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PRESS RELEASE

Citizens' Collective Demands Immediate Action from Election Commission on Electoral Transparency and Accountability, launches National Campaign for Accountability in the Electoral Process

➢ Why are Voters List, Past and Present not available in a searchable database on the ECI website?

➢ Why is Aggregate Voter Count Data & all Form 17-Cs not available in a searchable database on the ECI website?

➢ Why are Forms 9,10, 11, 11 A, 11 B which contain all Procedural Data on Voter Roll Revisions (Additions and Deletions) not available in a searchable database, in a transparent and accessible format.

➢ Why is the EVM Source Code not Open Source and publicly inspectable to enable independent verification of software integrity across all machines?

➢ Why is there no Full Disclosure of Symbol Loading Unit (SLU) contents with access/monitoring and oversight from Independent Technical Experts?

➢ Why are the VVPAT Slips not counted in their entirety?

Does not India have a clumsy, semi-automated, Electronic Voting System (EVS) riddled with technical vulnerabilities that needs urgent change/redressal?

A Collective of Concerned Citizens, Technical Experts, and people's/civil society organisations has served a memorandum on the Election Commission of India (ECI), outlining serious **concerns on the** Commission's continued silence and inaction on grave concerns surrounding the transparency and integrity of India's electoral process. The memorandum follows an earlier notice served in July 2024 and reiterates **Six Urgent Demands** to **restore public confidence in the electoral system.**

The group of citizens and organisations, coordinated through *Vote for Democracy (VFD)*, has questioned the ECI's growing proximity to the political executive, its failure and reluctance to observe the sanctity of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and curb divisive speech and overall, the erosion of its independence. Drawing on data from a CSDS survey, the memorandum notes that only 28% of Indians today retain trust in the Election Commission—an alarming indicator of democratic backsliding.

A national campaign for Accountability in the Electoral Process has also been launched. A recent three hour long national consultation with people's organisations and civil society groups has resulted in this Memorandum to the Election Commission with **six key demands. State-wide consultations with Expert Committees will be scheduled shortly.**

This memorandum has been endorsed by **83 prominent individuals** from across the country, including **computer scientists, technology experts, former judges and civil servants, journalists, and grassroots activists**, all unified in their demand for electoral integrity. Among the signatories are **MG Devasahayam** (former IAS and Army officer), **Madhav Deshpande** (Computer Scientist and Expert), **Professor Harish Karnick** (Computer Science Expert) **Justice D. Hariparanthaman** and **Justice B.G. Kolse Patil** (Former High Court Judges), **Aruna Roy** (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan), **Venkatesh Nayak** (CHRI), **Anjali Bhardwaj**, **E.A.S. Sarma IAS (Retd)**, **Prashant Tandon** (Senior Journalist & Political Commentator) **Teesta Setalvad,** (Senior Journalist and Writer), **Raju Parulekar** (Writer & Political Commentator) among others. Their collective expertise spans election law, public policy, data systems, and human rights, adding both credibility and urgency to the six demands outlined. Their intervention reflects a growing national concern over the erosion of electoral transparency and the critical need for systemic reform.

Memorandum to ECI

Citing systemic flaws, the group highlighted manipulation at multiple levels—from opaque voter list management to tampering possibilities within the Electronic Voting System (EVS). Notably, they emphasised that the design and operation of India's Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), far from being foolproof, are riddled with technical vulnerabilities and procedural lapses that compromise their reliability.

Among the critical points raised in the memorandum are: A complete lack of transparency and absence of independent monitoring of the Symbol Loading Units (SLUs),

- Failure to release key electoral data such as Form 17C and VVPAT records,
- Inaccessibility of updated, searchable voter rolls to the general public, and
- Refusal to subject the EVM source code to public scrutiny.

The memorandum outlines six key demands that the ECI must fulfil immediately:

1. **Public, searchable voter rolls**: Make all past and present voters' lists, with detailed additions and deletions, available in a searchable format on the ECI website to enable public verification.
2. **Form 17C Transparency**: Upload all Form 17C data (record of votes polled) from each booth and constituency, along with aggregate vote counts, in a searchable database for public scrutiny.
3. **Access to Voter List Revision forms**: Release Forms 9, 10, 11, 11A, and 11B, which contain data on voter roll revisions (additions and deletions), in a searchable database, in a transparent and accessible format.
4. **Open the EVM source code**: Make the EVM source code open source and publicly inspectable to enable independent verification of software integrity across all machines.
5. **Full disclosure of SLU contents**: Allow public inspection and upload the complete contents of each Symbol Loading Unit used in elections, with access/monitoring and oversight from independent technical experts.
6. **Restore paper ballot verifiability**: Modify the VVPAT process to allow the slip to be handed to the voter for manual deposit into a separate ballot box, followed by **100% counting** of these slips. Final vote counts must be based solely on these physical paper records.

The signatories to the memorandum have underscored that the current semi-automated, disjointed architecture of the EVS, comprising over 10.5 lakh standalone voting machines, makes it vulnerable to both human error and political manipulation. The absence of basic audit trails, like verified 17C forms or consistent VVPAT tallies, undermines electoral legitimacy.

Referring to international best practices and findings from the Citizens Commission on Elections, the memorandum stresses that unless voting technology is open to independent auditing and verification, the Indian electorate's faith in free and fair elections will continue to deteriorate. The signatories have urged the Election Commission of India to engage in meaningful dialogue with citizens, technical experts, and political representatives to address these longstanding concerns. The six demands outlined are not only feasible but essential to restoring faith in India's electoral integrity. A refusal to act on these fronts would signal a continued disregard for democratic accountability and further erode public trust in the electoral process. The time for transparency is now.

For further information please access the full memorandum at: https://votefordemocracy.org.in and sabrangindia.in

National Campaign for Accountability of the Electoral Process has also been launched

\# After a three-hour long consultation held recently a representation has been sent to Election Commission with six key demands emerged during discussions within civil society groups. \# Dozens of civil society groups, public intellectuals including former bureaucrats and professionals have come together to launch a nationwide campaign for a fair electoral process and an accountable Election Commission

\# Participants n consultation felt the need for a greater overhaul of the electoral system and the campaign will cover all aspects of conduct of elections including EVMs, unfair execution of Model Code, how level play field is disturbed elections after elections.

\# A national chorus for replacing EVMs with ballot paper is getting louder. The campaign has taken note of this will create a consensus for this among stake holders and electorate.

\# Soon after Lok Sabha election serious doubts have been raised about the credibility of electoral process which after Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi assembly elections got further amplified.

\# Sanctity of electoral roll is a big cause of concern. How 37 lakh new voters have been added just in 5 months before Maharashtra elections with no satisfactory explanation by EC indicates the scale of malpractices. Similar instances of addition and deletion of large-scale electorates have been reported in Haryana, Delhi, West Bengal and many other states.

\# A national campaign for Accountability in the Electoral Process has also been launched. A detailed programme will soon be released of the campaign.

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