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Bharat Electronics EVMs are safe, cannot be tampered with: CMD MV Gowtama

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Bharat Electronics Ltd, the makers of Electronic voting machines (EVMs), today said its machines cannot be tampered with and are 'safe'.



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Bharat Electronics Ltd, the makers of Electronic voting machines (EVMs), today said its machines cannot be tampered with and are 'safe'. The company also asserted that the machines are designed as per the specifications approved by the Election Commission of India and goes through rigorous verification process. "Our EVMs are independent machines not connected to any network, not connected to internet through which you can hack. They are simple calculators," BEL CMD M V Gowtama told reporters here.

His remarks come amid allegations by some political parties that the EVMs can be hacked. After questions were raised about the reliability of the machines, the Election Commission has announced the EVM hacking challenge for political parties which is scheduled on June 3 between 10 am and 2 pm at commission's headquarters.

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The NCP and the CPI-M are the only two parties which have agreed to participate in the challenge. "In electronics you can design the way in which you want, but what we have designed is for the Indian election system, for the specification given by the Election Commission and verified by independent technical expert committee and quality verified

by independent government body STQC (Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification)," Gowtama said.

Pointing out that EVs goes through many administrative checks and field level tests, the CMD, addressing the city-based company's annual press conference, said "our machines cannot be tampered with." Responding to a question about some parties demand for accessing the mother board of EVMs, Gowtama said "They want to design their own EVM, where by pressing one button vote will go to somebody else. Let them design and keep in their house. I don't have any issues on that."

"What we have designed is as per the specifications approved by the Election Commission of India and it goes through so many verification processes. These machines are safe, and they are the ones for taking democracy forward in this country. That much I can assure," he added.

Stating that BEL wants to exports EVMs, Gowtama said one-and-half year back the company exported to Namibia to conduct general elections which was successful, and because of that many African nations were looking to BEL's EVMs. He said EVMs needed to be customised from country to country based on their electoral policy requirement.

Following the controversy over EVMs, Election commission has decided that all future elections will use the voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) to dispel doubts about votes cast. Replying to another question, Gowtama said for VVPAT budget allocated was about Rs 3,100 crore. BEL was required to supply about 8.5 lakh VVPAT machines by September 2018, and similar number of machines will also be supplied by Electronics Corporation of India Ltd.

Also stating that BEL has got independent orders for both EVM and VVPAT, he said "...the decision of Election Commission now is- henceforth hundred percent deployment of VVPAT will be done in all election, so procurement of both will have to match."