

Indian election process acclaimed globally, says EC

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the Election Commission during his visit to the United States, the poll body on Tuesday said that any misinformation being spread, by anyone, regarding Indian elections was not only a sign of disrespect towards the law but also would bring disrepute to the thousands of elected representatives belonging to their own political party.

It also demotivates lakhs of election staff who work untiringly and transparently during elections, a senior EC official said.

'Completely absurd'

All Indian elections are held as per law and the scale and accuracy with which elections are held in India are widely acclaimed across the world, the EC official said.

"The entire nation is aware that each election process, including the preparation of electoral rolls, polling and counting, etc., are all held by government staff and that too in the presence of authorised representatives formally appointed by political parties and candidates from

'Rahul is trying to divert attention'

The BJP on Tuesday again targeted Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, over his comments on the Election Commission, stating that it was an attempt to divert attention from the *National Herald* case. At a press conference, BJP national spokesperson Nalin Kohli questioned the "silence" of the senior leadership of the Congress, including the Gandhis, on charges in the prosecution complaint filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the *National Herald* case.

polling station up to constituency level," the official said.

"After any unfavourable verdict by the voters, trying to defame the Election Commission by saying that it is compromised, is completely absurd," the official added.

The EC's reaction comes a day after Mr. Gandhi alleged, while in the U.S., that the Election Commission was "compromised", citing the "unusual" increase in voter turnout in the last two hours of voting during the Maharashtra Assembly election.

The Hindu (English), Dated: 23.04.2025 A move that endangers the right to vote

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has renewed push to link Aadhaar with voter ID endangers the right to vote. It is being justified as a measure to clean electoral rolls, eliminate bogus voters, and improve electoral integrity. Yet, experience and data show that Aadhaar linkage has resulted in mass disenfranchisement, systemic errors, exclusions, arbitrary welfare entitlements, and far-reaching infringements on the fundamental right to privacy of citizens.

Questionable claims

The claim that Aadhaar-voter ID linkage is voluntary is questionable. Presently, Form 6B offers no meaningful opt-out – voters must either submit their Aadhaar number or declare they do not have one, coercing even those unwilling to share it into compliance. Unsurprisingly, by September 2023, over 66 crore Aadhaar numbers had already been seeded. This was enabled not only by a coercive legal framework but also by data-sharing practices of questionable legality and constitutional, ethical propriety. These included the use of the DBT Seeding Data Viewer, which permits third-party access to non-biometric identity data held by UIDAI, as well as the repurposing of data collected for the National Population Register and by other government departments for unrelated administrative purposes.

The ECI's latest proposal fails to rectify this position. On the contrary, it makes the process more restrictive by requiring citizen-voters who do not provide Aadhaar to physically appear before an Electoral Registration Officer to justify their decision. In 2023, in *G. Niranjan v. Election Commission of India*, the ECI had assured the Supreme Court that Aadhaar-voter ID linkage is not mandatory and that appropriate clarifications would be introduced for that purpose; its latest proposal walks back on this commitment.

The new proposal also erodes the commitment to universal and equal suffrage by imposing barriers on those unwilling or unable to furnish Aadhaar. It places a disproportionate burden on the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and individuals in remote areas for whom attending an in-person hearing before the Electoral Registration Officer is often neither practical nor reasonable. This not only compromises individual dignity but also diminishes the trust that is foundational to democratic participation.

The problem is further exacerbated by the lack of a clear, accessible, and time-bound appellate



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mechanism for the citizen-voter, if their justification for not submitting Aadhaar is arbitrarily rejected. The Supreme Court, in *Lal Babu Prasad and Others v. Electoral Registration Officer* (1995), unequivocally held that any decision to delete a name from the electoral roll must comply with the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.

The Union government and the ECI argue that Aadhaar-voter ID linkage will eliminate duplicate voters and electoral fraud. However, this claim does not withstand scrutiny. Aadhaar was never designed to serve as proof of citizenship. Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, explicitly states that Aadhaar is a residency-based identification system, which means that an Aadhaar holder may not necessarily be an Indian citizen. Multiple High Courts have ruled that Aadhaar is not proof of Indian citizenship. The UIDAI itself has affirmed that even non-citizens residing in India for 182 days are eligible for Aadhaar. Importantly, the Supreme Court in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India* (2018) had limited the use of Aadhaar for welfare programmes paid out of the Consolidated Fund of India per Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016.

