

ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF FIJI — FIELD REPORT

India International Election Visitors Programme 2026

Observations and recommendations from the world's largest democracy

6–10 April 2026 | New Delhi & Kerala, India | Organised by IIIDEM

Report by Commissioner Susana Naisara and Commissioner Reginald Jokhan

AT A GLANCE

ELECTORATE

1 Billion+

registered voters

POLLING STATIONS

1.1 Million

across India

ELECTION WORKFORCE

20.15 Million

officers deployed

EVMS DEPLOYED

1.7 Million+

with 100% VVPAT

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Why this visit matters for Fiji

The IEVP 2026 gave the Fiji Electoral Commission delegation a first-hand view of the world's largest democratic exercise — one that manages over one billion voters through rigorous operational systems, advanced technology, and a genuine commitment to inclusion. The programme, organised by IIIDEM under the Election Commission of India, combined high-level institutional briefings in New Delhi with direct poll-day observation in Kerala.

The visit offered a striking end-to-end picture: from technical demonstrations of electronic voting machines and mock elections, to witnessing early-morning pre-poll testing and live voting across a state of 33 million people.



Opening plenary of the IEVP 2026 at IIIDEM, New Delhi

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

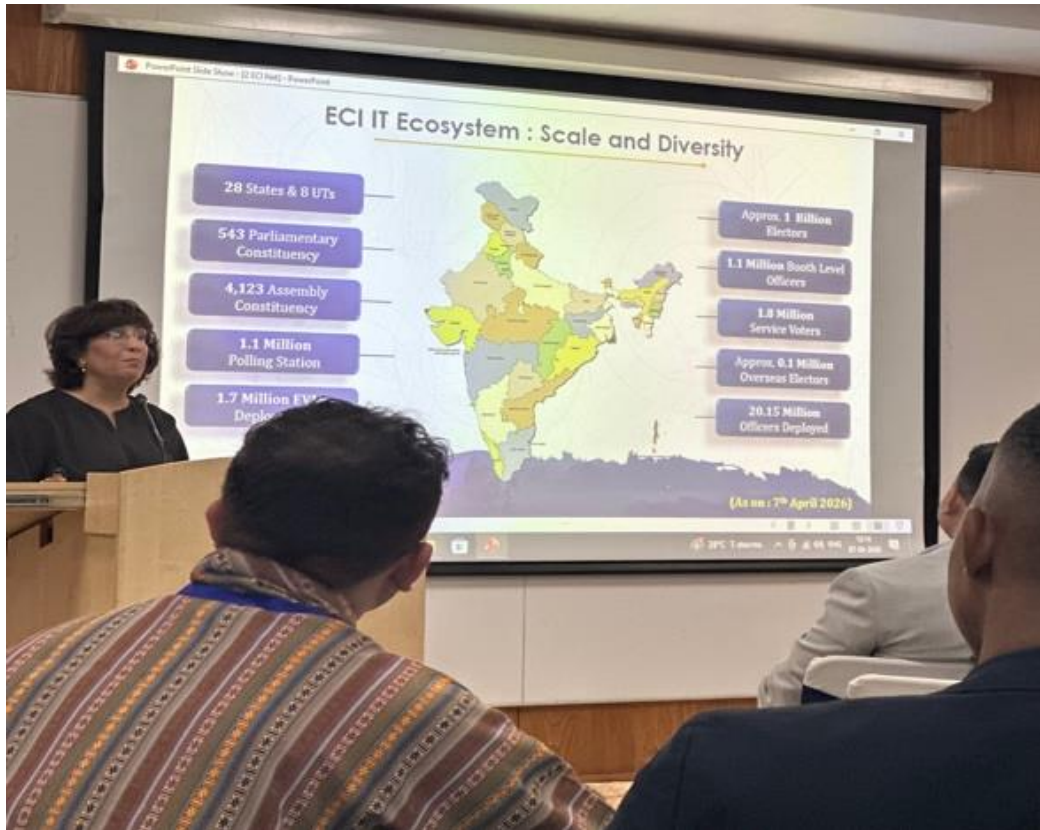
Day by day

Day 1 Arrival & welcome dinner — New Delhi

Commissioners arrived at Indra Gandhi International Airport and were hosted at the Radisson Blu, Dwarka. Welcome dinner with fellow delegates from Election Management Bodies across the region.

Day 2 Technical briefings & EVM demonstrations — IIIDEM

Live demonstrations of Electronic Voting Machines and mock poll simulations. Comprehensive briefing on India's electoral system operations and the scale of the ECI IT ecosystem. Update on India's Chairship of International IDEA and AI governance roadmap. Dinner with the Commission at ITC Maurya, Chanakyapuri.



Briefing on the ECI IT Ecosystem — scale and diversity of India’s electoral infrastructure

Day 3 Kerala — Dispatch Centre, Control Room & island stations

Briefed by the State Chief Electoral Officer on Kerala’s electoral approach. Visited Dispatch Centres and the central Control Room monitoring CCTV feeds from thousands of polling stations. Boat cruise to observe polling stations established on Kerala’s islands. Dinner with the Police Commissioner and senior electoral officials.



