

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vote Report India

Citizen-Driven Election Monitoring

Delhi -- Vote Report India announced today the launch of its collaborative election monitoring platform for the 2009 Indian general elections at votereport.in.

As India's 714 million voters elect their 543 representatives, in the month long general elections to the 15th Lok Sabha, we are sure to see the usual controversies that surround general elections in India: the illegal use of government resources for campaigning, incidences of divisive and inflammatory rhetoric in campaign speeches, and allegations of violence, intimidation and other irregularities during the elections.

Vote Report India provides a platform to Indian citizens to report such incidents. Basically, users contribute direct SMS, email, and web reports on violations of the Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct. The platform will then aggregate these direct reports with news reports, blog posts, photos, videos and tweets related to the elections from all relevant sources, in one place, on an interactive map.

At one level, Vote Report India will serve as a critical initiative aimed at nurturing transparency and accountability in the Indian election process. At another level, the platform will provide the most complete picture of public opinion in India during the elections.

Vote Report India is a non-partisan all-volunteer collaboration between software developers, designers, academics, and other professionals committed to ensure a free, fair and transparent election process in India.

The votereport.in platform is powered by two path-breaking non-profit open-source projects -- Ushahidi and SwiftRiver -- and managed by eMoksha. Ushahidi is an award-winning platform that crowd-sources citizen reporting. SwiftRiver is a platform that makes sense of multiple sources of information in a fast-changing crisis situation. eMoksha is a non-profit organization that aims to enable stronger democracies through increased citizen awareness and engagement.

eMoksha founder Selvam Velmurugan said that citizens will be able to file a report by sending a message starting with VoteReport to 5676785, sending an email to report@votereport.in, or filling a form at votereport.in.

Mr. Velmurugan also mentioned that the basic service is already in place but new features will be introduced throughout the duration of the elections.

Participating in the Vote Report India project are an impressive range of organizations including Liberty Institute, National Network for India, Citizens for Justice and Peace, and Women's Political Forum.

Anant Trivedi from National Network for India said that Vote Report India is an innovative initiative which uses technology to help the voter log incidents which they notice, quickly via a variety of means.

Barun Mitra from the Liberty Institute hoped that citizens will make use of the features on votereport.in, and report their experiences on the election day.

Teesta Setalvad from Citizens for Justice and Peace believed that Vote Report India allows ordinary Indian citizens to monitor and report on one of the most important exercises in Indian democracy.

A spokesperson for the Women's Political Forum said that Vote Report India is a very dynamic initiative that will be one of the milestones in redefining our electoral system.

Please visit votereport.in to learn more about how citizen reporting can bring transparency to the election process in India.

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Ushahidi is an award-winning platform, started in Kenya, that crowd-sources citizen reporting.

SwiftRiver is a platform that makes sense of multiple sources of information in a fast-changing crisis situation.

National Network for India (NNFI) is a non-profit organisation with a primary focus on electoral reforms and ridding Indian politics of criminals.

The Liberty Institute is an independent, non-profit think tank that leads “Empowering India,” an initiative that attempts to empower voters with information to promote transparency and accountability in politics.

Citizens for Justice and Peace is dedicated to the promotion of communal harmony, and promote values that will encourage the development of peace, justice and reconciliation in every sphere of society.

Women's Political Forum is an enterprise aimed at identifying potential women leaders and developing a talent pool so that it can serve as a resource centre for future women politicians.