Electronic Voting Machines and VVPAT

Electronic Voting Machines

Question300. What is an Electronic Voting machine? In what way its functioning is different from the conventional system of voting?
Answer. An Electronic Voting Machine consists of two Units – a Control Unit and a Balloting Unit – joined by a five-meter cable. The Control Unit is with the Presiding Officer or a Polling Officer and the Balloting Unit is placed inside the voting compartment. Instead of issuing a ballot paper, the Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit will press the Ballot Button. This will enable the voter to cast his vote by pressing the blue button on the Balloting Unit against the candidate and symbol of his choice.

Question301. How can EVMs be used in areas where there is no electricity?
Answer. EVMs run on an ordinary 7.5 volt alkaline battery manufactured by Bharat Electronics Ltd., Bangalore and Electronic Corporation of India Ltd., Hyderabad. Therefore, even in areas with no power connections, EVMs can be used.

Question302. What is the maximum number of votes which can be cast in EVMs?
Answer. The number of votes cast in EVM varies with its model as given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Model</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Pre 2006 EVMs</td>
<td>3840</td>
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<td>II.</td>
<td>Post 2006 EVMs</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>III.</td>
<td>Upgraded Post 2006 EVMs</td>
<td>2000</td>
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Question303. What is the maximum number of candidates which EVMs can cater to?
Answer. EVMs can cater to a maximum of 64 candidates including NOTA. There is provision for 16 candidates in a Balloting Unit. If the total number of candidates exceeds 16, a second Balloting Unit can be linked parallel to the first Balloting Unit. Similarly, if the total number of candidates exceeds 32, a third Balloting Unit can be attached and if the total number of candidates exceeds 48, a fourth Balloting Unit can be attached to cater to a maximum of 64 candidates. The upgraded Post 2006 can cater to 24 BUs i.e., 384 candidates including NOTA.

Question304. What will happen if the number of contesting candidates in a constituency goes 64 or above?
Answer. In case the number of contesting candidates goes beyond 64 in any constituency, Pre & Post 2006 EVMs cannot be used in such a constituency. The conventional method of voting by means of ballot box and ballot paper will have to be adopted in such a constituency. However, in case of upgraded Post 2006 (2013 onward) EVMs can be used upto 384 candidates.

Question305. What will happen if the EVM in a particular polling station goes out of order?
Answer. An Officer is put on duty to cover about 10 polling stations on the day of poll. He will be carrying spare EVMs and the out-of-order EVM can be replaced with a new one. The votes recorded until the stage when the EVM went out of order will be safe in the memory of the Control Unit and it will be sufficient to proceed with the polling after the EVM went out of order. It is not necessary to start the poll from the beginning.
Question 306. In our country a sizeable section of the population being illiterate will it not cause problems for the illiterate voters?
Answer. In fact, voting by EVMs is simpler compared to the conventional system, where one has to put the voting mark on or near the symbol of the candidate of his choice, fold it first vertically and then horizontally and thereafter put it into the ballot box. In EVMs, the voter has to simply press the blue button against the candidate and symbol of his choice and the vote is recorded. Rural and illiterate people had no difficulty in recording their votes and, in fact they have welcomed the use of EVMs.

Question 307. How can booth capturing be prevented by the use of EVMs?
Answer. The presiding Officer or one of the Polling Officers can press the "close" button as soon as they see some intruders inside the polling station. It will not be possible to record any vote when once the ‘close’ button is pressed. This way the further recording of votes in EVM is prevented and this will frustrate the efforts of the booth-capturers.

Question 308. What are the advantages in using EVMs?
Answer. The most important advantage is that the printing of millions of ballot papers can be dispensed with, as only one ballot paper is required for fixing on the Balloting Unit at each polling station instead of one ballot paper for each individual elector. This results in huge savings by way of cost of paper, printing, transportation, storage and distribution. Secondly, counting is very quick and the result can be declared within 2 to 3 hours as compared to 30-40 hours, on an average, under the conventional system. Thirdly, there are no invalid votes under the system of voting under EVMs. The importance of this will be better appreciated, if it is remembered that in General Elections, the number of invalid votes is more than the winning margin between the winning candidate and the second candidate, in a number of constituencies. To this extent, the choice of the electorate will be more correctly reflected when EVMs are used.

