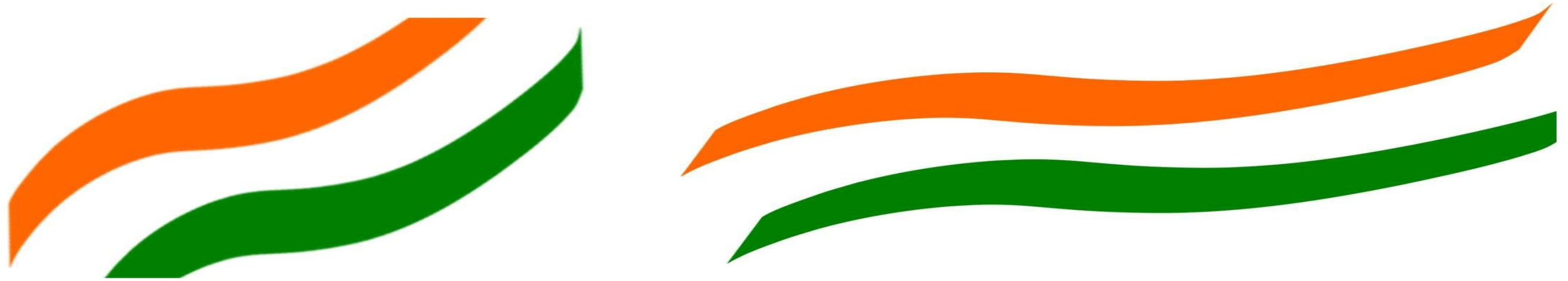




# Fortifying Electoral Integrity: A Comprehensive Approach

State Election Commission(SEC), Bihar



30<sup>th</sup> National Conference of SECs, Bodhgaya, Bihar, March 15 – 18, 2024

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# Agenda

**Exploring strategies to protect electoral integrity amidst challenges of backsliding**



**Transparent and accountable polling & counting (IT based monitoring of poll & post-poll process, EVM, Strong room – Digi Lock , OCR based Counting , Conflict management, increase voter turnout)**



**Technological Tool in Election: Legal Implication.**

# Objectives – Poll Day & Pre-polling session



**Smooth Conduct of elections and transparency in vote counting**

Eligible voters to be able to exercise their voting rights & integrity of election is maintained

Free fair and peaceful polling devoid of violence/ intimidation



**Ensuring Security**



**Facilitating Voting**

Accessibility of booths for all sections of the society

Preventing Electoral Malpractice & enforcement of election rules



**Stringent & continuous monitoring of the overall process from the allotment of EVMs till its safe and secure deposit.**



**Addressing Complaints or grievances**

Faster redressal of pending complaints

# Key Challenges – Poll Day & Post Poll

**Bogus voting & Booth Rigging**

**Safety & Security of polled EVMS, Vote counting disputes and complaints & grievances**

1

## **Ensuring security**

Maintaining law and order at polling stations and preventing any disruptions or incidents of violence requires effective coordination with law enforcement agencies

2

## **EVM Safety & Accurate Vote counting**

Tampering may happen with polled EVMS as well and incorrect counting may lead to disputes regarding the counting of votes, including allegations of miscounting, tampering, or discrepancies in the results.

**Booth Capturing**

**Ensuring security on polling day as well as post-poll**

3

## **Bogus Voting & Booth rigging**

Various forms of manipulation, such as voting multiple times, impersonating others, or tampering with ballots, tampering with voting machines, intimidating voters, or falsifying vote counts.

