

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

ECI/PN/100 /2022

29.12.2022

Press Note

ECI ready to pilot remote voting for domestic migrants; migrant voter need not travel back to home state to vote

ECI develops prototype Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM); invites political parties for demonstration of prototype RVM

Prototype RVM can handle multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth

ECI floats concept note soliciting views from Political Parties on legal, operational, administrative and technological challenges

Migration based disenfranchisement is indeed not an option in the age of technological advancement. The voter turnout in General Elections 2019 was 67.4 % and the Election Commission of India is concerned about the issue of over 30 Crore electors not exercising their franchise and also differential voter turnout in various States/UTs. It is understood that there are multifarious reasons for a voter not opting to register in a new place of residence, thus missing out on exercising the right to vote. Inability to vote due to internal migration (domestic migrants) is one of the prominent reasons to be addressed to improve voter turnout and ensure participative elections. Although there is no central database available for migration within the country, the analysis of available data in public domain points to work, marriage and education related migration as important components of domestic migration. Out-migration is predominant among the rural population in overall domestic migration. Approximately 85% of the internal migration is within the States.

Soon after assuming office as Chief Election Commissioner, Shri Kumar's learning of domestic migration issues first hand from his trek to Dumak village in Chamoli district, focused his attention on enabling the migrant voters to exercise their franchise from their current place of residence. Realising such empowerment would entail a host of legal, statutory, administrative and technological interventions, ECI team has deliberated at length to find inclusive solutions to facilitate electoral participation of migrants across all socio-economic strata and explored alternative voting methods like two-way physical transit postal ballots, proxy voting, early voting at special Early Voting Centres, one-way or two-way electronic transmission of postal ballots (ETPBS), Internet-based voting system etc.

With the objective of finding a technological solution which is credible, accessible and acceptable to all stakeholders, the Commission headed by Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar along with Election Commissioners Shri Anup Chandra Pandey and Shri Arun Goel has now explored the option of using a modified version of the time-tested model of M3 EVMs to enable voting at remote polling stations i.e., polling stations outside home constituency, for domestic migrants. The migrant voter would thus need not travel back to his/her home district to exercise his/her franchise of voting.

A concept note has been circulated amongst political parties (<https://eci.gov.in/files/file/14714-letter-to-political-parties-on-discussion-on-improving-voter-participation-of-domestic-migrant-using-remote-voting/>) highlighting the challenges of defining domestic migrants, implementation of Model Code of Conduct, ensuring secrecy of voting, facility of polling agents for identification of voters, process and method of remote voting and counting of votes amongst other issues.

Legal Challenges	Administrative Challenges	Technological Challenges
<p>Laws/Rules needing amendments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP Act, 1950 & 1951 • The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 • The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 <p>Defining Migrant Voter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poll day absence to permanently shifted • Retain registration at original place in the context of ‘ordinary residence’ & ‘temporary absence’ legal construct <p>Defining Remote Voting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with territorial constituency concept • Defining remoteness: outside constituency, outside district or outside state 	<p>Enumerating remote voters-self declaration?</p> <p>Providing controlled environment - ensuring secrecy of voting at remote locations</p> <p>Provision of polling agents at remote voting booths & ensuring identification of voters to avoid impersonation</p> <p>Number of booths to be set up & locations</p> <p>Appointment of polling personnel for remote polling stations and supervision thereof</p> <p>Implementation of MCC in remote location (other State)</p>	<p>Method of remote voting</p> <p>Familiarity of the voters with the methods/ Multi-Constituency Remote EVM or any other technology.</p> <p>Counting of votes cast at remote booths and transmit to RO located in other State.</p>

The Commission in association with a renowned Public Sector Undertaking is now ready to pilot a Multi Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM) for facilitating participation of domestic migrants from their remote locations itself i.e., the places of their current residence for purposes of education/employment, etc., for voting for their home

constituencies. This modified form of EVM can handle up to 72 multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth. The initiative, if implemented, can lead to a social transformation for the migrants and connect with their roots as many times they are reluctant to get themselves enrolled at their place of work for various reasons such as frequently changing residences, not enough social and emotional connect with the issues of area of migration, unwillingness to get their name deleted in electoral roll of their home/native constituencies as they have permanent residence/property etc.

The Commission has invited all Recognised 08 National and 57 State Political Parties on **16.1.2023** to demonstrate the functioning of the multi-constituency prototype Remote EVM. The Technical Expert Committee members will also be present. The Commission has also solicited written views of recognised political parties by **31.01.2023** on various related issues including changes required in legislation, changes in administrative procedures and voting method/RVM/technology, if any other, for the domestic migrants.

Based on the feedback received from various stakeholders and demonstration of the prototype, the Commission will appropriately carry forward the process of implementing remote voting method.



Anuj Chandak
Joint Director (Media)