Question 309. Does the use of EVMs slow down the pace of poll?
Answer. No. In fact the pace of poll is quickened by the use of EVMs as it is not necessary for the voter to first unfold the ballot paper, mark his preference, fold it again, go to the place where the ballot box is kept and drop it in the box. What he has to do under the system of EVMs is simply to press the button near the candidate and symbol of his choice.

Question 310. How long the Control Unit stores the result in its memory?
Answer. The Control Unit can store the result in its memory for 10 years and even more.

Question 311. Wherever an election petition is filed, the result of the election is subject to the final outcome. The courts, in appropriate cases, may order a recount of votes. Whether EVMs can be stored for such a long time and whether the result can be taken in the presence of the officers authorized by Courts? Will not the battery leak or otherwise damage EVMs?
Answer. The battery is required only to activate the EVMs at the time of polling and counting. As soon as the polling is over, the battery can be switched off and this will be required to be switched on only at the time of counting. The battery can be removed as soon as the result is taken and can be kept separately. Therefore, there is no question of battery leaking or otherwise damaging EVMs. Even when the battery is removed the memory in the microchip remains intact.
If the Court orders a recount, the Control Unit can be reactivated by fixing the battery and it will display the result stored in the memory.

Question312. Is it possible to vote more than once by pressing the button again and again?
Answer. No. As soon as a particular button on the Balloting Unit is pressed, the vote is recorded for that particular candidate and the machine gets locked. Even if one presses that button further or any other button, no further vote will be recorded. This way the EVMs ensure the principle of "one man, one vote".

Question313. How can a voter be sure that the EVM is working and his vote has been recorded?
Answer. As soon as the voter presses the `blue button’ against the candidate and symbol of his choice, a tiny lamp on the left side of the symbol glows red and simultaneously a long beep sound is heard. Thus, there is both audio and visual indications for the voter to be assured that his vote has been recorded.

Question314. Will it not be difficult to transport the EVMs to the polling stations?
Answer. No. Rather it will be easier to transport the EVMs compared to ballot boxes as EVMs are lighter, portable and come with polypropylene carrying cases.

Question315. In many areas of the country, there is no electricity connection and even in those places where there is electricity connection, power supply is erratic. In this scenario will it not create problem in storing the machines without air conditioning?
Answer. There is no need to air condition the room/hall where EVMs are stored. What is required is only to keep the room/hall free from dust dampness and rodents.

Question316. How can a presiding officer know hourly turn out of votes in the polling station by means of EVM?
Answer. By pressing total button on EVM the presiding officer can see the total number of votes poll up to the time of pressing the button.

Question317. The Balloting Unit has provision for 16 candidates. In a constituency, there are only 10 candidates. The voter may press any of the buttons from 11 to 16. Will these votes not be wasted?
Answer. No. The panels for candidates Nos. 11 to 16 will be masked before use. Further, recording of votes for candidates 11 to 16 will also be blanked off electronically, as the candidates’ switch is set on 10. Therefore, there is no question of any voter pressing any of the buttons for candidates 11 to 16 or the votes for these candidates being recorded in the EVMs.

Question318. Ballot boxes are engraved so as to avoid any scope for complaint of replacement of these boxes. Is there any system of numbering EVMs?
Answer. Yes. Each Control Unit has a unique ID Number, which is engraved on the metal plate fixed on the back of each unit. Moreover, bar code sticker is pasted. Display has also unique ID of the unit. This ID Number will be allowed to be noted by the Polling Agents and will also be recorded in a Register maintained for the purpose by the Returning Officer. The address tag attached to the Control Unit also will indicate this ID Number. Therefore, there is no question of replacement of any EVM.
Question 319. Is there any provision for issue of tendered ballot papers when EVMs are used?
Answer. Yes. There is provision for issue of tendered ballot papers under the system of EVMs also. But, when such a situation arises, the voter concerned will be issued an ordinary ballot paper. After marking the ballot paper with the arrow cross mark rubber stamp supplied, the tendered ballot paper will be put inside a cover specially provided for the purpose, sealed and kept by the Presiding Officer.

Question 320. In the conventional system, before the commencement of poll, the Presiding Officer shows to the polling agents present that the ballot box to be used in the polling station is empty. Is there any such provision to satisfy the polling agents that there are no hidden votes already recorded in the EVMs?
Answer. Yes. Before the commencement of poll, the Presiding Officer demonstrates to the polling agents present that there are no hidden votes already recorded in the machine by pressing the result button. Thereafter, he will conduct a mock poll by asking the polling agents to record their votes and will take the result to satisfy them that the result shown is strictly according to the choice recorded by them. Thereafter, the Presiding Officer will press the clear button to clear the result of the mock poll before commencing the actual poll.

