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Q1

In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS II · 10 marks · Constitutional Bodies

Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Core demand of the question

- In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the **Election Commission of India** to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India?
- Show the ECI's constitutional and legal tools, the EVM-VVPAT controversy, and the steps needed to restore public trust

Revision summary

Article 324 and the 1951 Act make the **Election Commission** responsible for a trustworthy poll, not only for a working machine.

The Supreme Court required VVPAT, but sample slip-counting remains too small in the eyes of many parties.

Storage, randomisation, mock poll and same-day mismatch data are the operational weak points.

SVEEP and all-party technical briefings must explain the paper trail, not only turnout.

A larger, statistically designed VVPAT audit is the practical way to keep EVMs without a trust crash.

Flow diagram

Article 324 ECI -> EVM plus VVPAT

EVM plus VVPAT -> Public and party trust

Public and party trust -> Visible audit and mock poll

Public and party trust -> SVEEP and all-party briefings

Visible audit and mock poll -> Trusted election result

Conclusion

- Publish booth-wise mock-poll and VVPAT-mismatch data on the same day, and raise VVPAT verification on a statistically defensible sample agreed with recognised parties.

- Institutionalise a standing all-party technical committee, with the Indian Statistical Institute or a similar public body for audit design, so sampling is not seen as an in-house choice.
- Keep paper ballots only as a last-resort contingency; the reform is a stronger audit trail, not a return to booth-level paper capture.

The **Election Commission** can keep EVMs only if voters can verify that the machine recorded their choice and that a public audit would catch a fraud. **Article 324** already gives the Commission the power; trustworthiness now depends on larger VVPAT checks, open logistics, and plain-language communication, not on a slogan that the machine is "tamper-proof".

Facts & figures

Article 324

Vests superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament and State legislatures in the **Election Commission of India**.

Representation of the People Act, 1951

Principal statute for conduct of elections, corrupt practices, and related Commission powers, read with the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

Subramanian Swamy v. ECI (2013)

Supreme Court held that a voter-verifiable paper audit trail is an indispensable requirement of free and fair elections.

VVPAT sample count (2019)

Supreme Court directed matching of VVPAT slips from five polling stations per Assembly constituency.

Law Commission 255th Report

Electoral-reform report covering, among other things, integrity and transparency of the election process; much of it still awaits legislation.

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