

Remote voting for migrant workers

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What's in today's article?

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Why in news?

- The Election Commission (EC) announced that it is ready to pilot remote voting for domestic migrants, so they don't have to travel back to their home states to vote.
- For this, the commission has developed a prototype for a Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM).
- The ECI will demonstrate the functioning of the remote EVM on January 16 to the eight national and 57 state political parties.

What is Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM)?

- In order to enable remote voting for domestic migrants, a technological solution was proposed in the form of Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM).
- RVM relies on the creation of a robust electoral roll and identification mechanisms (to stop duplicate voting), and allow voters to vote remotely, in a safe and controlled environment.
- It was developed with the assistance of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL). It is based on the currently used EVM system.

How does RVM work?

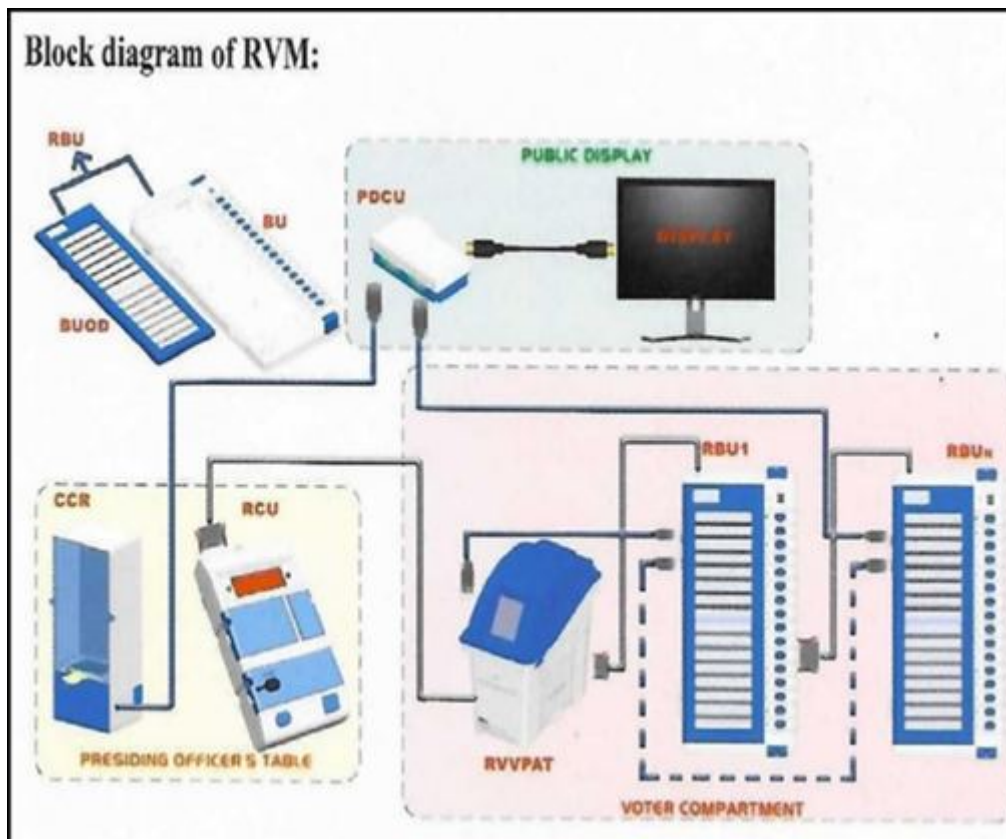


Image caption: Block diagram of RVM

- The RVMs are stand alone, non-networked systems, effectively providing the voter the same experience as currently used EVMs.
- They will be set up in remote locations outside the state under similar conditions as current polling booths.
- The unique feature of RVMs is that a single Remote Ballot Unit (RBU) will be able to cater to multiple constituencies (as many as 72) by using a dynamic ballot display board instead of the usual printed paper ballot sheet on EVMs.
- The Ballot Unit Overlay Display (BUOD) will show the requisite candidates based on the constituency number read on the voter's Constituency card.
- A barcode scanning system will be used to read these cards.

What will be the voting process under RVM?

