SVEEP Activities in Jharsuguda Bye-election

Submitted by: -

o/o The Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha

Prologue:

The recently concluded Jharsuguda Bye Election has set a yardstick which is likely to be taken as reference point for future elections. The Bye Election was concluded without any notable incident of violence, stoppage of poll, re-poll or questionable poll controversy. The poll was completely free fair, impartial and successfully completed meeting all the set parameters. The success story owes its credit to exhaustive groundworks and preliminaries planning by the o/o Chief Electoral Officer as well as Police & Administration of Jharsuguda.

Preparation:

The bye-election for 07-Jharsugua was declared on 29th March,2023 by ECI subsequent to the demise of the sitting MLA. Accordingly, preparations were made and arrangements were done to maximize the voter turnout focusing on a free, fair and accessible election.

An all-party political meeting was called by the CEO on declaration of the bye election and the representatives were briefed on the statutory rules/regulations and an overall insight of the Bye-election process.

Periodical Monitoring:

CEO and Addl CEO visited 07-Jharsuguda AC for scrutinizing the poll preparedness, law & order situations regularly both in physical and virtual mode. Periodical objective and analytical vulnerability mapping & critical analysis were jointly made by the civil and police officials in supervision of CEO, Odisha. Adequate central & state police forces were deployed. The total deployment of police personnel was more than the civilian polling personnel.

CEO, Odisha along with the SP, DEO and RO of 07-Jharsuda AC visited the booths and verified the arrangements such as AMF, accessibility, sensitiveness and over all arrangements of the specific booths.

Polling Station Verification by CEO, Odisha for the Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC

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Media Briefing:

CEO, Odisha briefed the media in Jharsugdua on pre-election, election, and post-election activities. Focus was laid on making the booths convenient and secured. In this aspect all the booths were made voter friendly with a minimum of 1000 sq. ft. shading area in every booth. CEO solicited co-operation from each and every quarter for smooth conduction of the bye-election.

Briefing of Hon'ble CEO, Odisha to the Media Persons for Smooth Conduct of Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC at DMF, Conference Hall, Collectorate, Jharsuguda

Special provision for Notified Class of Voters:

In this Bye-election, cent percent AMF was ensured by strict vigil of Senior Officials like CEO, and Collector. Additional Waiting Halls were arranged in all booths and adequate number of sitting arrangements were made available in every booth.