The Kerala election Control Room — monitoring thousands of polling stations in real time

Day 4 Poll day — pre-poll testing & live voting observation

Commissioner Jokhan attended 6am mock voting at polling stations. Observed pre-poll machine testing across 1,000+ stations. Visited Pink Booths, disability-accessible stations, and observed inclusion measures in practice across the state.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

What stood out on the ground

 **EVM Integrity Testing**

Each machine tested 50 times pre-poll — results manually recorded and cross-checked — then sealed. Replicated across all 1,000+ Kerala polling stations.

 **ECI Net Platform**

Single-login system replacing fragmented apps. 24/7 real-time support and transparent data access for all election officials nationwide.

 **Pink Booths**

Polling stations staffed entirely by women officers, with feeding rooms and creches. Demonstrably lifts female voter turnout in culturally conservative areas.

 **Disability Inclusion**

Dedicated personnel assisted voters with disabilities and the elderly. Select booths were staffed entirely by officials with disabilities.

 **Island Polling Stations**

Kerala's geography includes islands accessible only by boat — the delegation observed this directly, a vivid parallel for Fiji's own dispersed electorate.

 **Live Webcasting**

Over 6,000 cameras provided continuous monitoring of polling stations — full transparency without compromising voter secrecy.



EVM demonstration at IIIDEM



Delegation welcomed at a Pink Booth, Kerala



Accessible ramp and wheelchair facilities at a Kerala polling station

The delegation found the experience deeply instructive. Witnessing elections at this scale — in one of the world’s most populous and diverse democracies — offered a rare opportunity to see how robust systems, significant resources, and a culture of continuous improvement can combine to strengthen public confidence in the democratic process. The commitment to ongoing reform, rather than complacency with existing achievements, was a particularly striking aspect of India’s electoral culture.

NOTABLE DETAIL

The 50-vote pre-poll test

One of the most striking procedural safeguards observed was Kerala's mandatory pre-poll testing. On the morning of 9 April, starting at 6am, every one of over 1,000 polling stations carried out the same verification: each EVM was tested by pressing a candidate's name, confirming the correct name appeared on screen — 50 times — with results manually recorded. The two records were then compared before the machine was sealed for voting.

This meticulous process, replicated simultaneously across the entire state, speaks to the operational culture underpinning India's electoral integrity. It is a model of procedural transparency that builds public confidence not through rhetoric, but through repeatable, verifiable action.

i Kerala consistently records some of India's highest voter turnout figures — with female turnout regularly surpassing male turnout. This is a rarity among developing democracies, directly attributable to the inclusion infrastructure observed during the visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIJI

Applying lessons to our electoral context

1. Adopt practical inclusion measures for LGE and General Elections

Contextualise India's Pink Booth model for Fiji — simple feeding rooms with privacy curtains, creches for children, shaded rest areas, and dedicated staff assistance for elderly and disabled voters. Pilot booths managed by Persons with Disabilities. In dry or western locations, explore a 'cool election' approach with available drinking water.

2. Explore a unified digital platform (ECI Net model)

With separate registration processes for LGE, General Elections, and any referendum, a single unified system could reduce fragmentation, improve real-time oversight, and simplify voter access. ECI Net's transition from multiple fragmented apps to one login offers a tested blueprint.

3. Initiate a dedicated EVM exploration for Fiji

A bilateral visit focused on EVM systems would allow a deeper Fiji-specific assessment. The pre-poll testing process observed in Kerala — rigorous, manual, and transparent — demonstrates how public trust is built through procedure, not just technology.

4. Expand peer exchange on democratic participation

India's festive approach to elections — community-oriented, inclusive, and celebratory — offers a framework for increasing voter engagement. The island polling stations in Kerala also offer a direct parallel for Fiji's own island-dispersed electorate.

5. Collaborate on AI governance for elections

Deepfakes and disinformation are growing risks globally. India's AI roadmap through Q2 2027 — including ethical frameworks and institutional safeguards — offers a model Fiji can engage with through international forums and bilateral policy dialogue.

CONCLUSION

The Kerala model as a global benchmark

The IEVP 2026 demonstrated that high levels of public trust — grounded in transparent, inclusive, and rigorously tested systems — are the foundation of democratic success. The ‘Kerala Model,’ with its specific attention to gendered and disability-inclusive spaces and its origination of India’s Model Code of Conduct, is increasingly recognised as a gold standard for applying GEDSI principles directly within an electoral framework.

For the Electoral Commission of Fiji, this programme provided an insightful experience at all levels. The delegation witnessed processes — from high-level institutional design in New Delhi to disability-inclusive polling, and a 6am pre-poll test in a Kerala polling station — and returned with concrete, actionable insights applicable for Local Government Elections, General Elections, and any referendum process ahead.



Commissioners Naisara and Jokhan received with a traditional floral welcome in Kerala

ANNEXURE

Key contacts & venues

- Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma — Director General, IIIDEM
- Mr. Baskaran M — Head of Centre for Collaboration & Partnership, IIIDEM

Venues: Institutional briefings at IIIDEM; welcome dinner at Radisson Blu, Dwarka; lunch at Kochi Marriott Hotel with state electoral officials; closing dinner at ITC Maurya with the Commission.