

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

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Press Release

As part of its Diamond Jubilee celebrations, Election Commission of India organized an international symposium on “Sharing Best Electoral Practices” in which delegates from election commissions of 27 countries, 5 international organizations participated. The symposium was also attended by former CECs and ECs, Chief Electoral Officers from States and others. 15 countries and 2 International Organizations presented papers. 5 CEOs also submitted papers. The symposium was organized around 4 themes which were, (1) Management of Electoral Rolls, (2) Voter Education, (3) Involvement of Youth in Electoral Process and (4) Innovative Practices in Election Management. Many interesting ideas and innovations were presented and discussed. Some of them are, use of biometrics in electoral rolls in Bangladesh and Venezuela, voting rights for citizens residing overseas in Japan and Indonesia, inclusion of voter education as part of formal curriculum in Maldives, use of scouts in voter awareness and voter facilitation in Thailand, use of civil society organizations as observers in Nepal, postal voting for electors in remote areas in Bhutan, attempts to address the problem of increasing voter apathy and decreasing participation in Republic of Korea, partnership with media in Mexican elections and disclosure of campaign financing in the USA. The symposium also provided a unique opportunity for bilateral discussions between many countries on the side-lines. Several countries expressed the need for a forum for regular interaction and cooperation between the electoral management bodies of the different countries.

The symposium was followed by bilateral meeting next day with election commissions of several countries for future collaboration. Chief Election Commissioner, Shri Navin B. Chawla and Election Commissioners Dr. S.Y. Quraishi & Shri V.S. Sampath held these bilateral discussions. Bilateral discussions were held with Ms. Mmasegoa Masire-Mwamba, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth, Ms. Ellen L. Weintraub, Commissioner, Federal Election Commission, USA, Ms. Thoko Nandisile Mpumlwana, Deputy Chairperson, Independent Electoral Commission, South Africa, Mr. M.I. Abdool Rahman, Election Commissioner, Mauritius, Mr. Ahmed Issack Hassan, Chairman, Interim Independent Electoral Commission,

Kenya, Mr. Dasho Kunzang Wangdi, Chief Election Commissioner, Bhutan, Mr. Neel Kantha Uprety, Acting Chief Election Commissioner, Nepal and Mr. Karamjit Singh, Social Funds Commissioner and former Election Commissioner of the United Kingdom. Besides, Mr. Kyung Keun Kang, Standing Commissioner, National Election Commission, Republic of Korea & Dr. A.T.M. Shamsul Huda, Chief Election Commissioner, Bangladesh had earlier made courtesy calls on the Commission.

During the discussions, South Africa, Mauritius, Kenya and Nepal evinced keen interest in the Electronic Voting Machine of the Election Commission of India. The exchanges with the United States focused on campaign financing, expenditure scrutiny and regulatory provisions. Improvement of electoral rolls, voters' awareness & education, enforcement of model code of conduct and engagement of technology in improving election management were discussed in the bilateral meetings. It was agreed to share best practices and expertise to strengthen the cause of free & fair elections across the world. Several countries requested for the Election Commission's support in training, improvement of skills and human resource development. Some Heads of Electoral Bodies requested that their personnel should get an exposure to the conduct of Indian elections.

The Commission thanked them for their interest and offered all cooperation. The Commonwealth Deputy Secretary General Ms. Masire-Mwamba complimented India's leadership in election management. She suggested that ECI should play a key role in promotion of democratic process worldwide through the mechanism of the proposed Commonwealth network of election management bodies.