

4. Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines

Why in News?

- The Election Commission of India was recently criticized for not being transparent and keeping political parties out of the loop regarding defects in the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines.

Highlights

- The EC has not informed political parties about the identification of 6.5 lakh VVPAT machines as defective.
- The number of machines in which defects have been found is more than 1/3rd (37%) the number used in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and could have affected voters in the last general election and subsequent Assembly poll.
- Thousands of VVPATs with consecutive serial numbers in entire batches from different manufacturers have been found defective.
- The defects are serious enough that the machines have been returned to the manufacturers.
- The EC did not follow standard operating procedures (Model Code of Conduct) that the panel had framed for itself, which requires field officers to identify defects, and any faults to be identified within 7 days.
- EC needs to restore public faith and trust in the electoral process by being transparent.
- VVPAT is an independent verification printer machine attached to electronic voting machines (EVMs) that allows voters to verify that their votes have been recorded accurately.
- As soon as the voter presses the button on the EVM, the VVPAT machine prints the slip that contains the name and symbol of the party they have voted for, for around 7 seconds.
- VVPAT Machines were first introduced in India in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and were introduced to increase transparency and eliminate doubts about the accuracy of the EVMs.
- VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.
- According to ECI, EVMs and VVPATs are separate entities and are not connected to any network.