Again, Help Desks with proper brandings were made functional in every booth. The services of BLOs were supplemented with deployment of two NCC/NSS volunteers in every booth with proper uniform. Two wheel chairs were supplied to each booth.
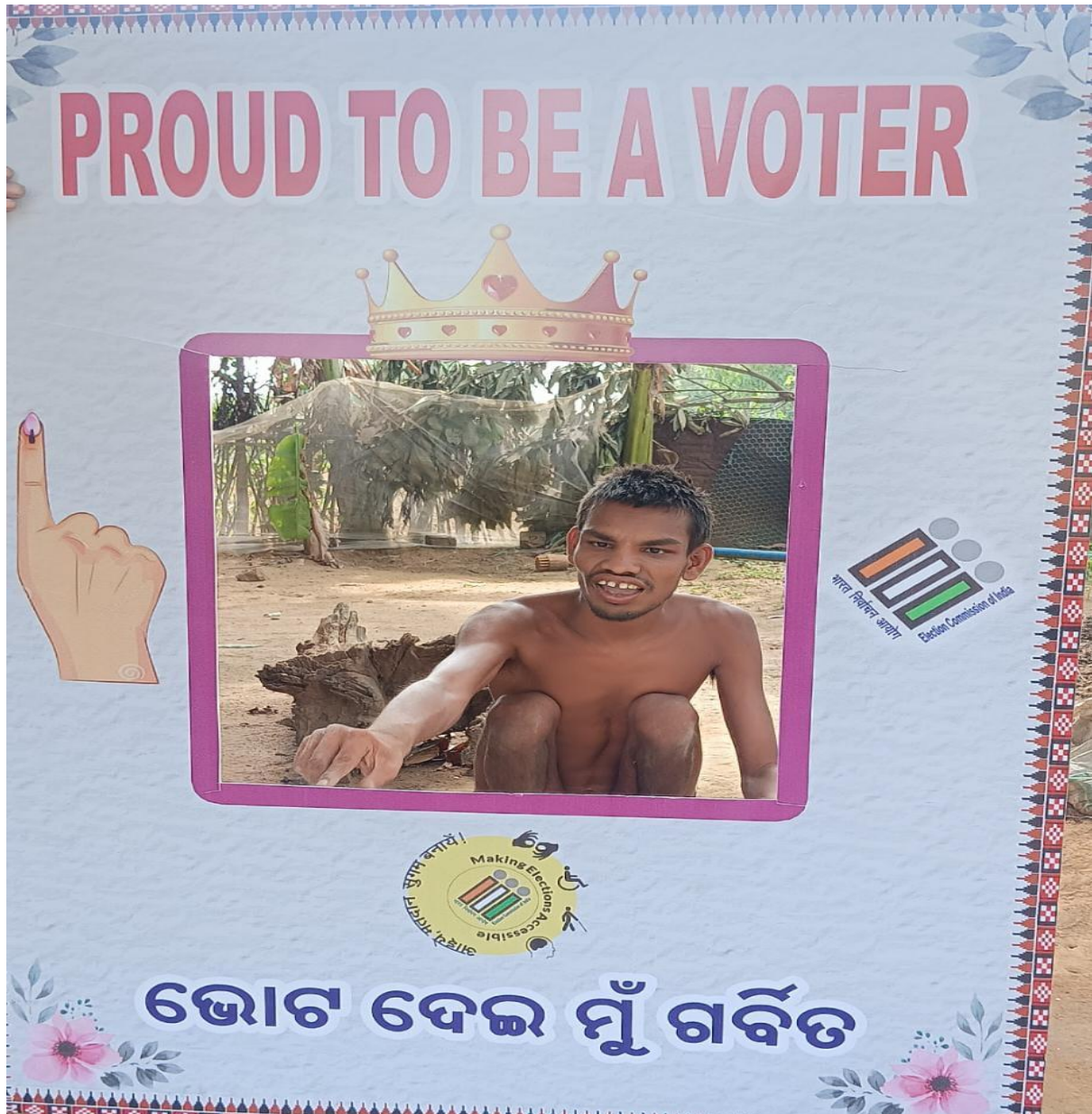
The PWD and 80+ voters were provided with wheel chairs and young volunteers such as school students. As a gesture of thanks giving a *"Red Rose"* was given to every such voters to uplift their spirits for casting their votes for the democracy.

Pink Booth at Govt. Primary School of Kolabira Block. Total 26 Nos. of Pink Booths were arranged in 4 nos. of Blocks and 1 no. of Municipality Area during Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC
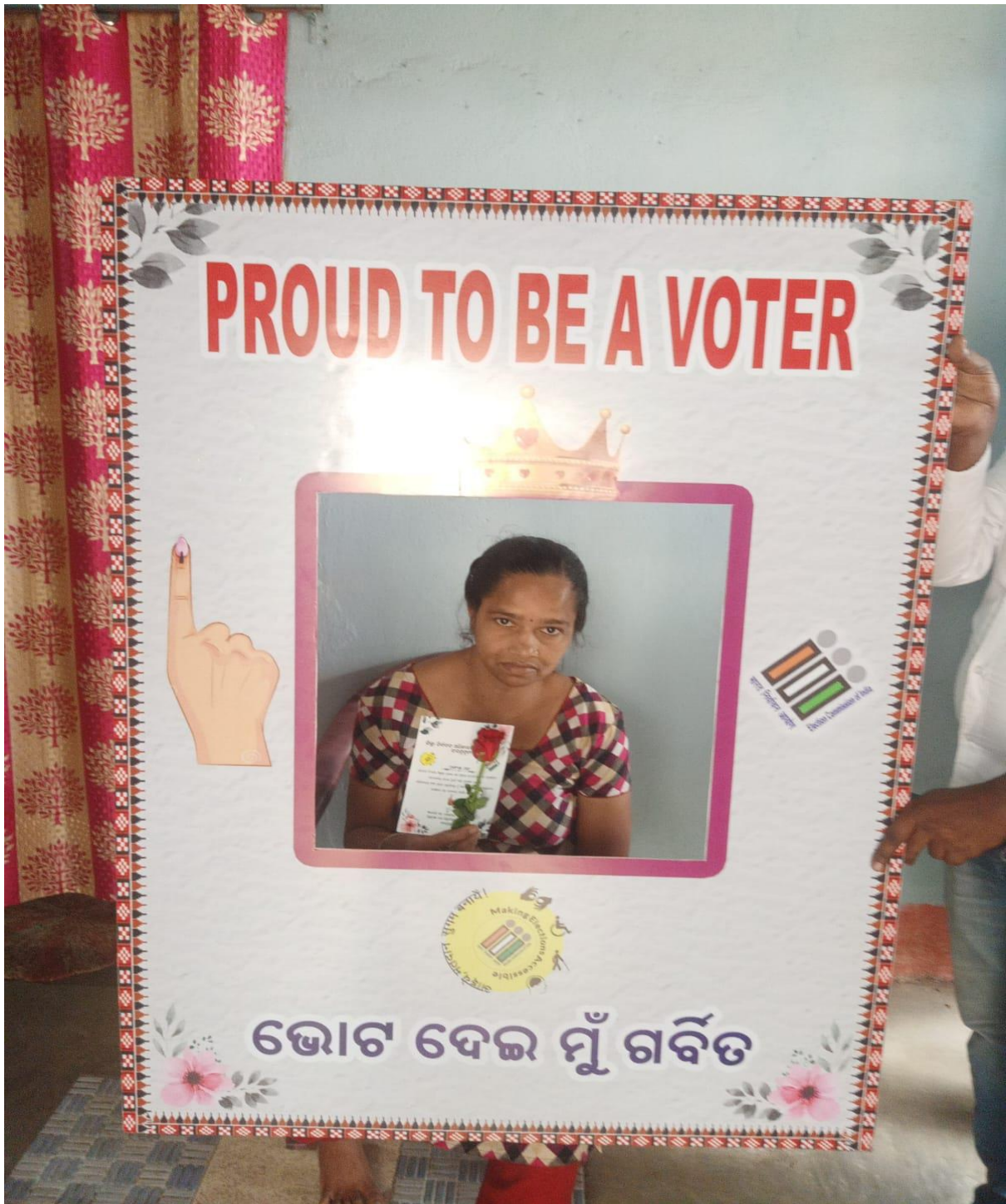
Special provision for Notified Class of Voters (postal ballot):

