ICT Tools for Elections in Puducherry
Best Practices for Effective Election Management

General Elections and By-Elections of 2016 held in Puducherry UT made use of the best practices for effective Election Management with the help of ICT tools.

DR. D. R. SHUKLA
Sr. Tech. Director & SIO
drshukla@nic.in

V. GOPI SWAMINATHAN
Technical Director
gopi.pon@nic.in

S. ARULRAJ
Scientist- C
s.arulraj@nic.in

D. GOPINATH
Scientist- B
d.gopinath@nic.in

In Puducherry, Information Technology (ICT) has played a key role in putting the UT on the national map of innovations and best practices for Election Management.

Albeit the small size of the U.T., the distribution of the four regions among the three Southern States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh with three different spoken languages poses a real challenge for planners. To accelerate the activities, an NIC cell has been formulated in the office of the Chief Election Officer for the complete software development and implementation. The NIC UT unit and District units of Puducherry UT are involved in the efforts.

After General Elections 2014, ECI has constituted nine Working Groups on various aspects of planning and management of elections and related matters for submission of a detailed report. Puducherry UT is a member of the Working Group 7 on the topic "Information Technology". NIC, Puducherry had been given the responsibility to collect and compile data for preparing a consolidated report based on the earlier experiences, observations, and learning of all states.

Real Time Poll Monitoring System (RTPMS)

The important events right from conduction of Mock Poll to close of Poll were captured on a Real Time basis through RTPMS and relayed online to all the stakeholders directly from all the polling stations. The progress of the polling percentage in the various regions of Puducherry was visible to all concerned. The option of Emergency SMS integrated into the software brought forward effective tackling of interruptions.

RTPMS has been the greatest success story of 2016 General Elections winning the accolades of the Election Commission, Press and the officers.

The Puducherry Legislative Assembly Election 2016 was a prelude to Mobile App based m-governance to Election processes. Mobile App version of RTPMS has been implemented during the by-elections 2016 where all the booths were provided with a Tab installed with the Mobile App. The U.T. of Puducherry has earned the distinction of pioneering such an initiative.

Trends Dissemination System (TDS)

The Trends Dissemination System (TDS) is a web enabled application, where the complete gamut of activities are integrated on one screen, for monitoring the counting progress of all the 12 AROs of Puducherry at 5 counting centres. A separate website and the Mobile App are available to display the result at a glance and view the trends continuously. The system has also been replicated in Goa.

SMS Portal

A web based generic SMS portal, used by the office of CEO, DEOs and ROs, saved a lot of time and effort in sending letters, phone calls and maintenance of manual registers. Timely delivery of information was the primary achievement. Local language based SMS support is another major highlight of the portal.