Question 321. How can one rule out the possibility of recording further votes at any time after close of the poll and before the commencement of counting by interested parties?
Answer. As soon as the last voter has voted, the Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit will press the ‘Close’ Button. Thereafter, the EVM will not accept any vote. Further, after the close of poll, the Balloting Unit is disconnected from the Control Unit and kept separately. Votes can be recorded only through the Balloting Unit. Again the Presiding officer, at the close of the poll, will hand over to each polling agent present an account of votes recorded. At the time of counting of votes, the total will be tallied with this account and if there is any discrepancy, this will be pointed out by the Counting Agents.

Question 322. How do voters cast their vote using EVMs?
Answer. The balloting unit of the EVM will have a securely held ballot paper on it showing the names and photographs of the candidates along with their symbols. The Presiding/Polling Officer in charge of the Control unit will press the ballot button before allowing the voter to enter the voting chamber. When the ballot button on the control unit is pressed, the balloting unit becomes ready for recording one vote which is indicated by the ready lamp on the balloting unit. Now the voter has to simply press the blue candidate button on the balloting unit against the name and symbol of the candidate of his choice.

Question 323. What is printed in the ballot paper which is put in the balloting unit?
Answer. The ballot paper put on the balloting unit contains name, symbol and photograph of the candidates.

Question 324. Can a voter ask for help from Presiding Officer as to how to cast vote in the EVM?
Answer. Yes. Presiding Officer can explain to the voter the voting process using the cardboard model (replica) of the EVM balloting unit (which is provided at polling station) in such a manner
that voter is able to understand but only in the presence of polling agents and not inside the
voting compartment.

Question 325. Whether a candidate can print Dummy Ballot Papers using his own name and
symbols and indicating the place where it would appear as a publicity material for educating the
voters?
Answer. Yes. Such Dummy Ballot Papers can be printed on any colour but not in pink and white
colour and not showing the names and symbols of other candidates.

Question 326. Is there any system of “randomization” of EVMs before same are allotted to
concerned Polling Stations?
Answer. Yes. The EVMs are thoroughly checked and randomized first at the level of District
Election Officer in the presence of representatives of recognized political parties and thereafter
randomized list of EVMs allotted to each Assembly Constituency is given to the representatives
of such parties and if a representative of party is not available, still such list is sent to such
party’s office. Second randomization of EVMs is done by Returning Officer in the presence of
Observer and representatives of candidates for allotting to specific polling stations. A list of such
EVMs indicating current ID and machine No. allotted to each polling station is given to
representatives of candidates.

Question 327. Is there any procedure to seal the EVM before it is used for polling?
Answer. Physical sealing of different segments of an EVM is done to prevent access to the
buttons controlling various processes of the poll. This is done in several stages. Sealing of ballot
screen of the balloting unit and the candidate set section of the control unit is done under the
supervision of Returning Officer in the presence of the candidates or their agents to prevent
tampering with the alignment of the ballot paper and making unwanted changes in the candidate
buttons that are actually required for a particular poll. Similarly, the ‘result section’ is sealed at
any the polling station after the mock poll, so that no one can see the result of a particular polling
station before it is taken up for counting at the counting center on the specified date. The
candidates or their agents are invited by the election authorities to put their signatures on the
tags/paper seals alongwith the seals of the Returning/Presiding Officers.

Question 328. After poll, where the EVMs are kept till counting?
Answer. The polled EVMs are stored in a secure storage centre in the constituency or a nearby
place on which the candidates or their representatives can keep a watch. Mostly it is the same
place where the counting is made.

Question 329. At the time of counting suppose a display in EVM is not showing the result. In
such case how the result can be verified?
Answer. The manufacturers of the EVMs have developed an “Auxiliary Display Unit. With the
use of this ADU, results can be retrieved most of the times when there is a failure of the original
display on the Control unit.