To enable old and differently abled voters who have opted for postal ballot a special selfie stand, red rose and a hand signed appreciation letter was given by DEO Jharsuguda to spread the awareness on voting among the voters and to hail their interest and enthusiasm to vote.

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The fervor among the elderly and PWD voters for the voting was worth mentioning. Voters were pre-sensitized on the use of **Saksham app** and were encouraged to use it for a commodious voting by the district administration. As many as 118 **Sakhyam Vaahans** were used to carry **1774** Absentee Voters. They were safely transported back after voting with the assistance of designated volunteers.

A record percentage of voting i.e. 92.33 % of differently abled voters was made during Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda Assembly Constituency due to the proper harmonization made by CEO, Odisha and District administration.

Health contingencies arising out of extreme heat

Fifteen numbers of mobile medical teams were deployed to attend, handle and intervene the health related issues as and when required due to the intense heat and scorching sun.

Tackling the heat wave:

Preparations were made by the district administration of Jharsuguda on getting the direction from the CEO, Odisha for arrangement of water / cold beverage/ summer fruits for voters to combat the heat during the peak hour of the poling time. Water sprinklers were arranged during the rush hours of voting to beat the heat and provide the voters a cool ambience for voting

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Voter Friendly Booths were made for the Maximum Participation of Voters during Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC

(Water sprinkler arrangements were made during 42 degrees Celsius in the booths which effort was highly appreciated by the voters)

Pink Booths:

Pink booths all managed by the women officials were set up in urban areas as a symbol of women empowerment. The decoration and ambience were made voter friendly and traditional welcome to voters was arranged in such booths. Highest number ever of Pink Booths were constituted this time. In the 26 Pink Booths, 120 women polling personnel were deployed which is 10% of the total polling personnel in the constituency. Women Polling personnel were given separate training. A separate expert team was formed to assist the women polling personnel and intervene whenever required. For time bound and hassle free dispersal keeping the convenience of polling personnel in mind, the tent age area was enhanced to 60000 sq. ft. 40 different counters were opened & the dispersal was completed before in the pre-lunch session.