By linking Aadhaar with the voter ID, the ECI is creating a mechanism that introduces an unreliable filter into the electoral process, risks mass disenfranchisement of citizen-voters, and eroding the sanctity of universal suffrage and democratic participation guaranteed by the Constitution. These dangers are not hypothetical; they have been documented. In 2015, the ECI attempted a similar Aadhaar-voter ID linkage under the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme. As a result, in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh alone, 55 lakh voters were arbitrarily removed from electoral rolls due to Aadhaar mismatches. Voters discovered their names missing only when they arrived at polling stations on election day. The ECI was forced to abandon the exercise after the Supreme Court issued a stay through its August 11, 2015 order.

Aadhaar-voter ID linkage also poses a severe risk of dragnet surveillance and voter profiling. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, contains sweeping exemptions for government entities, raising the possibility that voter data could be accessed and exploited for political purposes. Once Aadhaar is linked to voter IDs, it becomes possible to cross-reference electoral data with other databases, allowing ruling parties to monitor voter demographics. The implications are concerning. Political actors could use this

data to micro-target voters, suppress opposition strongholds, or even manipulate electoral rolls to achieve predetermined electoral outcomes.

Seeding Aadhaar with electoral roll data subverts core principles of constitutional design. The ECI, vested with the powers of "superintendence, direction and control" over elections, is a constitutionally independent authority. In contrast, the UIDAI is a statutory body operating under executive control – bound by government directives under Section 50 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, and subject to supersession under Section 48. Entrusting it with electoral data undermines the separation of powers, jeopardising the integrity of the electoral process and the democratic ideal of free and fair polls.

A further defect lies in the inherent unreliability of the Aadhaar database. The 2022 Performance Audit Report No. 24 of 2021 identified major deficiencies, including the cancellation of over 4.75 lakh Aadhaar numbers due to their duplication and issuance based on faulty biometric data. The CAG also found no assurance that all Aadhaar holders qualify as 'residents' under the Aadhaar Act, as UIDAI had not prescribed any specific proof, document, or process to verify an applicant's period of residence in India. Relying on such an error-prone database for de-duplicating the electoral rolls would lead to wrongful deletions and exclusions.

Methods of electoral verification

Instead of pushing a technological fix and infringing on the right to privacy of citizens, the ECI must focus on strengthening traditional, time-tested methods of voter verification. Regular door-to-door verification by booth level officers; comprehensive, independent audits of electoral rolls; and functional public grievance redressal frameworks are more effective and constitutionally sound approaches to addressing concerns about alleged duplicate or fraudulent entries. Introducing independent oversight through social audits would further enhance accountability and prevent politically motivated manipulations of electoral rolls.

The right to vote is a constitutional guarantee. Any policy that imposes unreasonable burdens on citizen-voters, introduces unreliable verification mechanisms, or enables political profiling must be abandoned. The Aadhaar-voter ID linkage does all three. That such a constitutionally fraught scheme has found support across the political spectrum is troubling.

EC rejects Rahul's claims on electoral rolls in Maha

'Spreading misinformation sign of disrespect towards law'

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

The Election Commission officials on Tuesday rubbished the claims made by Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with regard to discrepancies in voter data in Maharashtra state Assembly elections last year. The EC officials said all Indian elections are held as per law, and the scale and accuracy with which elections are held in India are widely acclaimed across the world. They termed Mr Gandhi's statement as "unsubstantiated allegations" that are "an affront to the rule of law".

Sources said the voting



Rahul Gandhi

progressed in front of 27,000 booth-level agents of the Congress, but they raised not a single complaint both during and after elections. "You (Congress) had your agents on the ground. No one noticed any abnormality or sudden spike in voter turnout. So all such allegations fall flat," sources in EC said.

