

24th April, 2010

Dear Shri Navin Chawla,

Sub: All-Party meeting to discuss Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) - Potential for manipulations - Reg.

The present debate, all over the country, on the efficacy of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) in accurately recording the votes of the voters is a very significant issue that requires serious attention of all of us. The Election Commission which is entrusted with the responsibility of holding free and fair elections has to address this important issue.

Many democracies like Germany, Ireland and Holland and the United States of America have either banned use of EVMs or imposed stringent safeguards for their use. This was done as storing voting data only electronically is considered non-transparent, unsafe, unreliable and prone to manipulations. The gold standard throughout the world today is that there must be a verifiable, physical record of voting for all concerned to repose confidence in the election results.

While we all are appreciative of the Election Commission of India's efforts in conducting elections in an efficient manner, we have serious apprehensions regarding the use of electronic voting machines in elections. There are fears of the possibilities of tampering with the software embedded in the EVMs at various stages from the manufacturing of the EVMs, its maintenance and storage. Some experts have demonstrated how such manipulation can be done.

The EVM related concerns are of national importance and impinge heavily on the sanctity of our electoral mandates. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the voting choices of the people, presently exercised on the electronic voting machines, find proper expression in the election outcomes.

The concerns expressed above are indeed very serious in nature and we are of the opinion that the Election Commission of India has not addressed these concerns adequately.

Over the past several months, many of us had individually requested the Election Commission of India to convene an All-Party Meeting to discuss in-depth the desirability or otherwise of using the EVMs in elections. We would now like to collectively call upon the Election Commission of India to hold an All-Party meeting to discuss the urgent steps required to reform the voting system so that the people of the country and the political class can have faith in our voting system. This is the essence of our democracy and the Election Commission is bound to perform this constitutional obligation.

Looking forward to hear from you at the earliest,

Signed by:

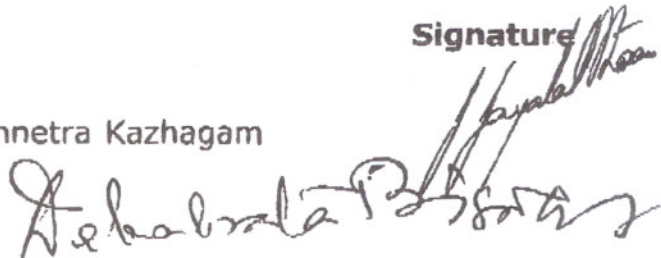
Presidents & Heads of political parties

Party

Signature

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
(**Dr. J. Jayalalitha**)

All India Forward Bloc
(**Dababrata Biswas**)

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The top signature is for Dr. J. Jayalalitha, and the bottom signature is for Dababrata Biswas. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Party

Signature

Asom Gana Parishad
(Baishya Shri Birendra Prasad)

B. Y.

Communist Party of India
(A.B. Bardhan, Gen. Sec.)

A. B. Bardhan

Communist Party of India (Marxist)
(Prakash Karath, Gen. Sec.)

Prakash Karath

Indian National Lok Dal
(Om Prakash Chowtala)

Om Prakash Chowtala

Janata Dal (United)
(Sarad Yadav)

Sarad Yadav

Janata Dal (Secular)
(H.D. Deve Gowde)

H. D. Deve Gowde

Rashtriya Lok Dal
(Ajit Singh)

Ajit Singh

Rastriya Janata Dal
(Lalu Prasad Yadav)

Lalu Prasad Yadav

Revolutionary Socialist Party
(Abani Roy Shri)

Abani Roy Shri

Samajwadi Party
(Mulayam Singh Yadav)

Mulayam Singh Yadav

Telugu Desam
(Nara Chandrababu Naidu)

N. Chandrababu Naidu

To
Shri Navin Chawla
Chief Election Commissioner
Election Commission of India
Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi.