

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

### What is Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)?

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is an independent system attached with the Electronic Voting Machines that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended. When a vote is cast, a slip is printed containing the serial number, name and symbol of the candidate and remains exposed through a transparent window for 7 seconds. Thereafter, this printed slip automatically gets cut and falls in sealed drop box of the VVPAT.

### Whether VVPAT runs on electricity?

No. VVPAT runs on a power pack Battery.

### Where VVPATs were used for first time in India?

VVPATs with EVMs were used for first time in a bye-election from 51-Noksen (ST) Assembly Constituency of Nagaland.

### Who conducts the First Level Checking of EVMs & VVPATs?

Only authorized engineers of the manufacturers, namely Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), conduct the First Level Checking (FLC) of EVMs and VVPATs under direct supervision of Dy. DEO in the presence of representative of Political Parties under videography.

### What is the cost of the machines? Is it not too expensive to use EVMs?

The Cost of M2 EVMs (manufactured between 2006-10) was Rs.8670/- per EVM (Balloting Unit and Control Unit). The cost of M3 EVMs has been tentatively fixed at about Rs. 17,000 per unit. Even though the initial investment is somewhat heavy, this is more than set off by the savings in the matter of printing of ballot papers in lakhs for every election, their transportation, storage etc., and the substantial reduction in the counting staff and the remuneration paid to them.

### In our country a sizeable section of the population is illiterate. Will it not cause problems for the illiterate voters?

Voting by EVMs is much simpler compared to the conventional system, where one has to put the voting mark on or near the symbol of the candidate of his choice, fold it first vertically and then horizontally and thereafter put it into the ballot box. In EVMs, the voter has to simply press the blue button on Ballot Unit against the candidate and symbol of his choice and the vote is recorded.

### Is it possible to use EVMs for simultaneous elections for Parliament and State Legislative Assembly?

Yes. However, during simultaneous elections 2 separate sets of EVMs will be required, one for the Parliamentary Constituency and the other for the Legislative Assembly Constituency.

### What are the advantages in using EVMs?

Advantage of using EVMs:

- It completely eliminates the possibility of casting 'Invalid Votes', which during the paper ballot regime was noticed in large numbers during each election. In fact, in many cases, the number of 'Invalid Votes' exceeded the winning margin, leading to numerous complaints and litigations. Thus EVMs have enabled a more authentic and accurate reflection of the choice of the electorate.
- With the use of EVMs, printing of millions of ballot papers for every election can be dispensed with, as only one ballot paper is required for fixing on the Balloting Unit at each polling station instead of one ballot paper for each individual elector. This results in huge savings by way of cost of paper, printing, transportation, storage and distribution.
- The counting process is very quick and the result can be declared within 3 to 5 hours as compared to 30-40 hours, on an average, under the conventional Ballot paper system.

### With ballot boxes counting is done after mixing the ballot papers. Is it possible to adopt this system when EVMs are used?

Yes, through use of a device called 'Totalizer' which can accommodate upto 14 Control Units at a time to aggregate votes without revealing the candidate-wise count of individual EVM used at a particular polling station. However, totalizers are not presently in use due to pendency of proposal and court case.

### How long the Control Unit stores the result in its memory?

The Control Unit can store the result in its memory until the data is deleted or cleared.

### Whenever an election petition is filed, the result of the election is subject to the final outcome. The courts, in appropriate cases, may order a recount of votes. Whether EVMs can be stored for such a long time and whether the result can be taken in the presence of the officers authorised by Courts?

The lifespan of an EVM is 15 years & even more and votes recorded in the Control Unit can be stored upto its lifetime until it is cleared. If the Court orders a recount, the Control Unit can be reactivated by fixing the battery and it will display the result stored in its memory.

### Is it possible to vote more than once by pressing the button again and again?

No. As soon as a particular button on the Balloting Unit is pressed, the vote is recorded for that particular candidate and the machine gets locked. Even if one presses that button further or any other button, no further vote will be recorded. This way the EVMs ensure the principle of "one man, one vote". The next vote is enabled only when the Presiding Officer/Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit releases the Ballot by pressing the Ballot Button.

### How can a voter be sure that the EVM is working and his vote has been recorded?

As soon as the voter presses the 'blue button' against the candidate and symbol of his choice, lamp against symbol of that particular candidate glows red and a long beep sound is heard. Thus, there is both audio and visual indications for the voter to be assured that his vote has been recorded correctly. In addition, VVPAT provides an additional visual verification in the form of paper slip to the voter so he can ensure that his vote has been correctly recorded for the candidate of his choice.

### Is it true that sometimes because of short-circuitry or other reason, a voter is likely to get an electric shock while pressing the 'blue button'?