"The entire nation is aware that each election process, including the preparation of electoral rolls, polling, counting, etc., is all held by government staff and that too in the presence of authorised representatives formally appointed by political parties/candidates from polling stations up to constituency level. Any misinformation being spread, by anyone, is not only a sign of disrespect towards law but also brings disrepute to the thousands of representatives appointed by their own political party. Such a statement demotivates lakhs of election staff who work untiringly and transparently during elections.

Deccan Chronicle

Dated: 23.04.2025

EC dismisses Rahul charge on Maha poll

New Delhi: The Election Commission officials on Tuesday rubbished the claims made by Congress MP and leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with regard to discrepancies in voter data in Maharashtra state Assembly elections last year. The EC officials termed Mr Gandhi's statement as "unsubstantiated allegations" that are "an affront to the rule of law".

Dated: 23.04.2025

RAHUL'S IMMATURE EC ATTACK

Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the U.S. alleging the Election Commission is "compromised" cross a dangerous red line — transforming political dissent into diplomatic self-sabotage. Criticism of domestic institutions, however legitimate, should be anchored in home soil, not paraded on foreign stages before audiences far removed from India's electoral realities. To claim, without hard evidence, that 65 lakh votes were magically cast in two hours may stir headlines, but it offers more heat than light. Worse, it plays into a troubling pattern where the Opposition leader appears more comfortable indicting Indian democracy abroad than engaging constructively within it. Such conduct reflects a startling lack of political maturity and constitutional responsibility. If the EC is flawed, challenge it in court or through Parliament—not in Boston ballrooms. In a polarised global landscape, undermining one's own institutions on foreign soil not only weakens India's democratic image but arms adversaries with ammunition. This isn't dissent — it's demolition disguised as dialogue.

Gopalaswamy J
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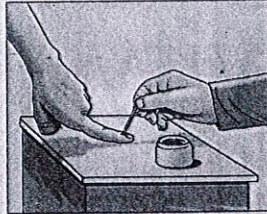
EC rejects Rahul's claims of voting spike in Maharashtra

'Cong Booth Agents Too Didn't Raise Any Issues'

BhartiJain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Rebutting Rahul Gandhi's allegation of an inexplicable spike in voter turnout between 5.30pm and 7.30pm during the 2024 assembly elections in Maharashtra, sources in the Election Commission on Tuesday said there was "nothing unusual" about the casting of 65 lakh votes in two hours, as alleged; rather, an average of 58 lakh electors had voted each hour from 7 am to 6 pm.

"About 58 lakh votes were polled per hour, on an average. Going by these av-



NUMBERS SPEAK

erage trends, nearly 116 lakh voters could have voted in the last two hours. Therefore, casting of 65 lakh votes by electors in two hours is much below the average hourly voting trends," said a senior EC functionary.

The functionary noted that Congress's own polling agents had watched the conduct of elections at every booth and did not once raise any allegation regarding abnormal voting, either at the time of scrutiny before the returning officers or before the election observers the next day.

Rahul attack on EC, polls to divert from National Herald case: BJP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: BJP on Tuesday claimed that Rahul Gandhi's remarks on the Election Commission, democracy and conduct of elections are an attempt to divert attention from the National Herald case, adding that the Congress leader is in the habit of sharing hateful thoughts on foreign soil.

"Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has once again questioned the credibility of the Election Commission from a foreign land. It is very unfortunate that whenever Rahul Gandhi is abroad, he does not miss sharing his hateful thoughts towards In-

dia and India's democratic systems," Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in a post on X.

"In fact, the 'crown prince' of the royal family which has been in power for decades, hates the recognition India's glorious democratic traditions are getting at the global level. This is the reason why he does not miss any opportunity to insult the country and its citizens," he added.

At a press conference, BJP spokesperson Nalin Kohli said Rahul's comments on both Election Commission and conduct of elections prove that Congress is running away from the National Herald Case.



Dated: 23.04.2025

Ex-judge says no need to curtail Assembly tenures for simultaneous elections

PREEETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AT the meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the 'One Nation One election' Bill, former Supreme Court Judge Hemant Gupta made suggestions, including the substitution of existing Article 82A with a new provision for the simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, said sources.

Article 82A of the Constitution, as proposed by the 129th Amendment Bill 2024, aims to facilitate "One Nation, One Election".