4

## **Booth Capturing**

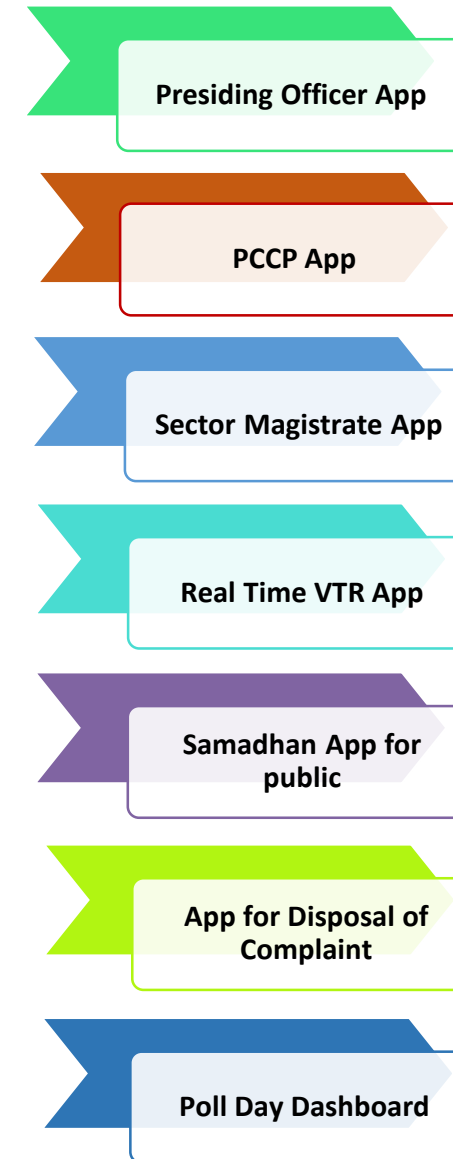
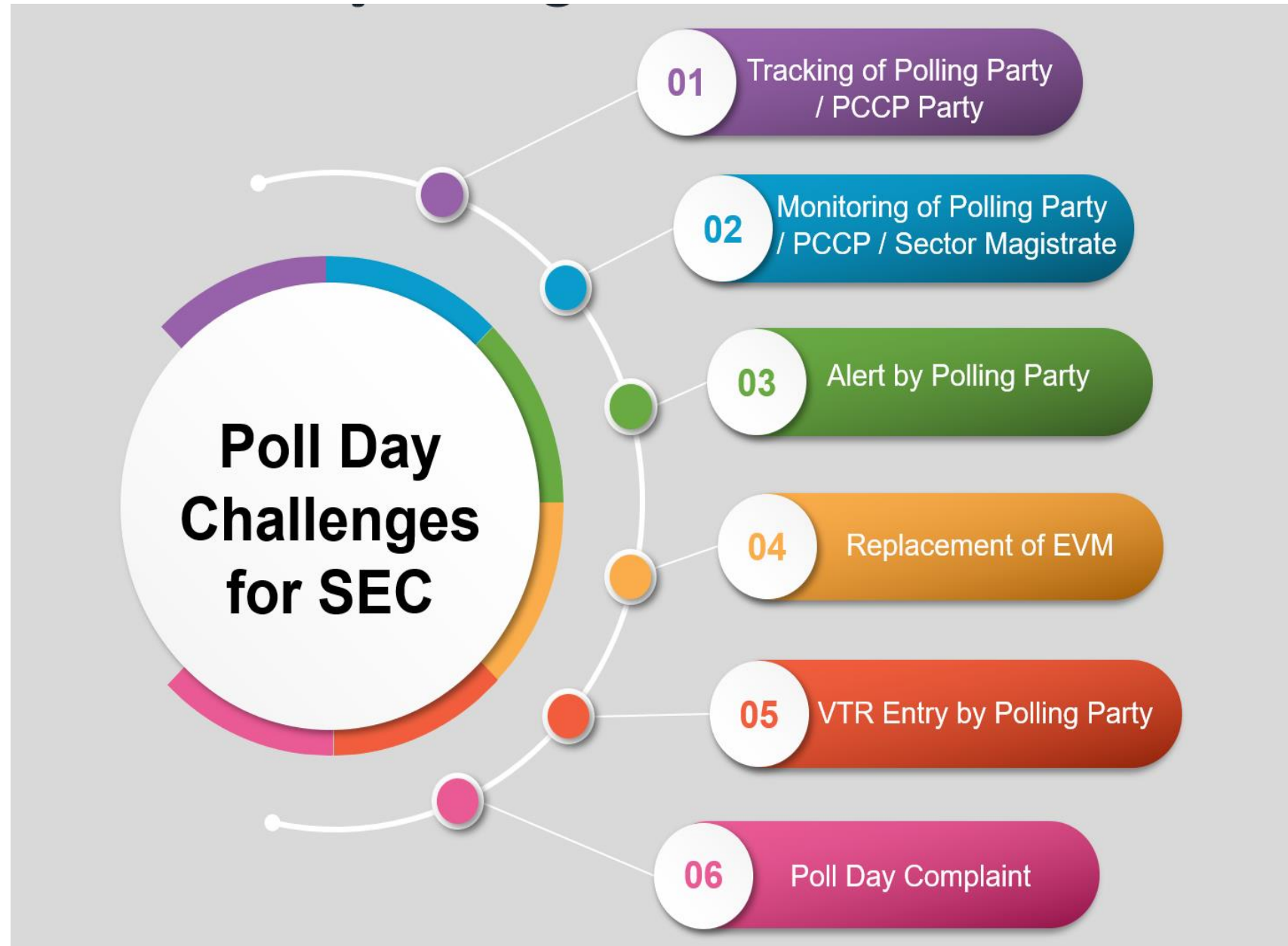
Intimidating voters, preventing opposition supporters from voting, falsifying ballots, or coercing voters to cast their votes in a particular way.

