

## Supreme Court Order on VVPAT Verification

### Why in news?

The Supreme Court has recently directed the Election Commission (EC) to increase random checking of VVPAT slips to five per Assembly segment.

### What is the SC's order?

- Earlier, VVPAT slips from only one Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in every Assembly segment/constituency was subjected to physical verification.
- SC has now directed the EC to increase this to five.
- In general elections, VVPAT slips of five EVMs in each Assembly segment of a Parliamentary Constituency would be subjected to physical counting.
- In State Assembly elections, this would extend to five random EVMs in each Assembly constituency.
- The Supreme Court order would be implemented in this Lok Sabha polls (2019).
- Notably, there was a demand from Opposition parties for VVPAT verification in 50% or 125 polling booths in each constituency. Click [here](#) to know more.

### Why not 50%?

- The opposition's idea would be a drain on the ECI's infrastructural resources and manpower.
- VVPAT slip counting takes place in specially erected VVPAT counting booths.
- It takes place under the close monitoring of the returning officer and direct oversight of the observer.
- So a 50% VVPAT verification would require a huge increase in extra personnel in each of the 4,125 polling stations.
- The ECI also said that a 50% random physical verification of VVPATs would delay Lok Sabha poll results of 2019 by six whole days.
- Given these, the court said VVPAT verification of 5 EVMs, rather than in 125 polling booths, is more "viable at this point of time."

### Is it a welcome move?

- The higher figure will increase the overall number of EVMs to be counted to close to 20,000 machines.
- This should reasonably address the very remote possibility of 'insider fraud'.

- The court also stated that the aim is to ensure the greatest degree of accuracy and satisfaction in election process.
- However, in effect, the increase to 5 EVMs from 1 would only increase the VVPAT verification percentage from 0.44% to less than 2%.
- Nevertheless, in any case, the VVPAT slip verification is more of a reassurance to voters that the EVM is indeed foolproof.

### **What is the real problem?**

- For the ECI, the key technical issue with EVMs and VVPATs is not really in regard to tampering but to machine glitches.
- The parliamentary by-elections in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the Assembly election in Karnataka in 2018 had registered significant machine replacement rates (20% and 4%, respectively).
- But these were brought down to less than 2% in later elections held in the winter months.
- The availability of replacement machines and the ability to deploy them quickly in case of a failure of VVPATs are essential to avoid disruptions in the coming elections.

**Source: The Hindu**