Justice Gupta spoke against the curtailment of assemblies, which have not completed at least three years of tenure, to synchronise their elections with that of the Lok Sabha, sources said. He instead suggested that their tenures should be extended. Gupta also conveyed his broad agreement to amend the Constitution to conduct simultaneous elections to Parliament and state assemblies, the sources said.

Congress MP and SC lawyer Abhishek Singhvi said that the draft laws proposing simultaneous elections violate the 'basic

structure', the will of the people and principles of federalism, even as several other jurists cited their positive impact.

Singhvi said that the idea of federalism has evolved in the country over a period of time, citing the devolution of financial resources to the states by the Finance Commission and the gradual empowerment of local bodies.

He also appeared to suggest that simultaneous elections will homogenise the agenda, favouring the same party in the national and state elections.

Sources added that another former SC judge, B S Chauhan, also a former chairman of the Law Commission of India, called for introducing the "doctrine of constructive no-confidence motion" so that an alternative government must be ready to step in if the incumbent is brought down through a no-confidence motion.

According to sources, DMK Rajya Sabha MP P Wilson cited a violation of federalism by the proposed curtailment of state assemblies. "The rights of the states have to be respected," he said, according to sources.



மராட்டிய தேர்தல் தொடர்பான

ராகுல் காந்தி குற்றச்சாட்டுக்கு தேர்தல் கமிஷன் கண்டனம்

புதுடெல்லி, ஏப்.23-
மராட்டிய சட்டசபை தேர்த
லில் முறைகேடு நடந்ததாக
காங்கிரஸ் மூத்த தலைவரும்,
மக்களவை எதிர்க்கட்சித் தலை
வருமான ராகுல் காந்தி குற்
றம் சாட்டி வருகிறார். அமெ
ரிக்கா சென்றுள்ள அவர்,
பாஸ்டனில் பேசும்போதும்
இது குறித்து தெரிவித்தார்.

அதாவது மராட்டியத்தில்
மாலை 5.30 மற்றும் 7.30
மணிக்கு இடையே 65 லட்சம்
பேர் வாக்களித்ததாக தேர்தல்
கமிஷன் கூறியதாகவும், இது
நடைமுறைக்கு சாத்திய
மில்லை என்றும், இதன்
மூலம் தேர்தல் கமிஷன் சமச
ரத்துக்கு உள்ளாகி இருப்ப
தாகவும் கூறியிருந்தார்.

இதற்கு தேர்தல் கமிஷன்
கண்டனம் தெரிவித்து உள்
ளது. ராகுல் காந்தியின் இந்த
தவறான தகவல் சட்டத்தை
அவமதிப்பதுடன், அரசியல்
மற்றும் தேர்தல் பணியாளர்க
ளுக்கு வேதனை அளிப்பதாக
உள்ளதாகவும் குற்றம் சாட்டி
யுள்ளது.

வாக்காளர்கள் தங்களுக்கு
எதிராக தீர்ப்பு அளித்தால்
தேர்தல் கமிஷன் சமரசத்
துக்கு உள்ளாகி இருப்பதாக
அவதுறு செய்ய முயற்சி
நடப்பதாகவும் கூறியுள்ளது.

மராட்டிய தேர்தலில் ஒரு
மணி நேரத்துக்கு சராசரியாக
58 லட்சம் வாக்காளர்கள் ஓட்
டுப்போட்டதாகவும், இதன்
மூலம் 2 மணி நேரத்தில் 65
லட்சம் பேர் வாக்களிப்பது
சாத்தியம்தான் என்றும்
ராகுல் காந்தியின் குற்றச்சாட்
டுக்கு விளக்கம் அளித்து
இருக்கிறது.

மகாராஷ்டிர பேரவைத் தேர்தல் விவகாரம்

‘ராகுலின் தவறான தகவல் சட்டத்தை அவமதிப்பதன் அடையாளம்’

புது தில்லி, ஏப். 22: மகாராஷ்டிர சட்டப்பேரவைத் தேர்தல் வாக்குப் பதிவில் முறைகேடு நடைபெற்றதாக காங்கிரஸ் எம்.பி. ராகுல் காந்தி தவறான தகவல்தெரிவிப்பது, சட்டத்தை அவமதிப்பதன் அடையாளம் என்று தேர்தல் ஆணைய வட்டாரங்கள் தெரிவித்துள்ளன.