Other challenges include conducting safe elections during the pandemic Covid 19 and other technical issues



# **Strategies Implemented by SEC, Bihar**

# Poll Day Applications



# Poll Booth Management



**Organized & Efficient Management to prevent disruptions**



**Training personnel to handle diverse scenarios and ensure smooth operations.**

- ✓ **Protection of voting rights of each individual**
- ✓ **Biometric-based system and Facial recognition System** for minimizing the risk of identity fraud and expediting the voting process, reducing waiting times for voters.
- ✓ Adequate security measures to ensure there is **'zero' violence** during the elections.
- ✓ **Post-wise colour code** of voting compartments for EVMs
- ✓ Cluster centre for EVMS to replace faulty EVMS at every Panchayat level with a TAT of 10 minutes
- ✓ Poll day **real-time events monitoring app including VTR**
- ✓ Training of Polling Officers
- ✓ Deployment of **women personnel** at every polling station
- ✓ Appointment of **Observers** in each Block to observe the scrutiny of nomination and adherence to guidelines



# The Future of Voting

## Advancements in Voter Identification

Introduction of Facial Recognition Systems (FRS) and Biometric Voting Compartments.

Utilizing color-coding for streamlined processes.

Citizen



Today



Booth



Today



Reporting



# Benefits of using FRS

## Transparency

Enhance transparency in the electoral process by providing clear records of who voted, thus fostering trust among voters in the fairness and accuracy of the elections.

## Provision of the Right to vote

By adding an extra layer of security, these systems can deter fraudulent activities and unauthorized access to voting booths or electoral databases.



## Free & Fair Election

Authenticate voters by matching their faces with the images in the electoral database, reducing the chances of impersonation or fraudulent voting

## Accountability

Automating the voter authentication process with facial recognition can make the process faster and more accurate, reducing human errors and ensuring that eligible voters can cast their votes efficiently.

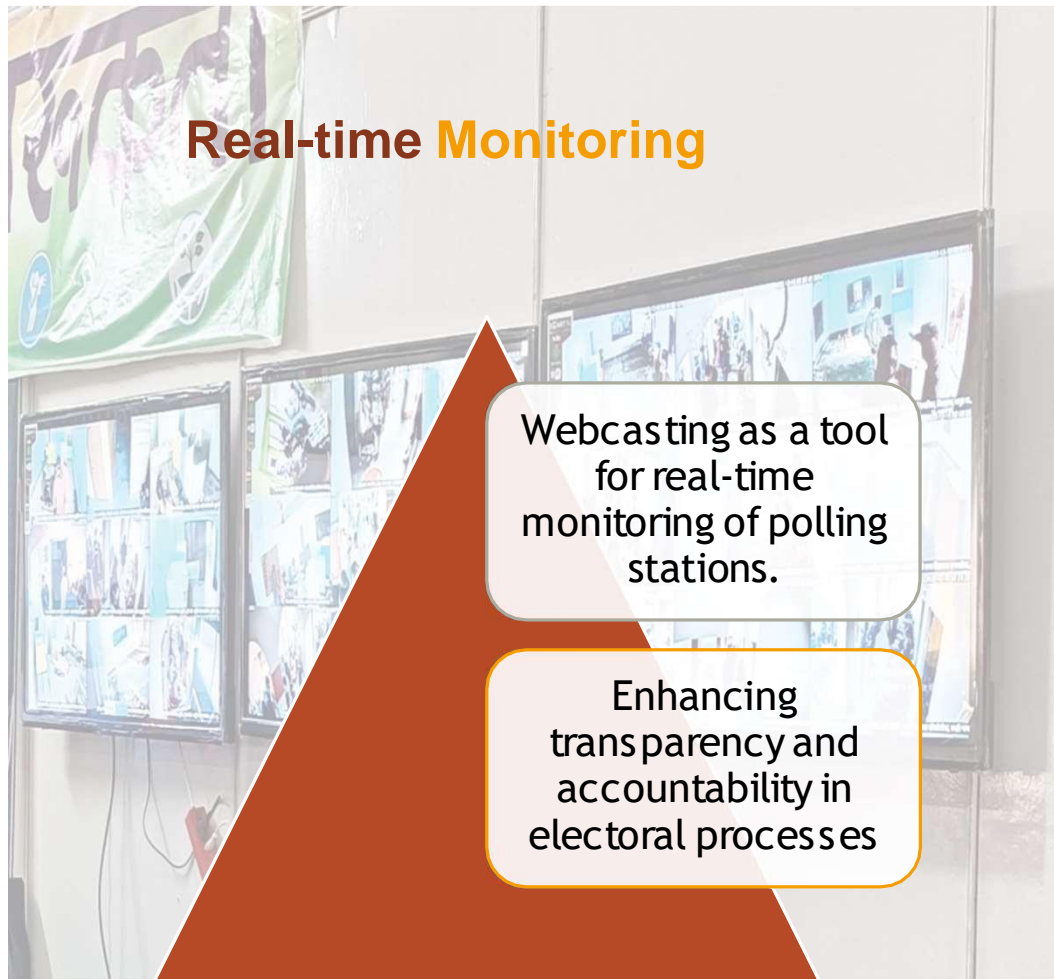
## Protect the fundamental right of voters

