

4.6 Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Randomization

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

A stock of 500 EVMs was available with the Election Department for polling at 386 locations. In the first phase the first level checking of EVMs was carried out in the presence of Electronic Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) engineers who came from Hyderabad. Out of the available 500 EVMs, 13 Ballot Units (BUs) and 19 Control Units (CUs) were found defective. The defective EVMs were taken to Hyderabad for repair and maintenance purposes as per directions issued by the Election Commission of India.

The initial requirement of EVMs was calculated as under:

Sl.No	Tehsil	Main	Reserved	Sector Magistrate	ARO	Total
1.	Diglipur	48	18	14	08	88
2.	Mayabunder	26	07	05	03	41
3.	Rangat	40	05	10	03	58
4.	Port Blair	143	04	18	10	175
5.	Ferrargunj	52	01	08	03	64
6.	Little Andaman	17	01	04	02	24
7.	Car Nicobar	16	00	06	03	25
8.	Nancowry	23	03	15	03	44
9.	Campbell Bay	21	11	08	03	43
	Grand Total	386	50	88	38	562

Table 25

Since EVMs are absolute critical for the conduct of elections, the number required was reassessed keeping in mind the challenges which this Territory faces. It was realised that there are many remote locations which would need to be accessed by road, then by ship followed by a long hike through jungles. It would not be possible either to send a replacement EVM within a short time of 2 hours to such places in case an EVM developed any faults, and nor could any person be sent to repair/check it. It was therefore decided to provide two EVMs to all the difficult to access Polling Stations. The requirement of EVMs therefore rose by 180 and the total number actually needed for the Poll was therefore assessed at 750.

Thereafter the additional 250 EVMs were airlifted to Port Blair from Uttarakhand with the ECI's concurrence. All necessary checks were carried out.

Randomization of EVMs

Since the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has only one Parliamentary Constituency and the District Election Officer of one District is the Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituency, the randomization of Polling Personnel was done as per Commission's instructions namely:

- First Randomization of EVMs was done through software on 18/03/2014 and the list of 56 EVMs for training and 562 EVMs for Poll were segregated.
- The EVMs for training and EVMs for Poll were segregated at the Strong Room. The EVMs for training were handed over to AROs concerned after doing the requisite labelling.
- The Second randomization was done on 27-03-2014 and Polling Station wise EVM allocation was done. Reserves were also allocated. The Randomization, was done in the presence of representatives of Political Parties.
- Pursuant to this, the EVMs were segregated Tehsil wise on 27-03-2014 itself at the Strong Room where all AROs were present as well as political parties.

Randomization helps to ensure the fairness of the Poll process by making sure that EVMs are randomly allocated, through a computer software, to all Polling Stations, in an open, transparent manner.

Preparation of EVMs

Chief Electoral Officer, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Election office had 500 EVMs for which FLC had been conducted a few months before the Elections. After the FLC, it was found that 19 number of CUs and 13 number of BUs are defective. It has been observed in the past too that whenever there is considerable gap between FLC of EVMs and its preparation for poll, a few more EVMs developed snags in the interregnum. This could possibly be assigned to very high humid conditions prevalent in the territory throughout the year.

Moreover, the election office had projected a requirement of 750 EVMs for use in poll keeping all this in account as well as the fact that it is mandatory for assigning extra EVMs at remote locations as has been described elsewhere in this chapter. After the randomization process was over (as detailed under the heading randomization of EVMs), EVMs were assigned to specific polling stations or as reserves etc category-wise. .

The Election office requisitioned the auditorium of Dr BRAIT for conduct of FLC as well as for preparation of EVMs. This auditorium is an air-conditioned complex, which was constructed after GE-2009 and was used for the first time in these elections. The complex provided easier security environment, mobility and did not inconvenience the handlers engaged in this meticulous task. Since there was sufficient space, the confusion normally associated with preparation of EVMs was not noticed.

The preparation of EVMs commenced on 29-03-2014 and was staggered in such a manner that the EVM preparation of remotest Tehsils were completed first and the EVM preparation for PS located in Port Blair and Ferrargunj Tehsils were taken up last. It may be noted here that EVM preparation and movement of EVMs to outlying islands has only a few days between them. As such timely preparation of EVMs for remote islands was critical so that they are transported by Ships (used for transport of general public too) to these Islands in time.

All the candidates were informed about the schedule of EVM preparation and given notice to attend the process of EVM preparation. The preparation of EVMs was done under the supervision of the AROs of the concerned Tehsil. The ARO was assisted by a Nodal Officer from the ROs office and team. Altogether 10 teams were deployed for the preparation and each team was headed by a master trainer for EVM, which was to ensure that handlers of EVMs are those who are comfortable and know about the machine. Besides, two Engineers from ECIL were also associated in the process to attend to repairs/ faults.