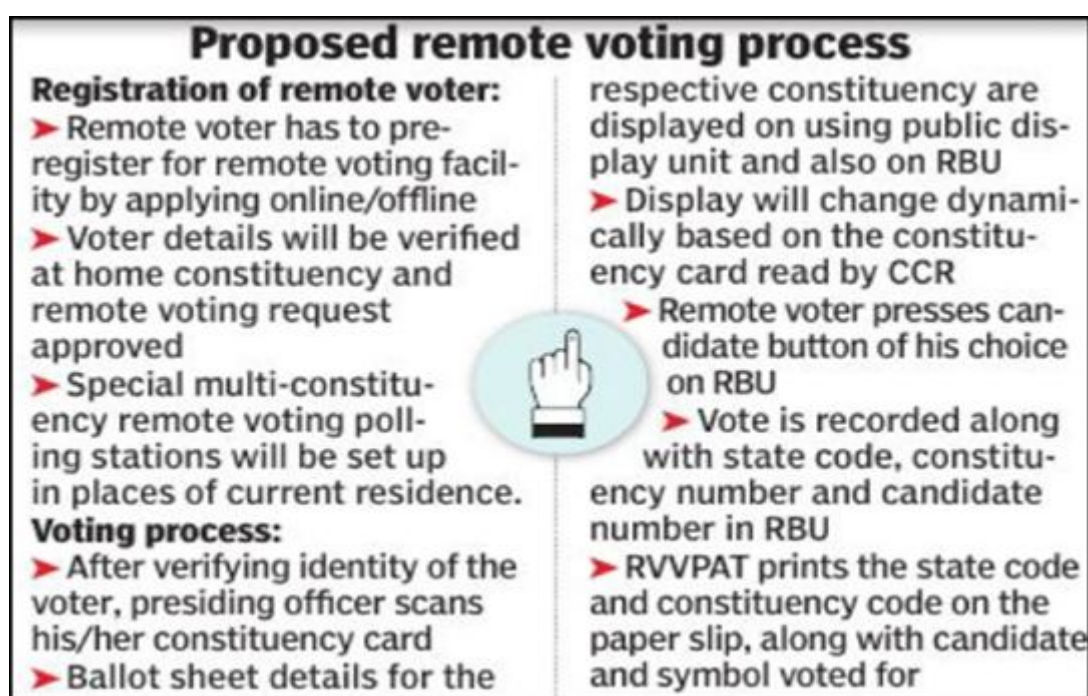


Image Caption: Proposed voting process

- The voting process will be as follows: after verifying a voter's identity, their constituency card will be read with a public display showing the constituency details and candidates.
- This will also be displayed privately, on the BUOD in the RVM's RBU.
- The voter will then vote and each vote will be stored constituency-wise in the control unit of the voting machine.
- The VVPAT system is expected to work along the same lines with the new technology.

Why EC is keen on remote voting for domestic migrants?

- Migration based disenfranchisement is indeed not an option in the age of technological advancement.

- The voter turnout in General Elections 2019 was 67.4 % and the Election Commission of India is concerned about the issue of over 30 Crore electors not exercising their franchise and also differential voter turnout in various States/UTs.
- One key reason for low voter turnout could be migrants not going home to exercise their franchise.
 - As per Census 2011, 45.36 crore Indians, or 37% of the population are migrants, but 75% of them are migrants on account of marriage or other family-related reasons.
- The poll panel proposes to address this by using technology so that migrants can vote remotely and also stay connected with their roots.

What will be the benefits of RVM?

- Many times, migrants are reluctant to get themselves enrolled at their place of work for various reasons such as:
 - frequently changing residences,
 - not enough social and emotional connect with the issues of area of migration,
 - unwillingness to get their name deleted in electoral roll of their home/native constituencies as they have permanent residence/property etc.
- The remote voting initiative, if implemented, can lead to a social transformation for the migrants and connect with their roots. It will also result in better voter turnouts.

What are the different challenges that would be faced by RVM?

Administrative Challenges	Legal Challenges	Technological Challenges
Enumerating remote voters-self declaration?	Laws/Rules needing amendments • RP Act, 1950 & 1951 • The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 • The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960	Method of remote voting
Providing controlled environment - ensuring secrecy of voting at remote locations		Familiarity of the voters with the methods/ Multi-Constituency Remote EVM or any other technology.
Provision of polling agents at remote voting booths & ensuring identification of voters to avoid impersonation	Defining Migrant Voter • Poll day absence to permanently shifted • Retain registration at original place in the context of 'ordinary residence' & 'temporary absence' legal construct	Counting of votes cast at remote booths and transmit to RO located in other State.
Number of booths to be set up & locations		
Appointment of polling personnel for remote polling stations and supervision thereof	Defining Remote Voting • Dealing with territorial constituency concept • Defining remoteness: outside constituency, outside district or outside state	
Implementation of MCC in remote location (other State)		

Image caption: Challenges to RVM

- There is no accurate number of migrants. Also, in 2017, the ECI had told the SC that it was not feasible to track movement of domestic migrants to allow remote voting.
- Also, migrants are not a uniform and defined class, with fluid identities, locations and situations.

Q1) How many votes can be cast in EVM?

An EVM can be used to record a maximum of 2000 votes and can cater to a maximum of 64 candidates including NOTA. There is provision for 16 candidates in a Balloting Unit.

Q2) What is VVPAT?

VVPAT or Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail is the machine that helps to keep a paper audit trail of the votes cast. It prints a paper slip of the candidate a person votes for with the name, serial number and symbol of the party.

Source: [EC proposes remote voting for inter-state migrants](#) | [PIB](#)

Video: [Indian Express](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/remote-voting-for-migrant-workers/>

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