Can detect if an individual has already cast their vote elsewhere, preventing duplicate voting and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

# Colour Coding

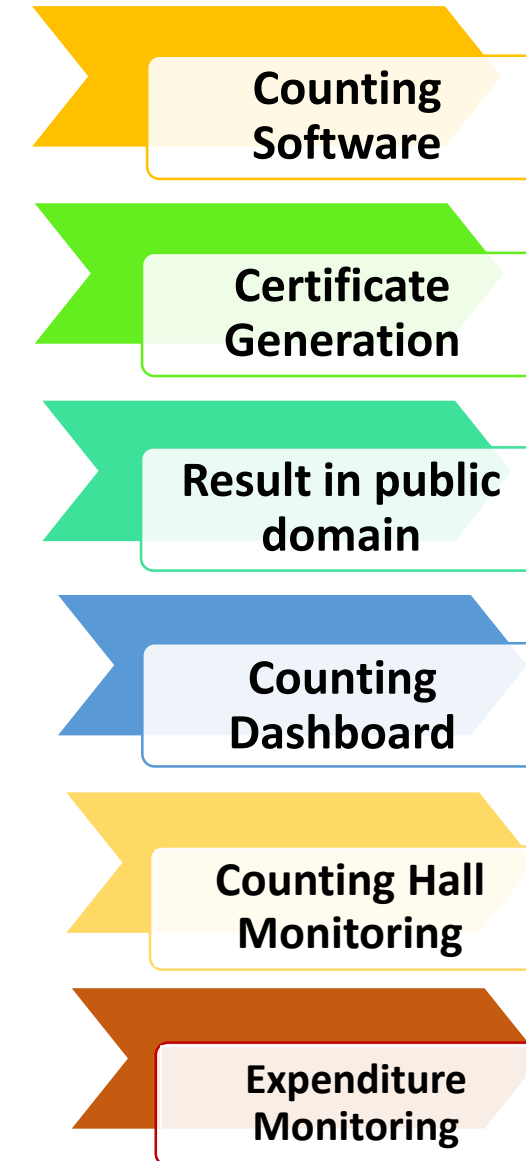
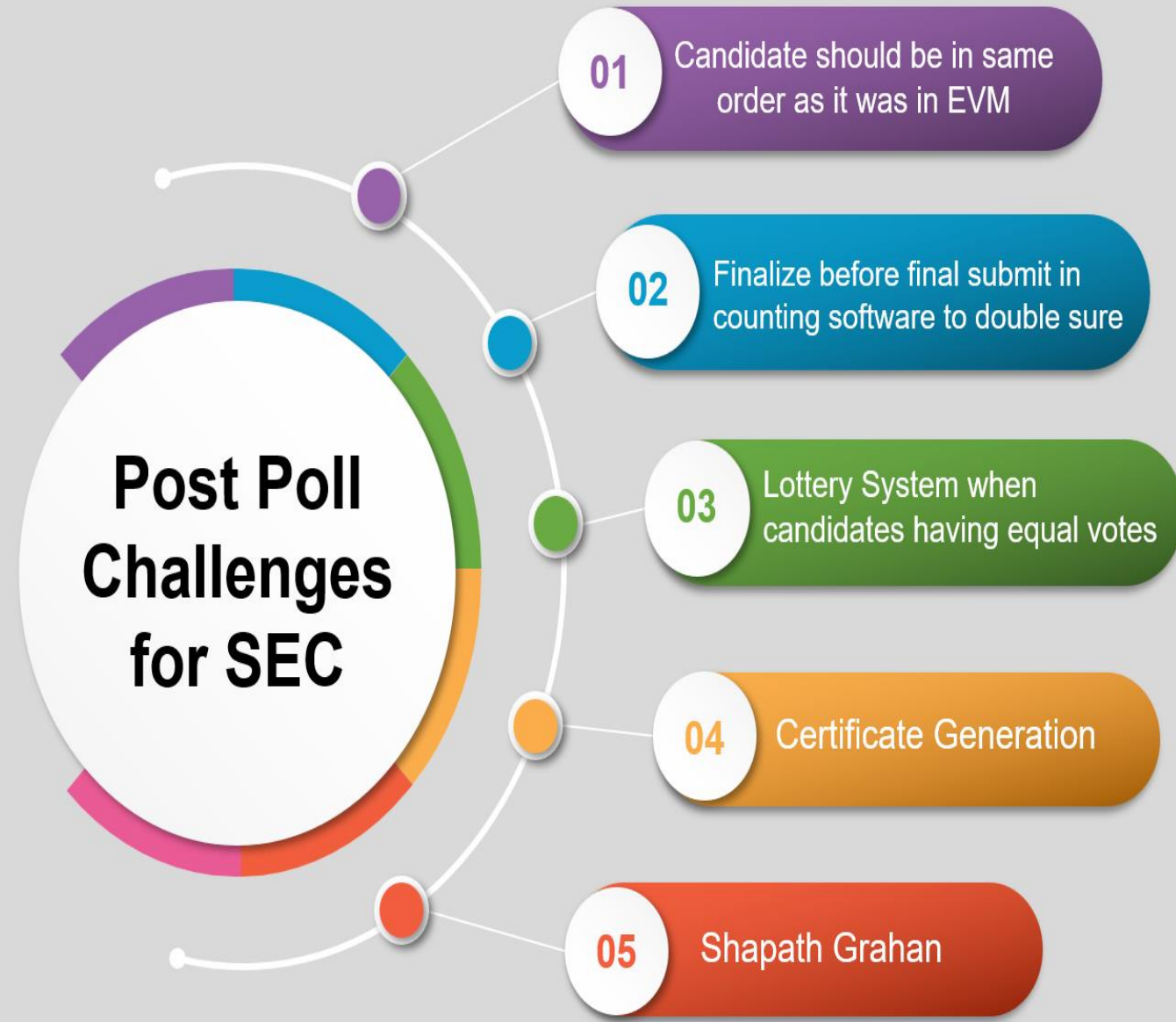


