



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are the advantages of EVM over paper ballots? What are the concerns still remaining in this regard? (250 words)

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Approach

- Give brief introduction w.r.t. use of EVM in India.
- Provide the advantages of using EVM's over paper ballot.
- Describe the concerns associated with use of EVM.

Answer

Introduction:

- Electronic Voting Machines (EVM's) were manufactured in 1989-90 were first used in the November 1998 elections. This was done on an experimental basis in 16 assembly constituencies in the states of Madhya Pradesh (5), Rajasthan (5) and Delhi (6). It was then felt that EVMs were a step in the right direction.
- The 2004 Lok Sabha elections were the first lok sabha conducted using EVMs.

Body

Advantages of EVM over Paper ballots:

- The printing of millions of ballot papers is dispensed with, thereby saving costs of paper, printing, transportation, storage and distribution.
- There are no invalid or bogus votes, no voter can cast vote more than once.
- An EVM permits only 240 votes per hour. Hence, the stuffing of votes (as in ballot boxes) is not possible.
- EVM reduces the chance of booth capturing thus it empower people from weaker sections of society who were victims of electoral violence and electoral malpractices.
- An EVM run on an ordinary 6-volt battery, therefore, it can be used in remote areas without electricity.
- The counting of votes is quicker and efficient in electronic voting, compared to counting of votes in ballot polls.
- It reduces the time that government officials; government teachers spent on election duty thus allowing them to work on their core executive functions.

Concerns associated with EVM

- Opposition parties have since long shown their concern regarding the possibility of tampering of EVM thus manipulating and subverting the electoral process.
- Opposition and civil society also criticize the use of statistically insignificant sample of VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) for one randomly selected booth per constituency. They have demanded that at least 50% of VVPAT slips should be counted to verify that EVM are not rigged.

- Recently an EVM was found on a highway in Rajasthan and another one found in a MLA house. These instances have created doubt about efficacy of EVM for fair electoral process.

Conclusion:

- Despite opposition parties claims administrative and technical safeguards instituted by the ECI and EVM manufacturers have held steady. Since the introduction of the EVMs there has been no evidence of EVM-tampering.
- However, it is important to remove the concerns regarding EVM machines as popular faith in electoral process is critical pillar of democracy. For this use of VVPAT can be expanded to such number of booth which is statistically significant yet practical to implement.

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