ICT in Local Bodies Elections in Haryana

The local bodies elections conducted by State Election Commission (SEC), evoke huge enthusiasm and interest amongst the public and political parties. Usually the number of candidates taking part in such elections is very large. Due to high percentage of votes polled, the value attached to each vote is very high. All this makes the need for transparency in conducting local bodies' elections a paramount necessity.
At the same time, the State Elections Commissions are the offices, where optimum use of ICT and ITeS is yet to be made. This project aimed to bring in efficiency and transparency in the local elections thereby ensuring the freeness and fairness of the whole process.

PARDEEP KAUSHAL
Technical Director
p.kaushal@nic.in

M P KULSHRESHTHA
Technical Director
and DIO Hisar
hryhsr@nic.in

Edited by
VIVEK VERMA

BACKGROUND

Almost every process involved in conducting local body elections, right from preparation of electoral rolls to the declaration of results was manual. There was no coordination between Election departments of the state, which manages the electoral rolls for assembly and parliamentary elections and the SEC. Use of computers at SEC was limited to preparation of excel sheets and word documents only.

BOTTLENECKS

- Lack of IT infrastructure at the SEC
- Lack of IT awareness and training among the staff
- Lack of coordination between SEC and Elections department
- Reluctance to introduce new technology and change
- Over confidence of the old staff in manual procedures being followed
- Data transmission, compilation and reporting were very slow.
- Preparation of final reports took long time
- By the time data was available, it had lost most of its utility.

IDENTIFIED AREAS

The whole idea of introduction of ICT and ITeS at various stages of the local bodies' elections was conceptualized at the initiative of the State Election Commissioner. Following problem areas were identified for modernization through ICT:

1. Dissemination of information in easy and quick manner
2. Integration of Assembly elections electoral rolls with SEC electoral rolls for local bodies elections
3. Publishing of draft rolls for everyone to see
4. Accepting claims and objections of the voters at field level
5. Identification of duplicate voters and correction of electoral rolls
6. Marking of polling booths and making information about booths available on web
7. Monitoring of polls and counting process
8. Publication of results and reporting at various levels
9. Generation of MIS

IMPLEMENTATION OF ICT IN IDENTIFIED AREAS

a. Preparation of electoral rolls

Data processing and final preparation of local bodies, electoral rolls was done at Field units using client server software. Final data, after ward-marking, de-duplication and correction was linked to a web based voter helpline making it available to the voters.

b. Accepting claims and objections from voters/citizens

A centralized role based web solution was used to accept claims and

objections on a centralized server which were resolved by the designated officers, to whom claims and objections were submitted online.

c. Uploading of candidates' details and documents

A web based system was developed specifically for the application named "Know Your Candidate" (KYC). The application was hosted on a central server at NIC Haryana State Data Centre, on which data from various field offices was uploaded, including candidate details, scanned documents, elections symbols etc.

d. Duty assignment and randomization

Duty assignment of polling staff and randomization of polling parties was done at field offices through NIC District Centres. Information about polling parties was disseminated to the respective Presiding Officers through SMS.

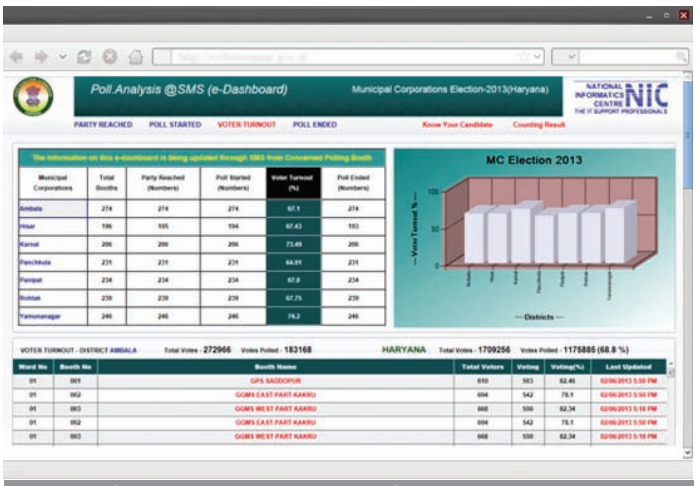
e. e-Dashboards for poll monitoring and results display

Web based e-dashboards were developed for monitoring of polling days and displaying counting results on web during counting. The data on these e-dashboards was uploaded from polling booths and counting centres through SMS using NIC SMPP gateway.

Snapshot of e-Dashboard for showing counting progress and poll results

TECHNOLOGY & ARCHITECTURE

- .Net framework 4.0/ IIS 7.5
- SQL server 2008 R2
- VB for client/Server tools and other utilities.
- NIC SMPP Gateway for PUSH and PULL SMSs.



Snapshot of Poll monitoring e-Dashboard for poll day monitoring

OUTCOMES

The commission had an overall sense of satisfaction with the implementation of ICT and the whole team of NIC Haryana was honoured in a specially held function on 12th August 2013. The major outcomes of the project are:

1. Maintenance of separate electoral rolls for Local Bodies' elections was discontinued with the use of latest assembly rolls.
2. Marking of wards and generation of rolls was automated.
3. Printing of electoral rolls in Hindi was facilitated through the use of Unicode Hindi fonts.
4. A new step of distributing official Voter Slips from the commission to the voters was introduced. It provided an identity to the voters, and could be used in place of a voter ID Card.
5. Manual procedure of accepting claims and objections was changed to online method. The citizen could track the status of their application online.
6. Another major re-engineering step was to make the candidates' details and affidavits public.
7. Whole process of creating polling parties, deputation of poll staff and randomization of parties was automated.
8. e-dashboards were designed to completely transform the way information was exchanged on poll day and counting Day. Use of SMS technology made a significant contribution in making the whole process highly efficient and quick.
9. Meetings of the commission with District administration were held through the use of Video conferencing to save on time and money.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
State Informatics Officer
NIC Haryana State Centre,
Room No G02, Ground Floor,
Haryana New Secretariat,
Sector – 17, Chandigarh – 160017
E-mail: sio@hry.nic.in