# Webcasting for Transparency



- **Webcasting** at polling stations ensures transparency and accountability in elections. **Live monitoring of vulnerable and sensitive polling stations** is conducted at the district/ commission level.
- When there is **overcrowding or problems with law and order**, local police stations are notified, and prompt action is taken.
- When **vote boxes and EVMs are being transported** from strong rooms to the counting location, live monitoring takes place.
- Throughout the voting process, staff members, agents, and actions outside the counting centre are all closely observed.
- **Result data from EVM control units is recorded** through cameras to maintain transparency.
- Live webcasting captures the **process of calculating forms** and results prepared using OCR technology without human intervention.

# Post Poll Applications



# Counting through OCR



प्रपत्र - 20(भाग-1)  
(विद्यमान 76 (2) केबिरी)  
(साम पंचायत के मुखिया)

**निर्वाचन के मतों की गणना का परिणाम-पत्र**

जिला: सुपौल      प्रखंड: विवेकीर्गंज      साम पंचायत: भद्रेसुआ  
\*निर्वाचन क्षेत्र संख्या 7      से      साम पंचायत के मुखिया

परिचय-3  
पंचायत निर्वाचन  
610802

| क्रमांक | अभ्यर्थी का नाम | अभ्यर्थी के पक्ष में दिये गये विधिवानुसार मतों की संख्या। |
|---------|-----------------|---|
| 1.      | अरुण देवी       | 10  |
| 2.      | निर्मला देवी    | 12  |
| 3.      | विधि कुमारी     | 219   |
| 4.      | बबीता कुमारी    | 27  |
| 5.      | विन्दु कुमारी   | 8   |
| 6.      | रेनु कुमारी     | 63  |
| 7.      | रीता देवी       | 8   |
| 8.      | रेनु देवी       | 5   |
| 9.      | सुहाना खातून    | 9   |
| योग -   |                 | 361   |

