

Electronic Voting Machines (EVS) a Threat To Right To Vote And Fair Election.

Lawyers For Human Rights International in a press conference held at Chandigarh Press Club alleged that the Tamperable Electronic Voting Machines (E.V.M.) is a threat to right to vote and free and fair election. Free and Fair election are a very basic for the survival of democracy. Exercising of right to vote and for assuring that the vote which is cast is accounted in favour of the candidate and party which one likes is the very essence of democracy. There was a time when ballot papers were printed and the votes were manually cast in the election, but now the ballot paper has been replaced by electronic voting machines and everybody seems to be very happy with quick process and speedy declaration of election result. However, a strong and a large majority of people feel that the E.V.M machines are temperable. They think that the machines can be hacked and manipulated in favour or against a candidate/political party. If this is true, then the election process would end up being a farce and democracy would be at peril.

In the western world, specially Europe, most of the democracies in order to ensure free and fair elections have shifted to E.V.M with voter verifiable paper audit trail system or are sticking to paper ballot. The system of the V.V.P.A.T is that one casts one's vote electronically but a receipt is printed by the machine attached to the system, where one's vote has been cast, whereas in the normal E.V.M that are used at present one just presses the button as per the choice of symbol allotted to candidate, but the voter never knows as to where the vote has been cast and whether it is as per the choice of voter.

A petition was filed in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India by Dr. Subramanian Swamy & others against the Election Commission of India in year 2012, where a prayer was made before the Hon'ble apex court of India to direct the Election Commission of India to introduce E.V.M with V.V.P.A.T system in order to ensure free and fair elections. The Election Commission of India submitted before the Supreme Court that it would require approximately 10 lac voting machines for the whole of the country. In order to introduce the same in the whole of the nation, the Election Commission of India said that it would require some time to ensure availability of E.V.M with V.V.P.A.T. system. The apex Court allowed the Election Commission to do so in a phased manner. The said petition was decided by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on 8th, October, 2013.

That the Election Commission of India placed an order with 2 Government of India public undertakings for manufacturing of such machines. However, it come to light that though the Election Commission of India seemingly placed an orders for 1,07,300 voting machines, but in fact it has only 20,000 machines at its disposal to use in the coming elections of

Punjab, Uttar Pardesh, Uttrakhand, Manipur and Goa. It is essential to state that Punjab has 117 Vidhan Sabha constituencies, with polling booths totaling in 22,603. The Election Commission is only making arrangement for using of said V.V.P.A.T machines in just 12 constituencies, and that too in merely 2,123 polling booths. Hence, the effort on the part of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, which gave time to Election Commission on 8th October-2013, to make available E.V.M machines with paper trail system has been set to naught, due to the inaction of the Election Commission of India.

That Dr. Ishavar Das Singh who has sought support from our organisation, has filed a Contempt Petition in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, Dr. Ishavar Das Singh also personally met and gave written representation to V.K.Singh chief electoral Officer Punjab, but no response has been received by him.

That our organisation feels that the Election Commission of India is at a fault in not honouring its commitment before Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, which results into a situation that in the coming Election of 5 state including Punjab, the elections could be rigged in favour of powers that matter and the election process is vulnerable to fraud. Through the present press conference, we want to attract people at large and media to ensure Election Commission is forced to speed up the process of delivery and deployment of the E.V.M machines with paper trail system, so that democracy may survive.