



SC Notice to EC over VVPAT's

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The Supreme Court (SC) has issued a notice to the Election Commission (EC) on a **plea by leaders from 21 political parties who wanted random verification of at least 50% Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) using their Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips** in the upcoming general elections.

Background

- There are **concerns** being raised by many political parties **regarding the functioning of EVMs**.
- To allay these fears, **EC has decided that it will verify VVPAT slips of only one randomly selected booth of a constituency**.
- Recently, the SC has directed the EC to respond to a plea that the counts from EVMs and VVPAT units should be cross-verified in at least 30% randomly chosen polling stations in each assembly and Lok Sabha constituency.

Argument of Petitioner

- Randomly verifying at least 50% Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) using their Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips in the upcoming elections was in the interest of free and fair elections, which is part of the basic structure of the Constitution.
- The 50% randomized verification in each assembly constituency/assembly segment is a reasonable sample size to
 - allay the fears of the general public with regard to EVM tampering and;
 - be a statistically significant sample size to ensure that EVMs are working properly.
- The decision of ECI to verify VVPAT of only one randomly selected booth of a constituency will account only for 0.44% of the votes polled.
 - This guideline defeats the entire purpose of VVPAT and makes the same "ornamental" without actual substance.
 - The petition refers to the decision in ***Dr. Subramanian Swamy v ECI (2013)*** which

held that VVPAT is an "indispensable requirement of free and fair elections". To give meaningful effect to this judgment, at least 50% of VVPAT should be verified.

Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail

- VVPAT is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines. It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.
- When a voter presses a button in the EVM, a paper slip is printed through the VVPAT. The slip contains the poll symbol and name of the candidate. It allows the voter to verify his/her choice.
- After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard.
- VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.