

## Sansad TV Perspective: Remote Voting - for Domestic Migrants

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the IAS exam, especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: **'Remote Voting - for Domestic Migrants'**.

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### **Participants :**

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**Context** - With the objective of finding a technological solution which is credible, accessible and acceptable to all stakeholders, the Commission headed by Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar has explored the option of using a modified version of the time-tested model of M3 EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) to enable voting at remote polling stations i.e., polling stations outside home constituency, for domestic migrants.

### **Introduction -**

India is the World's largest democracy and the Constitution of India provides universal adult suffrage to its citizens irrespective of race, religion, gender, economic status. There has been a significant increase in voter registration over the past few years. However the stagnation of voter participation is a cause of concern.

- 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.
- Inability to vote due to internal migration (domestic migrants) is one of the prominent reasons to be addressed to improve voter turnout and ensure participative elections. Other reasons being urban apathy, youth apathy.
- Although there is no central database available for migration within the country, the analysis of available data in public domain points to work, marriage and education related

migration as important components of domestic migration. Out-migration is predominant among the rural population in overall domestic migration. Approximately 85% of the internal migration is within the States.

### **Remote Voting Machine (RVM)**

The [Election Commission of India](#) (ECI) showcased the remote electronic voting machine prototype for migrant voters to representatives of political parties. ECI has also solicited written views of recognised political parties by January 31, 2023, on various related issues including changes required in legislation, administrative procedures, and voting method / RVM / technology for the domestic migrants.

- However, 16 opposition parties have said they will oppose the Election Commission's multi-constituency remote electronic voting machine (RVM) for domestic migrants terming the proposal as very sketchy with huge political anomalies and problems such as no clarity on definition and number of domestic migrants.

### **What is RVM?**

RVM is a Multi Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM) for facilitating participation of domestic migrants from their remote locations itself i.e., the places of their current residence for purposes of education/employment, etc., for voting for their home constituencies.

- This modified form of EVM can handle up to 72 multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth.
- These are similar to the existing EVMs in terms of security system and voting experience.
- The initiative, if implemented, can lead to a “social transformation” for migrants.
- The commission has maintained that RVMs, developed by the public sector undertaking Electronics Corporation of India Ltd, will be a standalone device not connected to the internet.

### Some of the Electoral Reforms - related to voters participation and integration

- The 2021 amendments to the Representation of the People Act (RPA) include allowing the youth to enrol as voters on four different dates every year to increase voter turnout. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has been pushing for multiple cut-off dates to allow more eligible voters to register.
  - As per the amendment four qualifying dates have been inserted for voter registration- January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1 of every year.
- National Voters Day -
  - Since 2011, [National Voters Day](#) has been celebrated on January 25 every year, all across the country to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, i.e. 25th January 1950.
  - The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximise enrolment, especially for the new voters.
  - Dedicated to the voters of the country, the day is utilised to spread awareness among voters and for promoting informed participation in the electoral process.

**Conclusion** - Whenever a new technology comes in, it is bound to face resistance, there is apprehension about safety, operations etc. RVM is a new technology aimed at making elections more inclusive, though there are administrative, legal and operational issues which need to be sorted out. More deliberations are needed to build consensus amongst political parties to accept this new technology. After focusing on youth and urban apathy, remote voting will be a transformational initiative for strengthening participation in electoral democracy.