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Lok Sabha election dates are in: Voting begins April 19, results on June 4

Won't tolerate model code violations; time to go beyond advisories and take concrete action, says CEC Rajiv Kumar

Written by **Damini Nath**

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Chief Election Commissioner of India, Rajiv Kumar (centre) with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar (left) and S S Sandhu at a press conference to announce dates for the national elections, in New Delhi. (Express photo by Amit Mehra)

Kicking off the world's largest election exercise, the Election Commission of India Saturday announced that the **18th Lok Sabha elections** would be held in seven phases from April 19 to June 1, with counting of votes on June 4.

Close to a billion electors will be eligible to cast their votes in the exercise that stretches for 81 days well into the peak of summer, with over 10 million polling and security personnel being deployed for the job. In 2019, elections were concluded in 75 days.

Addressing a press conference here, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, flanked by newly-appointed Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and S.S. Sandhu, appealed to electors to come out and vote, saying “elections belong to you”.

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With the announcement, the Model Code of Conduct came into force, bringing announcements of new schemes by the government and use of government machinery for electioneering by ministers to a halt.

The EC also announced the schedule for the Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim Assembly elections, where polling would be held on the same day as the Lok Sabha polling. The EC also announced bye-elections to 26 Assembly seats across states.



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A total of 96.8 crore voters, of which 49.7 crore are male and 47.1 crore are female, including 88.4 lakh persons with disabilities, 48,000 transgender voters and 19.1 lakh service electors, will be eligible to cast their votes.

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There are 1.8 crore first-time voters who are 18 to 19 years old, and 19.74 crore in the age group 20-29 years. In other words, those under 30 make up a fifth of the total voters. Rajiv Kumar said young voters and women voters, who outnumber men in 12 states, were well represented in the electoral roll.

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“We will take democracy to every corner of the country,” said Rajiv Kumar.

The number of polling stations increased to 10.48 lakh, up from 10.35 lakh in 2019. Kumar said the polling exercise would involve 1.5 crore polling and security officials, 55 lakh EVMs and 4 lakh vehicles.

Starting with April 19, 21 states across the country, including Bihar, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal, will have polls in a total of 102 seats. Phase two of polls will be on April 26 in 13 states in 89 seats; phase three will be on May 7 in 12 states in 94 seats; phase four will be on May 13 in 10 states in 96 seats; phase five will be on May 20 and cover 49 seats across eight states; phase six will be on May 25 in 57 seats in seven states; and phase seven on June 1 in eight states, across 57 seats.

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Like in the 2019 polls, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar would have elections throughout the seven phases. Polls would be held on five days in Maharashtra and [Jammu](#) and Kashmir; over four phases in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand; three days in [Chhattisgarh](#) and Assam and two phases in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tripura and Manipur. The remaining 22 states and UTs would have a single-phase poll.

While J&K elections would be held in five phases, each of the five seats would be completed in a single phase. The CEC said while all political parties in J&K asked for the Assembly elections to be held simultaneously with Lok Sabha, it was not

possible due to administrative reasons. Owing to the security concerns in J&K, each candidate would have to be provided with security, he said.

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Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which were in the first phase of polling in 2019, have been moved to phase four this time.

Asked why the elections spread across seven phases, as was the case in 2019 as well, Kumar highlighted the “historical and geographic” situation of the country, and said everything from the weather, festivals and examinations, had to be kept in mind. “Think of the movement of security forces also. They’ll be moving like, within the three to four days gap between phases, they will walk the length and breadth of the country,” he said.

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Rajiv Kumar said the EC had four challenges – “4Ms – muscle, money, misinformation and MCC violations”. He said the EC was establishing 24/7 integrated control rooms in districts and webcasting in sensitive booths and a minimum of 50 per cent of all polling stations. On some international borders, there will be drone-based checking too, he said.



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Addressing political parties, he said the EC would not tolerate MCC violations and would have a “calibrated approach”. He said the EC had issued an advisory to

parties earlier this month, putting them “on notice” and asking them to circulate the same with all their star campaigners. “Now, the time is during this election, to go beyond advisories and take concrete action,” the CEC said.

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Damini Nath is an Assistant Editor with the national bureau of The Indian Express. She covers the housing and urban affairs and Election Commission beats. She has [... Read More](#)

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