அமெரிக்கா சென்ற ராகுல் காந்தி, அங்குள்ள பாஸ்டன் நகரில் நடைபெற்ற நிகழ்ச்சி ஒன்றில் ஞாயிற்றுக் கிழமை பேசுகையில், ‘கடந்த ஆண்டு நடைபெற்ற மகாராஷ்டிர சட்டப்பேரவைத் தேர்தலில், அந்த மாநிலத்தில் உள்ள மொத்த வாக்காளர்களைவிட கூடுதல் வாக்குகள் பதிவாகின.

வாக்குப் பதிவு நாளன்று மாலை 5.30 மணி நிலவரப்படி, எத்தனை பேர் வாக்களித்தனர் என்ற விவரத்தை தேர்தல் ஆணையம் வெளியிட்டது. பின்னர் 5.30 மணி முதல் 7.30 மணி வரை, 65 லட்சம் பேர் வாக்களித்தனர். 2 மணி நேரத்தில் இத்தனை பேர் வாக்களிப்பது சாத்தியமற்றது.

ஒரு வாக்காளர் வாக்களிக்க சுமார்

3 நிமிஷங்களாகும். இதை அடிப்படையாக வைத்து கணக்கிட்டால் 65 லட்சம் பேர் வாக்களித்து முடிக்க அதிகாலை 2 மணியாகும். ஆனால் அவ்வாறு எதுவும் நடைபெறவில்லை.

தேர்தல் ஆணையம் பாரபட்சத் துடன் செயல்படுகிறது என்பதும், தேர்தல் முறையில் தவறு இருப்பதும் தெளிவாக தெரிகிறது என்று குற்றஞ்சாட்டினார்.

இத்தொடர்பாக தேர்தல் ஆணைய வட்டாரங்கள் செவ்வாய்க் கிழமை கூறியதாவது: மகாராஷ்டிர சட்டப்பேரவைத் தேர்தலின்போது காலை 7 மணி முதல் மாலை 6 மணி வரை, 6.40 கோடி பேர் வாக்களித்தனர்.

சராசரியாக ஒரு மணி நேரத்துக்கு சுமார் 58 லட்சம் வாக்காளர்கள் வாக்களித்தனர். இதை வைத்து கணக்கிட்டால், வாக்குப் பதிவு நிறைவடைவதற்கான கடைசி 2 மணி நேரத்தில் சுமார் 1.16 கோடி வாக்காளர்கள் வாக்களித்திருக்கக் கூடும்.

எனவே ராகுல் காந்தி கூறியபடி 2 மணி நேரத்தில் 65 லட்சம் வாக்குகள் பதிவாகியிருந்தால், அது சராசரியாக ஒரு மணி நேரத்தில் பதிவான வாக்குகளைவிட மிகவும் குறைவாகும்.

ஒவ்வொரு வாக்குச்சாவடியிலும் வேட்பாளர்கள் அல்லது அரசியல் கட்சிகளால் முறைப்படி நியமிக்கப்படும் வாக்குச்சாவடி முகவர்கள் முன்னிலையில், வாக்குப் பதிவு நடைபெற்றது.

வழக்கத்துக்கு மாறாக வாக்குப் பதிவு நடைபெற்றது என்று வாக்குப் பதிவுக்கு மறுநாள் தேர்தல் நடத்தும் அதிகாரிகள், தேர்தல் பார்வையாளர்கள் ஆகியோரிடம் காங்கிரஸ் வேட்பாளர்கள் அல்லது அவர்களின் அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்ட முகவர்கள் எதுவும் தெரிவிக்கவில்லை.

எனவே வாக்குப் பதிவு குறித்து தவறான தகவல்களை தெரிவிப்பது சட்டத்தை அவமதிப்பதன் அடையாளமாகும். இது தேர்தலுக்காக உழைத்த தேர்தல் பணியாளர்களை காயப்படுத்தும் என்று தெரிவித்தனர்.