

When Elephants Fight, Grass Suffers

News:

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has initiated work on the technical aspects of e-voting after the country's parliament passed the electronic voting and voting right for Pakistanis living abroad in the next general elections in 2023. The first committee will examine the technical aspects, the second financial cost of the process, and the third will inquire into the difficulties of implementing the system and suggest amendments. (Gulf News)

Comment:

Recently Parliament passed a bill in favour of the Electric Voting System and it has displeased the opposition greatly and a debate has started if this voting system is safe, forgetting that what they are voting for is the actual threat that Ummah is facing.

First things first, anything that the Government is so keen to achieve before the next election shows the interest of the current leadership, otherwise if they were so determined on making technological advancements why would we not have a solar energy system and have our people pay a hefty price every month for the electricity. In a country where we have no arrangement for the handicapped, not even having a wheelchair ramp anywhere except for hospitals, The Government is concerned about the overseas Pakistanis and the invalids who cannot reach polling stations. Opposition's objection is not because they are worried for public wellbeing but because they fear that they may lose the chance of being elected as no part of the system will be in their reach.

With any electronic device, there is always the risk that someone could illegally alter the results of an election. This could be done either through physical tampering or a remote attack over the internet. Allowing people to vote using their own devices could pose major risks as well. An authority could change millions of electronic votes undetected. Even if this is noticed there is nothing that can be done about it. So by far, the biggest disadvantage of an electronic voting machine is election hacking, and that is why it is so lucrative for the current Government. There are multiple other elements, like if a touch screen is used in the elections, the sensors in touch devices can be knocked out of alignment by shock or vibration that may occur during transportation. Considering our political culture, any manufacturer or company hired for the e-voting system can be asked to tailor the e-voting machines according to the "needs" of the current political party in power. In this method of voting, votes are stored in a safe storage in the computer memory Doug Jones, PhD, Professor of computer science at University of Iowa says in his book, Secure Election Voting, 'For over a decade, all direct recording electronic machines have been required to contain redundant storage, but this redundant storage is not an independent record of the votes, because it is created by the same software that created the original record. As a result multiple files are of limited use to check the correctness of the software.'

History of Pakistani Elections shows it clearly that the opposing political party and its supporters have always blamed the authorities of maligning the Elections. So it is not the method of voting that is a problem, previously, ghost voting, missing ballot boxes and counting taking longer than normal were major accusations and now e-voting.

It is the environment of major distrust that is to be blamed. People have been deceived by this deceptive system so many times that they do not expect any good from any form or method of these Elections. We all know this is like “when elephants fight, the grass suffers”, and we now refuse to be that grass. And tranquility for Muslim Ummah is only in to be led by the method of the Rasool Allah (saw). Islam has made it obligatory upon the Ummah to appoint a Khalifah according to the method provided in the Quran, the Sunnah and the Ijmaa of the Sahabah (ra). The method is the pledge of allegiance (Bay’ah) and this way Muslims choose a Khalifah for themselves and this method is proved by the by the Bay’ah of Muslims to the Messenger of Allah and from the order of the Messenger to us to pledge Bay’ah to the Imam for ruling. If the Ummah understands that the issue is not e-voting or ballot voting, issue is what we are voting for. A dishonest system can find multiple dishonest ways to gain ruling powers, while Khalifah of Muslims knows that he is directly answerable to Allah (swt) and Ummah of the Holy Prophet is his responsibility.

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (saw) said, «كَانَتْ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ تَسُوسُهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ، كُلَّمَا هَلَكَ نَبِيٌّ خَلَفَهُ نَبِيٌّ، وَإِنَّهُ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي، وَسَيَكُونُ خُلَفَاءُ فَيَكْثُرُونَ. قَالُوا فَمَا تَأْمُرُنَا قَالَ فُوا بَبَيْعَةِ الْأَوَّلِ فَأَلَّوْا، أَعْطَوْهُمْ حَقَّهُمْ، «The Israelis used to be ruled and guided by prophets: Whenever a prophet died, another would take over his place. There will be no prophet after me, but there will be Caliphs who will increase in number.” The people asked, "O Allah's Messenger (saw)! What do you order us (to do)?" He said, "Obey the one who will be given the pledge of allegiance first. Fulfil their (i.e. the Caliphs) rights, for Allah will ask them about (any shortcoming) in ruling those Allah has put under their guardianship.”

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