

EVMs a must for democracy, can't be tampered with: BEL CMD

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The longest ever election season in India has come to an end and the Narendra Modi government has taken charge at the Centre. Yet, questions on the functioning of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) are as loud as it was during the election phase. All elections that India has witnessed in the recent past saw EVM tampering allegations been thrown up, time and again.

Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has now trashed all such allegations. Rubbishing the claims, BEL CMD M.V Gowtama said EVMs cannot be tampered with and added that they are a must for a democracy.

BEL, along with Electronics Corporation of India Ltd, manufactures EVMs for elections in India. There has not been even a single case of inconsistency between EVMs and VVPATs in all the constituencies they were used, he said. "Around 74 per cent EVMs used in the elections were manufactured by BEL and the rest were manufactured by ECIL. EVMs are fitted with a one-time programmable chip that goes into the unit and it comes from abroad. We made the first system on the chip in partnership with Wipro and got it manufactured abroad," said Gowtama during a media interaction in Bengaluru.

Gowtama recalled that the M1 model of EVMs, which were first introduced, have now been done away with. The upgraded M2 model were in use later and now, the M3 model were used in the elections. "EVM M3 is a robust machine. In fact, the Election Commission had also invited foreign delegates to witness the recent Lok Sabha elections in India," remarked Gowtama.

Additionally, BEL is also strongly focusing on the smart city business wherein it will primarily be supplying intelligent traffic management solutions to different smart cities. "We have bagged orders for the Agra smart city project and a few smart cities in the northeast region," said Gowtama. The CMD said BEL would also be working

towards the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), which will be used to make payments across public transport anywhere in the country. To begin with, BEL will be working with different metro rails across Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. "We have started working on this card and to begin with, we would be developing it for the metro rail in different cities so that a single card can be used across metros," said Gowtama.

BEL is also working with the ISRO and is assisting in development of satellites. The navratna PSU has also acquired around 30 acres land near Devanahalli near Bengaluru to set up a centre that will focus on space electronics and will develop satellites for ISRO based on their requirements. "We will work with ISRO and are a robust partner to them. ISRO aims to launch around 600 satellites a year for which they require the help. At the same time we are associating ourselves with niche startups and will act as a marketing agency for their products," remarked Gowtama.

Recently, as per the recent fiscal performance, BEL recorded a turnover of Rs 11,789 crore (audited) during the FY 2018-19, registering a growth of 17 per cent over the previous year turnover of Rs 10,085 crore. The company, during the last fiscal, also introduced many new systems and products such as the Information System for Indian Railways, Auto Fare Collection Gate (SWAGAT), Drone Guard System, Integrated Communication System for the Indian Navy, Image Intensifier-based Passive Night Vision Devices, etc.

During the last fiscal, BEL also received orders such as Long Range Surface to Air Missile for P17A, smart city businesses, Integrated Perimeter Security Systems (IPSS) for Air Force, Kerala fibre optic network, Home Land Security System (Naval Airfield Integrated Security System (NAISS)), Naval equipment, setting up of Weapon Repair Facility at the Naval Shipyard and the upgradation of Shikari/Lynx Fire Control Systems.

In the future the company is expected to focus on areas such as in-house R&D for increased value addition and diversification in non-defence opportunities. The company will also strongly focus on areas such as space electronics, solar, homeland security, smart cards, telecom, railways, civil aviation, software as a service, fuel cells and Li-ion batteries, among others.