No. EVMs work on a battery and there is absolutely no chance of any voter getting an electric shock at the time of pressing the 'blue button' or at any time of handling the EVM.

### Is it possible to program the EVMs in such a way that initially, say upto 100 votes, votes will be recorded exactly in the same way as the 'blue buttons' are pressed, but thereafter, votes will be recorded only in favor of one particular candidate irrespective of whether the 'blue button' against that candidate or any other candidate is pressed?

The microchip used in EVMs is a one-time programmable/ masked chip, which can neither be read nor overwritten. Hence, the program used in the EVMs cannot be reprogrammed in a particular manner. Furthermore, the EVMs are stand-alone machines which are not accessible remotely from any network are connected with any external devices and there is no operating system used in these machines. There is, therefore, absolutely no chance of programming the EVMs in a particular way to select any particular candidate or political party.

### Will it not be difficult to transport the EVMs to the polling stations?

No. On the contrary, it is easier to transport the EVMs, as compared to ballot boxes as EVMs are lighter, portable and come with custom-made polypropylene carrying cases for ease of portage/transport.

### In many areas of the country, there is no electricity connection and even in those places where there is electricity connection, power supply is erratic. In this scenario will it not create problem in storing the machines without air conditioning?

There is no need to air condition the room/hall where EVMs are stored. What is required is only to keep the room/hall free from dust dampness and rodents as in the case of ballot boxes.

### Approved Identification Documents

- Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) • Passport • Driving License • PAN Card • Pension Card • Pension Book • Freedom Fighter Identity Card
- Service Identity Cards • Passbook • Certificate of Physical Handicapped • SC/ST/OBC certificate • Arms Licenses
- Health Insurance Scheme Smart Card • Job Cards • Property Documents with Photographs

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**In the conventional system, it will be possible to know the total number of votes polled at any particular point of time. In EVMS 'Result' portion is sealed and will be opened only at the time of counting. How can the total number of votes polled be known on the date of poll?**

In addition to the 'Result' button, there is a 'Total' button on EVMS. By pressing this button the total number of votes polled upto the time of pressing the button will be displayed without indicating the candidate-wise result.

**The Balloting Unit has provision for 16 candidates. In a constituency, there are only 10 candidates. The voter may press any of the buttons from 11 to 16. Will these votes not be wasted?**

No. If there are only 10 candidates in a constituency, the 'Candidate' buttons provided at Sl. No. 11 to 16 will not be masked at the time of preparation of EVM by Returning Officer. Therefore, there is no question of any voter pressing any of the buttons for candidates 11 to 16.

**Ballot boxes are engraved so as to avoid any scope for complaint of replacement of these boxes. Is there any system of numbering EVMS?**

Yes. Each Balloting Unit and Control Unit has a unique ID Number, which is engraved on each unit. The list containing ID number of EVM (Balloting Unit & Control Unit) to be used in a particular polling station is prepared and provided to the contesting candidates/their agents.

**In the conventional system, before the commencement of poll, the Presiding Officer shows to the polling agents present that the ballot box to be used in the polling station is empty. Is there any such provision to satisfy the polling agents that there are no hidden votes already recorded in the EVMS?**

Yes. Before the commencement of poll, the Presiding Officer demonstrates to the polling agents present that there are no hidden votes already recorded in the machine by pressing the result button. Thereafter, he conducts a Mock poll with atleast 50 votes in the presence of the polling agents and tallied with the electronic result stored in the CU to fully satisfy the polling agents to satisfy them that the result shown is strictly according to the choice recorded by them. Thereafter, the Presiding Officer will press the clear button to clear the result of the mock poll before commencing the actual poll. He then again shows to polling agents, by pressing 'Total' button that it shows '0'. Then he seals the Control Unit before starting actual poll in the presence of polling agents. Now, with 100% VVPAT use at every polling booth, after the Mock Poll, the VVPAT paper slips are also counted

**How can one rule out the possibility of recording further votes at any time after close of the poll and before the commencement of counting by interested parties?**

After completion of poll i.e. when the last voter has voted, the Officer in-charge of the Control Unit/Presiding Officer presses the 'Close' Button. Thereafter, the EVM does not accept any vote. After the close of poll, the Control Unit is switched off and thereafter the Balloting Unit is disconnected from the Control Unit and kept separately in the respective carrying cases and sealed. Further, the Presiding officer has to hand over to each polling agent a copy of the account of votes recorded. At the time of counting of votes, the total votes recorded in a particular control unit is tallied with this account and if there is any discrepancy, this can be pointed out by the Counting Agents.

**How long the Control Unit stores the result in its memory?**

The Control Unit can store the result in its memory until the data is deleted or cleared.

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