India's First Mobile E-Voting in Bihar

Bihar became the first Indian state to pilot mobile phone-based e-voting in municipal elections **using the E-SECBHR app developed by C-DAC.** The initiative aimed **to improve voting access for senior citizens, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities**.

- To ensure **security and transparency,** the system **used blockchain technology, facial recognition, biometric scanning, voter ID verification,** and limited 2 voters per mobile number.

Recent ECI Electoral Reforms & Privacy Safeguards

- **Restriction on Public Access to Polling Booth CCTV Footage:** The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has restricted public access to **CCTV, webcast, and videography footage** of polling stations citing **voter privacy and security**. As per new rules:
    - **Destruction of footage** is mandated **45 days after result declaration**, unless a **petition is filed.**
    - Footage can only be submitted to a **High Court** hearing an **election petition** & **no other authority or individual may access it** as public release may violate **Section 128 of the Representation of People Act, 1951** (secrecy of voting) and **Supreme Court rulings** that uphold **ballot secrecy**.
        - ECI clarified that videography is **not legally mandated**, and is used only as an **internal management tool**.
    - In **December 2024**, **Rule 93(2)(a)** of the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961** was amended to **exclude CCTV and electronic footage** from public inspection.
- **New Voter-Friendly Measures:** In bye-elections across **5 Assembly Constituencies**, ECI introduced new initiatives to improve **transparency and voter convenience**, including:
    - **Mobile deposit facility** for voters
    - **Real-time voter turnout reporting** via the **ECINET App**
    - **100% webcasting** (except one station)
    - **Individual mock poll training** for all Presiding Officers
    - **Conducted Special Summary Revision (SSR)** to revise the electoral rolls, for the **first time in nearly 20 years.**

ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA

ELECTORAL REFORMS ARE CHANGES MADE TO IMPROVE THE ELECTION PROCESS AND ENSURE FAIRNESS.

Electoral Reforms Before 1996

- **Model Code of Conduct (1969):** Guidelines to regulate political parties and candidates prior to elections
- **61st Constitutional Amendment Act (1988):** Lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 years
- **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) (1989):** Switched from individual colored ballot boxes to ballot papers, and later to EVMs
- **Booth Capturing (1989):** Provision for adjournment of poll or countermanding of elections in such cases
- **Elector's Photo Identity card (EPIC) (1993):** Electoral roll is the basis to issue EPIC to registered electors
- **ECI- A Multi-member Body (1993):** Election commissioners were appointed in addition to CEC

Electoral Reforms of 1996

- **Time-limit for By-elections:** Elections must occur within 6 months of any vacancy in a legislative house
- **Listing of Names of Candidates:** Contesting candidates categorized into 3 groups for listing
  - Recognised & registered-unrecognised political parties
  - Other (independent)
- **Disqualification for Insulting the National Honour Act, 1971:** Leads to election disqualification for 6 years upon:
  - Insulting the National Flag, Constitution of India or preventing the singing of National Anthem

Electoral Reforms After 1996

- **Vote Through Proxy (2003):** Service voters in Armed Forces & forces under Army Act can vote by proxy
- **Allocation of Time on Electronic Media (2003):** Equitable sharing of time on electronic media during elections to address the public
- **Introduction of Braille Signage Features in EVMs (2004):** To facilitate the visually impaired voters to cast their votes without an attendant

Electoral Reforms Since 2010

- **Voting Rights to Indian Citizens Living Abroad (2010)**
- **Online Enrollment in Electoral Roll (2013)**
- **Introduction of NOTA option (2014)**
- **VVPAT Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (2013):** Introduction of VVPAT with EVMs to conduct free and fair elections
- **Photos of Candidates on EVMs and Ballot Papers (2015):** To prevent confusion in constituencies with namesake candidates
- **Introduction of Electoral bonds (2017 Budget):** An alternative to cash donations for political parties
  - Declared as unconstitutional by SC (2024)
- **Launch of Electronic EPIC (2021)**
- **Home Voting for People with Disabilities & Those Above 85 years of Age (2024)**

IMPORTANT COMMITTEES/ COMMISSION

Committees/ Commission	Year	Purpose
Tarkunde Committee	1974	By Jaya Prakash Narayan (JP) during the "Total Revolution" movement.
Dinesh Goswami Committee	1990	Electoral Reforms
Vohra Committee	1993	On the Nexus between Crime and Politics
Indrajit Gupta Committee	1998	State Funding of Elections
Second Administrative Reforms Commission of India	2007	Report on Ethics in Governance (Headed by Veerappa Moily)
Tankha Committee (Core Committee)	2010	To look into the whole gamut of the election laws & electoral reforms.

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Read More: Electoral Reforms in India

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