses of Parliament and the State Legislatures,
- Administrative machinery for conducting elections,
- Registration of Political parties,
- Conduct of Elections,
- Election Disputes,
- Corrupt practices & Electoral offences, &
- By-elections.

Source: PIB