Mobile App for Static Surveillance

This is a Mobile Application (App) with a web based system for the control room for online information about vehicle checking made by all the Static Surveillance teams of the entire UT, at check posts, for updating the vehicle details. A web based dashboard is available for the Control Room to easily monitor the online information on incoming/ outgoing vehicles along with in-built search facility in the portal.
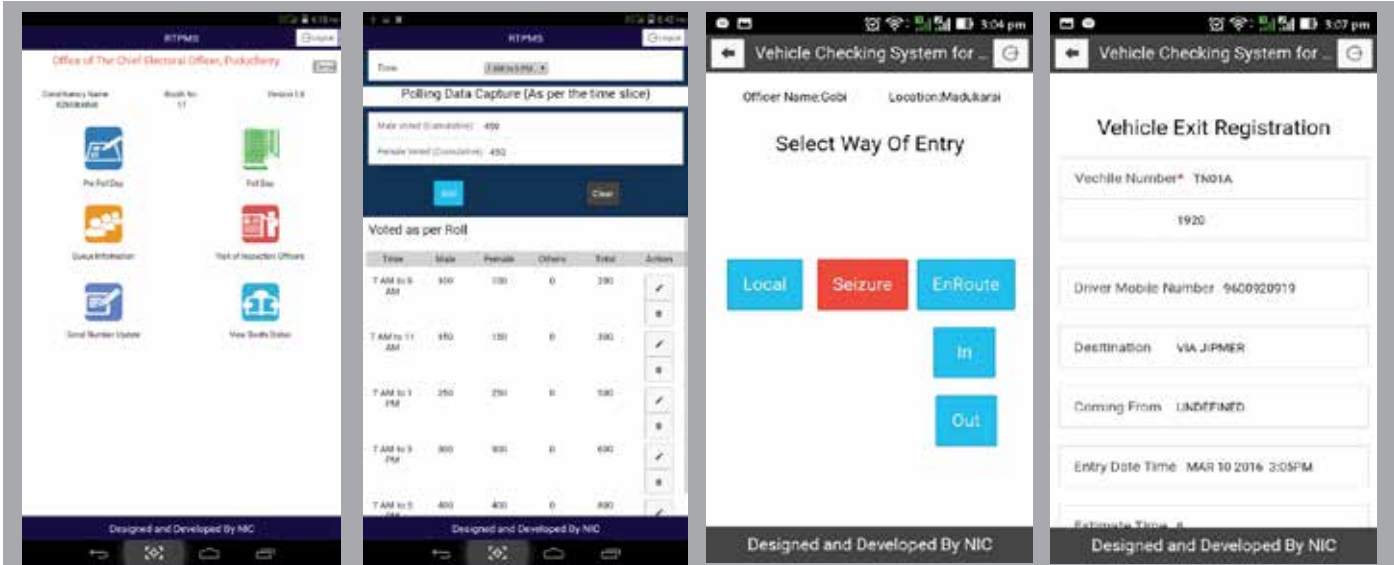
Screenshots of Mobile Apps

The ease of updation about the checking through Mobile App has saved lot of time in updation of data, preparation of activities register and monitoring the check posts.

UDHAVI
Single Window Clearance System

The online application helps the political parties and the public to get permissions for holding meeting, opening temporary party offices, vehicle permits, processions, street corner meeting, loud speaker permissions etc., The acknowledgement, SMS facilities and uploads of permission details are major functionalities.

THEERVU
Grievance and Complaints Redressal System

All the complaints and grievances of voters are registered through this Online System for registering the details through web including the complaints received from toll free number 1950 in Control Room.

The competent authority would then look into the complaints and update the Action Taken Report through the work flow based system.

Online Services for Voters

With this facility, the citizens can file their claims and objections with a simple form interface and get the service. A Backend Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) module is available to all the EROs to access the online applications received and given to Booth Level Officers (BLO) for verification. A comprehensive MIS is provided to view the status of the applications and SMS facility is integrated into the system.

General Information to Voters through Mobile App

A Mobile App called "General Information to Voters" has been developed to help the voters search the voter list for the Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) details, to geographically locate the polling station over Google map, to find out the details of the Booth Level Officer. The App also provides the list of candidates who have filed their nomination with their affidavit details. The Polling percentage and queue information on Poll day is also provided.

On the result dissemination day, the public get the trends details for the 30 Assembly constituencies. The application has received widespread appreciation from public, media and officers.

Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee giving away the ECI Award 2016 for IT initiatives to Shri V. Gopi Swaminathan, Tech. Director (NIC) & Nodal officer
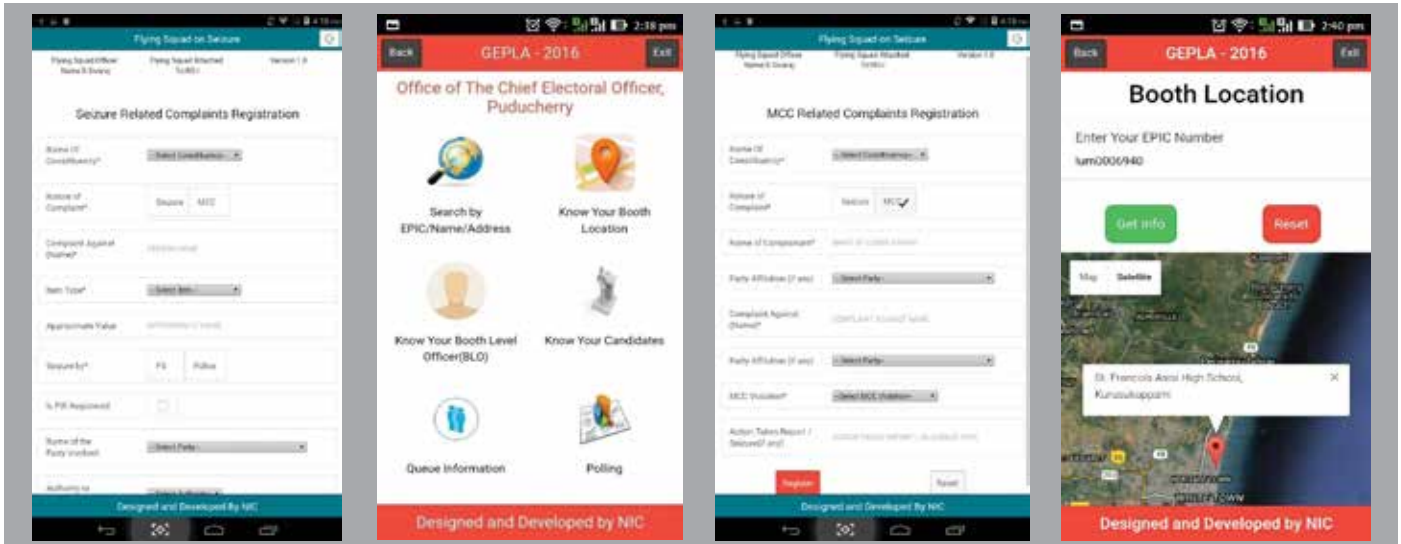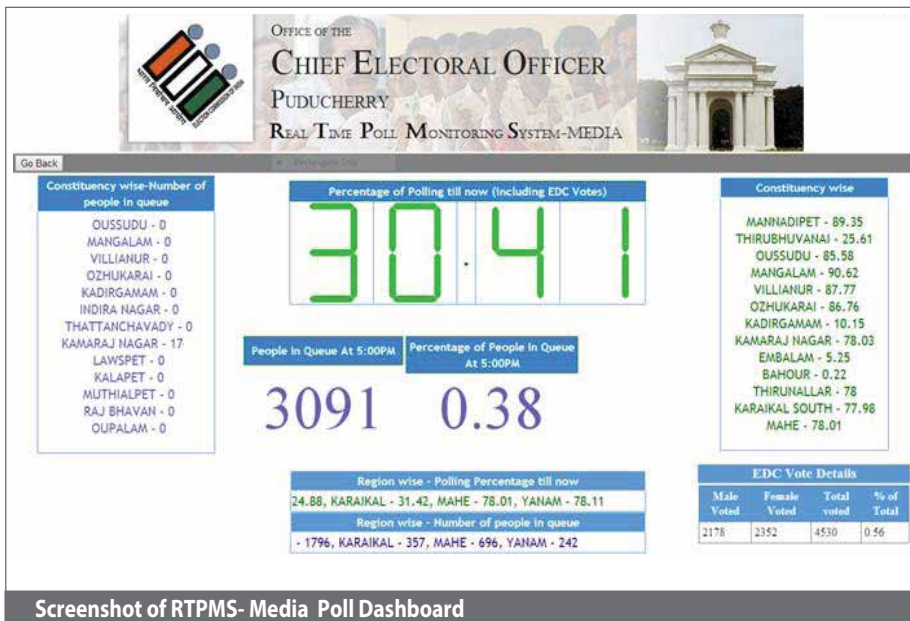
Screenshots of Mobile Apps

Mobile App for Flying Squad Team

An App with a web based system was also developed for the control room for management of online information about Model Code of Conduct (MCC) complaints/ seizure details. A web based dashboard is available for the Control Room to easily monitor the online information on seizure with search facility. The flying squad team carries tablets having an application for updating the details of MCC related violations and complaints.

Training session on RTPMS in progress

The ease of updation about the checking through this App saves lot of time in updation of data, preparation of activities register and monitoring the flying squad checks.

SUMMARY

The young India is rapidly emerging as citizens empowered by ICT continually embracing the web and mobile technologies. NIC, Puducherry has endeavored successfully, with its various applications, in this direction and has been appreciated by the Election Commission of India for its initiatives.

Screenshot of RTPMS- Media Poll Dashboard