कुल मतदाता - 361  
प्रतिशेकित मतों की कुल संख्या - 0  
मतों का योग - 361

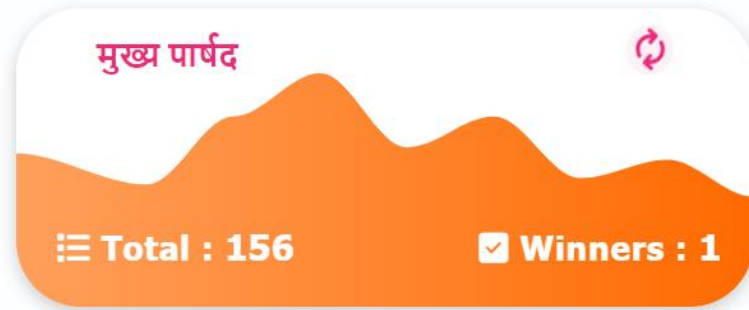
(क) विधिवानुसार मतों की कुल संख्या - 361  
(ख) प्रतिशेकित मतों की कुल संख्या - 0  
(ग) कागजे गये मतों की कुल संख्या - 361

(क-ख)  
समस्तमत का स्थान: सुपौल  
तारीख:

समस्तमत परीक्षक का हस्ताक्षर -  
नाम :  
पदनाम :



# Counting Hall Monitoring



मुख्य पार्षद विजेता

उप मुख्य पार्षद विजेता

वार्ड पार्षद विजेता



अनिल कुमार  
नगर परिषद लालगंज  
वार्ड न० 1



अनिल कुमार  
नगर परिषद लालगंज  
वार्ड न० 1

## वार्ड अनुसार स्थिति

| # | पद           | कुल पद | PENDING | STARTED | COMPLETED | DECORATED |
|---|--------------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | वार्ड पार्षद | 26     | 25      | 0       | 0         |           |

**विजेता**

नगर परिषद लालगंज  
वार्ड पार्षद, वार्ड न० 1

**अनिल कुमार**




# Counting Dashboard



## Counting Dashboard for Phase 1

| मुख्य पार्षद <a href="#">View All</a> |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| 156<br>Total                          | 0<br>Counting  |
| 155<br>Result                         | 0<br>Nirvirodh |
| COUNTING PENDING<br>0                 |                |
| NO ELECTION<br>1                      |                |

| उप मुख्य पार्षद <a href="#">View All</a> |                |
|--|----------------|
| 156<br>Total                             | 0<br>Counting  |
| 155<br>Result                            | 0<br>Nirvirodh |
| COUNTING PENDING<br>0                    |                |
| NO ELECTION<br>1                         |                |

| वार्ड पार्षद <a href="#">View All</a> |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 3346<br>Total                         | 0<br>Counting   |
| 3281<br>Result                        | 53<br>Nirvirodh |
| COUNTING PENDING<br>-4                |                 |
| NO ELECTION<br>16                     |                 |



# Monitoring at Headquarter level



# Inclusive Participation



## Ensuring Accessibility for Vulnerable Groups

Establishing an inclusive ecosystem for women, marginalized communities, and the physically challenged.

Facilitating their active participation in the electoral process.

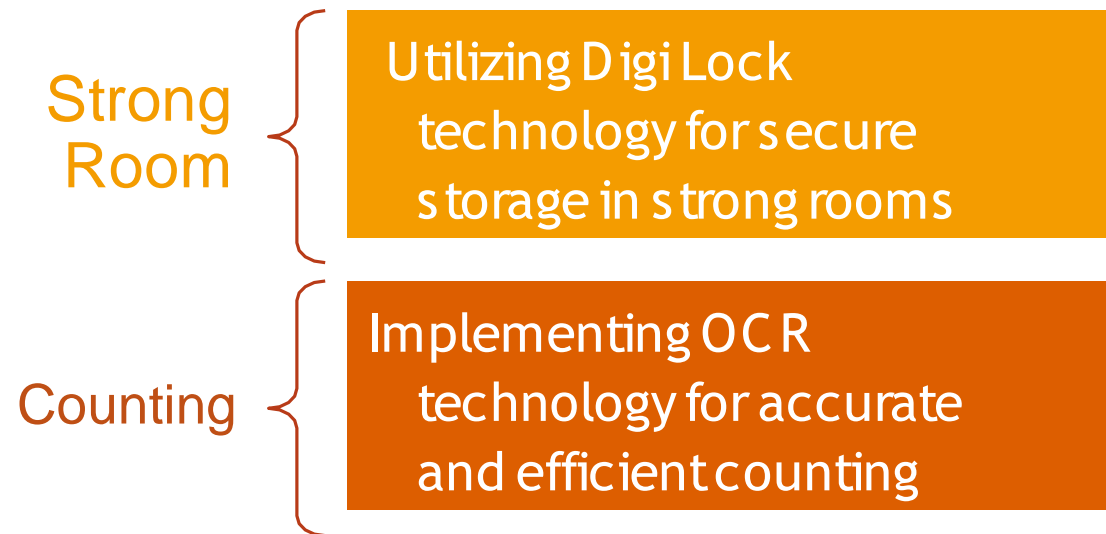
- **Online voter registration** introduced alongside offline process to attract young voters.
- Reservations for SC, ST, OBC, and women initiated to ensure representation.
- **Polling booths designed** attractively to encourage women and young voters.
- **Women polling officers** deployed in all booths for women voters' comfort and security.
- Accessible polling booths equipped with amenities like **ramps for elderly and disabled voters.**
- SEC, Bihar implemented an **app for voters to request wheelchairs** and other assistance.
- Different **coloured ballot papers** used for various election posts, matching compartment colors to aid illiterate voters.

