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For further information
Email: info@pattan.org

Media Committee [\(show more\)](#)

Pattan-C38 Secretariat

House 5, Street 58, F-10/3
Islamabad, Pakistan.
Cell #: 0333-6110964
Cell #: 0302-8516901
Cell #: 0345-9555438
E-mail: info@pattan.org
URL: www.pattan.org

**Pattan Disaster
Preparedness &
Learning Center:**

Mauza Bahadurpur,
Bosan Road Multan
Cell #: 0307-7869866

About PATTAN-Coalition38

PATTAN is one of the leading civil society organisations of Pakistan and has been working to empower marginalised classes to make state and govt bodies accountable for improving governance of elections, disasters and rights. Currently, PATTAN is the secretariat of Coalition38 - a largest network of CSOs, labour unions, CBOs, and intellectuals.

Coalition38 aims to influence the state institutions for the implementation of Articles 3; 29; 37, and 38 of Pakistan's Constitution in letter and spirit through research, awareness raising, social mobilization, networking of civil society including marginalised people and women.

PRESS RELEASE

Election Commission is urged to clear the confusion regarding free access to 8300 SMS service to check polling station details.

Islamabad, 31 January: The 8300 short code of the Election Commission to check one's polling station details is inherently discriminatory as poor voters can't access this facility due to policy of cellarer companies. It is worth stating here that recently some newspapers and TV channels including APP and PTV had announced that the ECP would provide free 8300 SMS service.

PATTAN-Coalition38 – one of the largest networks of civil society on election observation have run tests across the country by using various packages of mobile companies. We note with deep concern that this service can't be availed by anybody whose credit balance is not sufficient. Therefore, this discriminatory policy has been causing differential impact and as a result denying poor people from getting advance information about their polling stations.

We would like to highlight that lack of prior information about polling station locations can deter millions of poor voters from casting their vote. As a result, it will disenfranchise them from electing their representatives. It is worth mentioning here that one of the major strategic goals of the Election Commission has been to increase voters turn out in the elections. Introduction of costly 8300 SMS service directly undermines the ECP's goal. It is also important to state here that while the ECP is spending huge amount of money on campaign for the use of 8300 service but failing to remove the barrier to its use.

We therefore appeal to the Election Commission to clear the confusion regarding 8300 service, and secondly, we also urge the mobile companies to remove restriction on minimum credit balance for the 8300 short message service.

For further information:
Sarwar Bari: 0300-8545572,
Ayaz Wagha: 0333-6110964,
William Pervaiz: 0302-8516901