REPORT

Subcommittee on voting mechanisms in the gymkhana elections

1) Membership of the committee

Mr Ayushya Agarwal | Chairperson, Students' Senate

Mr Pratyush Rai | President Students' Gymkhana

Mr Akshay Bajaj | PG Senator

Mr Rahul Sethi | UG Senator

Mr Yash Maheshwari | UG Senator

Mr Richeek Awasthi | General Body Member

Mr Mayank Chauhan | Chief Election Officer (Convenor)

2) Meetings

The first meeting was called on **Friday, 14 December 2018**. Since a majority of members of the committee were not present in the campus on this day, the discussion was held through conferencing.

Agenda: To analyse the feasibility and pros/cons of various available voting mechanisms.

Attendees: Mayank Chauhan, Richeek Awasthi, Yash Maheshwari, Akshay Bajaj, Rahul Sethi, Ayushya Agarwal

Minutes:

1) The committee discussed the pros and cons of the following voting mechanisms: (i) Online Voting, (ii) Dynamic Voting (iii) The current polling system

2) The committee opined that online voting mechanism would give an edge over the current system on the aspects of (i) Reach (ii) Logistical Ease.

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However, there was a contention on the possibility of candidates and/or their campaigners/sympathisers influencing people to cast vote in their favour.

3) It was felt that due to the logistical ease, the process of polling would become independent of manpower, and hence a larger number of Election Commission volunteers would be available for patrolling and crisis management, which in effect would counter the apprehensions regarding undue influence on voter.

4) It was also suggested that the software could include options to change votes, and freeze them until a given point of time. The discussion regarding the pros/cons of this were deferred for the next meeting.

5) Hence, since the pros of online voting outweigh the cons, and the contentions raised could be tackled by the election commission, the committee agreed in principle that an online voting system should be implemented.

6) However, implementing it starting with the general election would have potential risks associated with it, hence the committee opined that an online voting and system should be used on a pilot basis in the HEC elections of various halls, and then in the MidTerm elections of Students' Gymkhana 19-20, before moving on to a large scale implementation.

7) The committee also discussed the possibility of dynamic polling system, however, there were a lot of logistical constraints,namely (1) Battery backup of polling machines (2) Location of booths in wings (3) Non uniform time allotment to wings, depending on the number of wings in the hall (4) Lack of proper communication options regarding voters who have already cast their votes, in case of multiple polling machines doing rounds

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in a given hall. Hence, the option was deemed infeasible for gymkhana elections.

The second meeting was convened on Sunday, **6 January 2019** at CCD, IIT Kanpur.

Agenda: To discuss about the option to change votes and freeze them during online polling and confirm the minutes of first meeting.

Attendees: Mayank Chauhan, Richeek Awasthi, Yash Maheshwari, Rahul Sethi

Minutes:

1) The minutes of first meeting were confirmed
2) The committee discussed the possibility of the 2 options for online voting-
    a) To cast the vote only once
    b) To cast the vote and change it any number of times
    c) To cast the votes and change it any number of times, with an option to freeze the vote at any point of time
3) It opined that if given the option to change votes, there is an extra leeway for candidates and/or their campaigners/sympathisers to influence even those voters who would have ordinarily cast vote for some other candidate. Although, the option to freeze does help, by saving voters with a clear opinion from being vulnerable to influence.
4) Since the option of changing the votes in itself exposes an additional set of people to vulnerabilities, it was opined that the election software which gives the option to cast the vote only once would be ideal for its first implementation.

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3) **Recommendations**

   a) The current election software to be used for upcoming general elections

   b) Online voting software is a welcome change, however, it should go through an implementation on a smaller scale, before being adopted in entirety.

   c) The hall should be encouraged to adopt online voting softwares for their HEC elections and post this, the software should be used for Mid-Term Elections of Students' Gymkhana 19-20

   d) The first time implementation should have the option to cast vote only once.

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