# Helpline Cell, Control Room and Toll-Free Number

- Helpline cell and control room established at State Election Commission headquarters for Panchayat and Municipal General/Election activities.
- Control rooms operated at district/sub-division/block levels.
- A toll-free number (1800-34572-43) has been designated to provide continuous support to voters and candidates alike. This hotline serves as a central point of contact for electoral assistance and complaint registration.
- The helpline cell has proven instrumental in facilitating access to essential voting-related information and providing prompt assistance.
- Live webcasting monitored all voting and counting activities.
- Quick response to suggestions, help, and complaints received through the commission's website or social media platforms executed at the helpline cell level.



# Post-Poll Procedures



- During the 2021 Panchayat General Election, **advanced digital locking systems** were employed to ensure the secure storage of electronic voting machines (EVMs). These digital locks enhanced the security of strong room doors, where EVMs were kept under stringent protection.
- **Software was employed for EVM supply and Strong room security.**
- Polled EVMs were stored at collection centres, while voting materials were kept post-wise in the Strong Room, secured with digital locks.
- Stakeholders were **continuously updated** about the Strong Room's status via SMS messages.

# Digital Lock



# Conflict Management

**Electoral conflict management in Bihar is crucial for ensuring the integrity of the democratic process in a vibrant and populous state.**

Strategies for  
managing conflicts  
and disputes during  
counting

Importance of fair  
resolution to  
maintain electoral  
integrity

- Transparency & Accountability in ward formation, Voter Registration, polling station establishment and nomination
- Stringent Enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)
- Implementation of Law-and-Order Mechanism (Pre-poll mopping operation)
- Apart from print media and electronic media, social media election-educator documentary were used to inform all the voters
- proactive in promoting voter education
- Use of Technology for candidates, related permission/information and citizens' grievance redressal
- Monitoring of Candidates' Expenditure
- Use of Technology on poll day such as EVMs, AI-based FRS and biometric-based authentication system
- Post-voting counting using OCR without human intervention
- Post-election restriction of victory processions by winning candidates & patrolling of hamlets of vulnerable sections
- Post-election comprehensive analysis of the entire electoral process

# Legal and Privacy Considerations



## IT Acts and Electoral Legality

Understanding the legal framework governing elections and IT acts

Balancing privacy concerns with the need for transparency and accountability

### **Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 2006**

- Provides basic structure and framework for the functioning of Panchayats in the state.
- Delineates the powers, functions, and responsibilities of Panchayats, including the conduct of elections.

### **Bihar Panchayat Raj (Conduct of Election) Rules, 2006**

- Lays down the procedural aspects of conducting Panchayat elections in Bihar.
- Specifies the process of voter registration, nomination of candidates, polling procedures, counting of votes, etc.

### **Representation of the People Act, 1950 & 1951**

- Govern the electoral process in India at large, including Bihar Panchayat Elections.
- Outlines the qualifications and disqualifications for candidates, voter registration procedures, polling arrangements, etc

### **State Election Commission (SEC) Guidelines:**

- Issues guidelines and notifications regarding the conduct of elections.
- Provides detailed instructions to election officials, political parties, and candidates on various aspects of the electoral process.

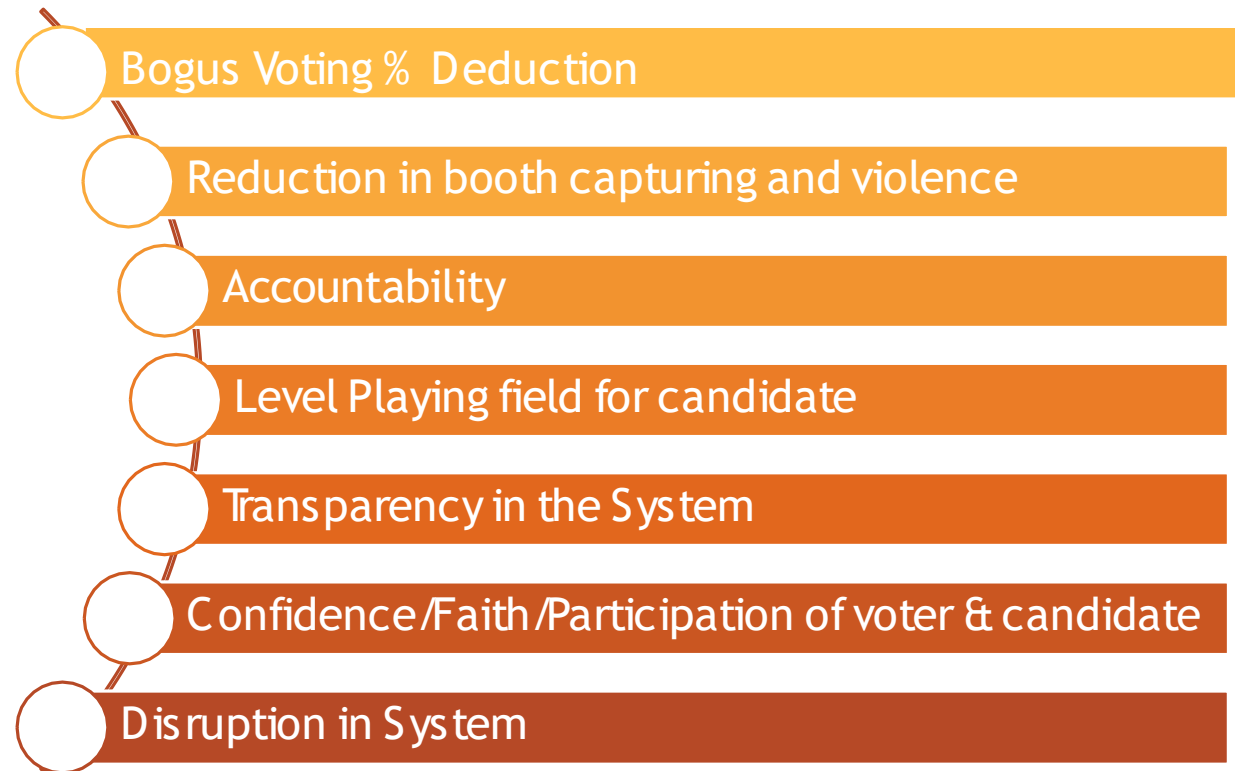
### **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**

To provide for the processing of digital personal data in a manner that recognises both the right of individuals to protect their personal data and the need to process such personal data for lawful purposes and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto

### **Information Technology (IT) Acts**

- Regulates the use of electronic means in various aspects of governance, including elections.
- Ensures the security and integrity of electronic voting systems, voter databases, and other digital infrastructure used in elections.

# Key Outcomes



- ▶ Completely **violence-free** election
- ▶ Notable **64% female voter** turnout in the 2021 Panchayat elections, marking a significant step towards gender equality in the electoral process
- ▶ **Participation of SC, ST, OBC & women** for various posts has been increased
- ▶ **Reservations for marginalized communities**, particularly women, have resulted in increased representation from these groups in local governance
- ▶ The introduction of EVMs along with Biometric authentication and facial recognition system has significantly reduced electoral malpractice, ensuring that election results accurately reflect the will of the people
- ▶ The SEC's efforts to educate voters and involve them in the electoral process have contributed to **greater citizen engagement**





# e-Voting

## Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Monitoring

Implementing e-Voting and e-Balloting for increased accessibility.

Ensuring secure and tamper-proof voting mechanisms.

- Continuous monitoring was done at the headquarters level.
- Arrangements for TV/computer screens etc. were made as per requirement for monitoring the webcasting.
- Apart from this, on the day of voting and counting, two IT managers were set up on deputation at the headquarters level by the Bihar Administrative Reforms Mission Society.

- e-Voting solution for vulnerable demographics of the electorate for the ensuing fair elections.
- Technical architecture has been finalized, and software development is in progress.
- Features:
  - Citizen Authentication using AI
  - Secured Votes using Blockchain (Distributed Ledger Technology)
- The web-based Admin Module allows the SEC to set online registration dates well in advance. This would allow the removal of online registered candidates from the electoral rolls for physical booths

# Roadmap Ahead

