Usage of VVPATs in Elections

Why in news?

The Election Commission has recently announced that there will be 100% use of VVPATs during the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

What is a VVPAT system?

- Voter verifiable paper audit trial (VVPAT) is an independent system attached to an EVM that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended.
- When a vote is cast, a slip is printed on the VVPAT printer containing the serial number, name and symbol of the candidate voted.
- This remains visible to you through a transparent window for seven seconds.
- Thereafter, this printed slip automatically gets cut and falls into a sealed drop box.
- If there is a need, these printouts can later be counted.



How did the VVPAT system evolve in India?

- Many political parties expressed their satisfaction with EVMs initially.
- But some parties requested the Commission to consider introducing VVPATs for further transparency and verifiability of the votes cast.
- The Commission referred the matter to its technical committee on EVMs to examine and make a recommendation to the Commission.
- The committee first met with the manufacturers and then with political parties and other civil society members to explore the design requirements of the VVPAT system.
- In 2011, BEL and ECIL made a prototype of the VVPAT and demonstrated it to the technical committee and the Election Commission.
- In the same year the Commission conducted simulated elections for the field trial of the VVPAT system in various places including Thiruvananthapuram, Ladakh, Cherrapunji and Jaisalmer.
- Two years later, the government amended the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 allowing the Commission to use VVPATs along with EVMs.
- These were first used in the bye-election for the Noksen Assembly seat in Nagaland in 2013.

- Thereafter VVPATs have been used in select constituencies in every election to the State Assemblies.
- They were deployed in eight Parliamentary constituencies during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, VVPATs will be used in all the constituencies.

Why is it important?

- In the world's largest democracy, every vote counts and the EVMs and VVPATs try and ensure that the massive election process is in tune with the latest technological advancements.
- The Election Commission has never doubted the workings of EVMs and their utility in a free and fair electoral process.
- However, VVPATs add another layer of transparency and reliability to convince voters about the sanctity of EVMs.
- EVMs and VVPATs also quicken the election process as counting votes on EVMs takes much lesser time than counting paper ballots.
- The EVMs and VVPATs are also environment-friendly as they use very little paper compared to paper ballots.

Source: Business Line

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