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## Postal ballot plan was discussed with parties: EC

Yechury had alleged that poll panel was in a hurry to extend it to electors over the age of 65

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The Election Commission of India said on Wednesday that political parties had been consulted on its decision to extend postal ballot to more categories of voters.

The poll panel was responding to Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's

criticism that it was in a hurry to extend postal ballot to electors over the age of 65.

In a letter to the EC on Monday, Mr. Yechury raised concerns at the lack of consultation before the EC decided to expand the postal ballot facility to electors over 65 and those infected with or suspected to have COVID-19 in the run-up to the Bihar As-

sembly elections.

Along with its response, the EC sent Mr. Yechury the minutes of a meeting convened by the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer on June 26 that was attended by recognised political parties, including the CPI(M).

The Representation of the People Act, 1951 provides for any person to be given the

postal facility by the ECI in consultation with the government, it said. The ECI had recommended that three categories of electors - those 80 years and above, persons with disabilities, and essential services workers - be given the facility. This was notified by the government on October 22, 2019 and the ECI rolled it out

as a pilot in seven constituencies in the Jharkhand elections last year.

Apart from asking the Bihar CEO to hold consultations, the ECI also ordered that the number of electors in each polling station be limited to 1,000 and auxiliary stations created in the same location or vicinity to maintain social distancing norms.