Question 330. How the votes are counted in EVMs?
Answer. In the Counting Centre, the EVMs are kept on a number of counting tables whose
number does not normally exceed 14. Seating arrangements are made for the counting agents in
such a way that they can clearly watch the EVM and its display. When the result button on the control unit of an EVM is pressed, its display segment indicates the total number of votes polled in a particular polling station and then shows the votes polled by each candidate in serial order. Besides the counting staff, these are noted by the counting agents also. At the end of each round, the result of that round and the progressive total is announced. The result is compiled by summing up the round wise totals.

Question 331. How the numbers of contesting candidates are set in EVM? Answer. For setting up the number of contesting candidates the candidate set button is pressed after linking balloting unit with the control unit. As soon as candidates set button in Control Unit is pressed the display shows “candidate set”. On display of this message the last button that is NOTA button is to be pressed.

Question 332. Which paper seal is fixed at the time of First Level Checking? What is done after sealing? Answer. Pink paper Seal. The representatives of political parties, engineers have to put the signature on pink paper seal.

Question 333. Name the seals required for sealing of Control Unit after mock poll at the Polling Station. Answer. Green paper Seal and Outer Paper Strip Seal (ABCD Seal) and Special tag.

Question 334. How many votes are cast during mock poll at the Polling Station? Answer. At least 50 votes

Question 335. What is CRC (Close-Result-Clear) and when is it to be done? Answer. After mock poll, the CU is supposed to be cleared for actual poll. Therefore, First Close Button is pressed for closing of Mock Poll, then Result button is pressed for viewing result and thereafter clear button is pressed for deleting the votes of mock poll.

Question 336. What happens to the slips generated by the VVPAT during poll, explain in brief? Answer. The slips generated during mock poll are counted before the polling agents present at polling station to show the results of mock poll done by them. Thereafter, they are kept in a thick black envelope duly sealed.

Question 337. How many Ballot Units can be connected to one Control Unit in Post-06 model? Answer. 4 Ballot Units

Question 338. How many Ballot Units can be connected to one Control Unit in Post-13 model? Answer. 24 ballot Units

Question 339. What is the mandatory period for keeping EVMs, used in an election, untouched? Answer. 6 months

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)
Question 340. What is Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)? Why it is introduced?
Answer. To further increase transparency in voting, the Commission is experimenting with
VVPAT in which a slip is generated after vote is cast. This slip is visible to the voter for a few
seconds and then it falls in a drop box.

Question 341. How many ports does a VVPAT have for making connections? Please name them.
Answer. 2 Ports. BU Interface and VSDU Interface

Question 342. Name the connection port in the VVPAT where cable from Ballot Unit is connected.
Answer. BU Interface

Question 343. Who loads the Ballot paper in the VVPAT?
Answer. Engineers of the manufacturers

Question 344. When is the first randomization of VVPAT done?
Answer. After First level Checking of EVMs/VVPATs

Question 345. When is the second randomization done?
Answer. After Preparation of EVMs/VVPATs

Question 346. Which compartment of VVPAT is sealed after mock poll?
Answer. Ballot Slip Compartment

Question 347. What is VSDU and where is it placed during actual poll?
Answer. It displays errors occurred in the VVPAT unit. It is placed on the table of presiding
officer along with the Control Unit.

Question 348. Which unit(s) is/are placed in the voter’s compartment?
Answer. Ballot Unit(s) and VVPAT

Question 349. After mock poll at the polling Station, how the Ballot Slips of VVPAT kept?
Answer. Mock poll slips of the VVPAT are kept in a thick black envelope and sealed in a air-
tight plastic box.

Question 350. When the Ballot Slips of VVPAT are counted?
Answer. If any Witten request is received by the representative of any contesting candidate

Question 351. What steps are to be taken for storing of VVPAT Ballot Slips after counting?
Answer. Slips of the VVPAT are kept in a thick black envelope and sealed in a air-tight plastic box

Question 352. Why are the EVMs and VVPATs kept in separate strong rooms after counting?
Answer. As the VVPAT does not have any memory and the ballot slips are separated at the time of counting, the unit is free to use in the next election. Therefore, the same is kept separate so that VVPATs are not locked in the strong room if any EP is filed.

Question 353. What is the mandatory period for filing an Election petition?
Answer. 45 days

Question 354. If an EP is filed, can the VVPATs, used in that election, be used in any other election before disposal of the EP?
Answer. Yes. The VVPAT do not have any votes recorded. The slips generated during the conduct of actual poll are taken out and kept in a black thick envelope at the time of counting. Therefore, the VVPAT becomes empty and usable for the next election.