Pink Booth at K.B.J. Govt. High School of Laikera Block. Total 26 Nos. of Pink Booths were arranged during the Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC

Welcoming the first time voters:

New voters were welcomed with Chandan (Sandalwood paste), Sindur (vermillion) and Flowers for their first time votes and to imbibe in their minds that "young voters are the future of the Indian democracy". Selfie points were a super hit for both young and old voters. Nearly 2000 Young Voters were welcomed with such rituals

Welcoming New Voters By the BLOs during Bye-Election to 07-Jharsuguda AC. A Total of 3821 Nos. of New Voters (18-19 Age Group) having added in the Electoral Roll-2023

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Police-Administration coordination:

The coordination between the police and administration of Jharsuguda not only made the casting of votes of all segments of voters including the elderly and Divyang (Differentially abled) persons accessible, but also it made them feel the importance of the tagline **"Each vote counts".**
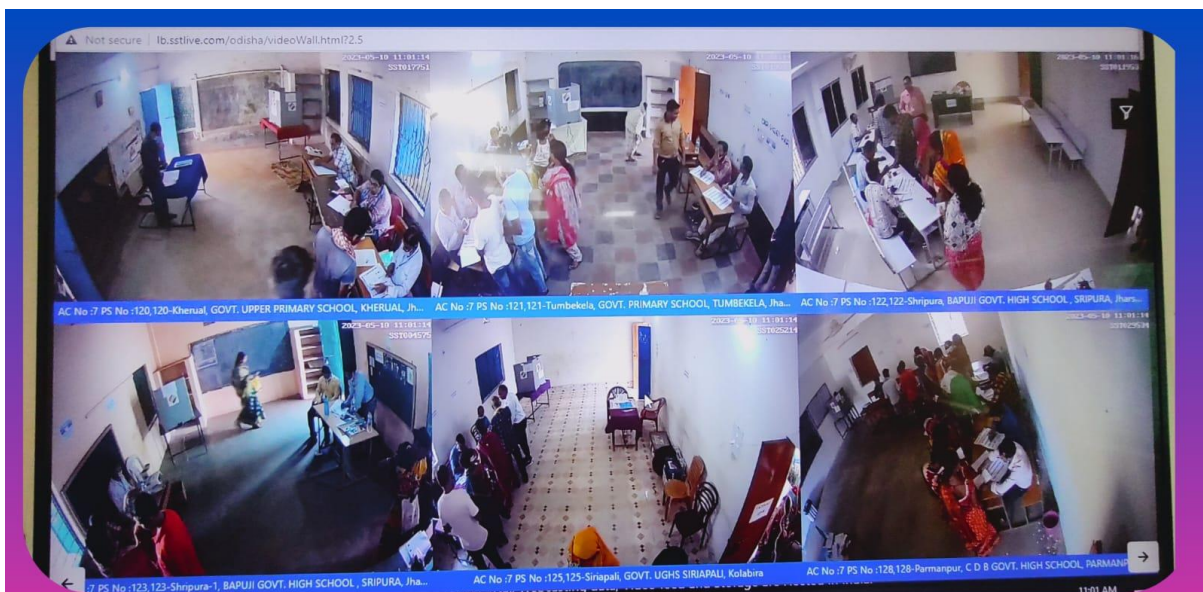
Law and order measures:

For monitoring the periphery of the booths, drone monitoring was incorporated. The GIS tracking and real time information ware disseminated to the police surveillance teams and executive magistrates in charge of law and order in their respective jurisdictions along with web camera coverage to all the 253 number of booths.

Ensuring cent percent webcasting and monitoring the polling booths:

For the bye-election of Jharsuguda, CEO directed for cent percent webcasting of all the 253 booths. The team at CEO office continuously monitored each and every booth with a special focus on low turnout booths. Instructions were provided to the DEO for taking immediate steps for informing the voters of the booths through the AROs/BLOs and ensuring maximum participation.

Epilogue:

The bye election of 07-Jharsuguda AC was the trail blazer for a system of voting in Odisha with cent percent webcasting and monitoring the voter turnout. The message was widely spread "You are under surveillance" to instill an atmosphere of fearlessness for an inducement free and fair election among the voters. The arrangements encompassed SVEEP strategies such as welcoming the new voters, provision for good will token/selfie stands/hand signed cards to the special voters and creating a favorable condition for defying the heat for taking part in the largest democratic event.

In the conclusion, all these resulted in the highest number of voter turnout that 79.34% which itself is a record. More than 30 polling stations recorded more than 90% of voting. This has set a new benchmark on how voter sensitization and educating the voters can bring a huge difference in the pattern of voting through SVEEP.

The closing up of the event was more meaningful and memorable since the counting was completed before noon and all the result related Returns were filed by 3 PM which is a record too.

*** *Your Vote*

Your Pride ***