

Election Commission to upgrade VTR sharing process

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The Election Commission of India is now introducing a streamlined, technology-driven system to provide timely updates on the approximate voter turnout percentage trends. This new process significantly reduces the time lag associated with the earlier manual reporting methods. The initiative aligns with the Commission's commitment to ensure timely public communication, which has often been underlined by the Chief Election Commissioner, Shri Gyanesh Kumar on various occasions.

Under the statutory framework of Rule 49S of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, Presiding Officers (PROs) are required to furnish Form 17C, detailing the account of votes recorded, to polling agents, who are nominated by the candidates and are present at the polling station at the close of poll. While this legal requirement remains unchanged, the process of updating the VTR App, which had evolved as a facilitative, non-statutory mechanism to keep the public informed of the approximate voter turnout percentage trends is being streamlined to ensure faster updation.

Under this new initiative, the Presiding Officer (PRO) of each polling station, will now be directly entering voter turnout on the new ECINET App every two hours on polling day in order to reduce the time lag in the updation of the approximate polling trends. This will be automatically aggregated at the constituency level. The approximate voting percentage trends will continue to be published every two hours as before. Notably, voter turnout data will now be entered into ECINET by PROs immediately after the close of poll, before they leave the polling station which will reduce the delays and ensure that the approximate percentage of votes polled would be available on the updated VTR App constituency-wise after the close of polls subject to network connectivity. Where mobile networks are unavailable, entries can be made offline and synced once connectivity is restored. This updated VTR App will become an integral part of ECINET before the Bihar elections.

Previously, voter turnout data was collected manually by Sector Officers and relayed to Returning Officers (ROs) via phone calls, SMS, or messaging apps. This information was aggregated every two hours and uploaded to the Voter Turnout (VTR) App. The polling percentage trends were often updated hours later, based on physical records arriving late in the night or even the next day, leading to delays of 4–5-hours or more leading to misperceptions by some.

PK/GDH/RP

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