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PRESS RELEASE

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Indian EVMs used in elections are vulnerable to election fraud

In a collaborative study, a team of Indian and international experts have revealed that the electronic voting machines used in Indian elections are vulnerable to fraud. Even brief access to the voting machines could allow criminals to alter election results. Videos exposing the tamperability of original EVMs and a technical paper are available at www.indiaevm.org.

These research findings and the exposure of tamperability in Election Commission of India's EVMs by experts prove that the Election Commission of India's claims that its EVMs are tamper proof are untrue and baseless.

There are around 1.4 million electronic voting machines in use. All such machines **record votes only to internal memory and provide no paper records for later inspection or recount**. With these voting machines**, absolute trust is placed in the hardware and software of the voting machines**. Paperless electronic voting systems have been criticized globally and more and more countries have abandoned (Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Florida etc.) such systems altogether.

In a video released recently, three researchers namely Hari Krishna Prasad (NetIndia, Hyderabad), Alex Halderman (University of Michigan)

and Rop Gonggrijp (Computer Security Expert, Netherlands) have shown two demonstration attacks against a *real* Indian EVM used in elections.

One attack involves replacing a small part of the machine with a look-alike component that can be silently instructed to steal a percentage of the votes in favor of a chosen candidate. These instructions can be sent wirelessly from a mobile phone. Another attack uses a pocket-sized device to change the votes stored in the EVM between the election and the public counting session (which happens many days/ weeks later).

The researchers were also surprised to find that the vote-counting software in the EVMs is programmed into so-called "mask programmed microcontrollers," **which do not allow the software to be read out and verified.** Because these chips are made in the US and Japan, this has led to a situation in which nobody in India knows for sure what software is in these machines or whether it counts votes accurately.

Hari Prasad M.D of NetIndia a Hyderabad based technology services firm organized the study and says the findings are the culmination of a seven month investigation. "Everywhere I looked there were more security problems. I am glad that with the presentation of this work, the debate over whether India's EVMs are secure is over. We need to look forward now. India deserves a transparent election process, which these machines simply cannot deliver." Hari Prasad is the Technical Coordinator of VeTA.

G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, Psephologist, President, VeTA and author of the book titled "Democracy at Risk! Can we trust our EVMs?" commenting on the objections raised by many parties said, "*Today, the distrust among political leaders of all hues in voting machines is so high that most losers are wondering if they had been unfairly defeated in polls. It is about time India shunned paperless voting to make its election outcomes verifiable and auditable.*" He is the president of veta.

V.V. Rao, Petitioner in the Supreme Court and Election Activist said, "In the electronic voting machines, there is no transparency." He adds, "There is neither verifiability nor recounting provision in the EVMs. Election Commission is reluctant to clarify the doubts raised over several issues in EVMs, while the voters have a right to know if their votes have been recorded correctly and counted in favor of the candidates for whom

they have voted. Election Commission is the highest independent constitutional body empowered to conduct elections in a free and fair manner, but by refusing to debate the issues for ushering electoral reforms in the country, they are lowering the credibility of the Election Commission as an independent body." V.V. Rao is the National Coordinator of VeTA.

J.C. Mohanty, former IT Secretary, Government of A.P, who organized the press meet in Bhubaneshwar observed, "In the present system of voting through EVMs, there are several week areas to manipulate the votes and the way the elections are being conducted puts the democracy at grave risk. There must be a nationwide public debate for systemic correction." A former IAS officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre who held several important positions, Mohanty says, "It is hard to assume that government officers in important positions cannot be influenced by top political leaders. So relying merely on the checks and balances to protect the integrity of EVMs will render elections to a mockery."

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