A seven-member Namibia's Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) delegation visited Bangalore, Karnataka's state capital and India's IT hub to catch up with the poll actions of April 17, the largest single day of voting in the five-week national election.

The visit was organised as part of a partnership between UNDP and the Election Commission of India to further South-South cooperation in electoral management.

UNDP sees South-South cooperation as a broad framework for countries of the global South to share learnings and identify solutions for common development challenges. The conduct of transparent and credible elections is one of them. Professor Paul John Isaak, Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Electoral Commission of Namibia said the delegation wanted to witness the parliamentary polls especially the use of the Electronic Voter Machines (EVMs) for a free and fair polls. The idea was to learn from India's incredible experience in generating awareness on the use of EVMs.

Namibia goes to the polls in November 2014 and will deploy EVMs for the first time. The EVMs will help save paper, reduce corruption, and make the poll process simple and efficient. Meanwhile, we are waiting for suitable amendments in the law to usher in electronic voting, he said. Namibia has acquired 1,700 EVMs and ordered 3,400 more from public sector PSU Bharat Electronics Limited.

Last year, an IT team of Namibia were in the city to familiarise themselves with their functioning, he recalled.

The Namibians also saw the live webcasting of the polls in the IT hub undertaken with the assistance of college students and volunteers. Both these initiatives by the Election Commission of India have been introduced at model and sensitive polling stations across India. The visitors made it a point to interact with the transgender voters of the Hebbal Dasarahalli area in the Bangalore North parliamentary constituency. The EC had included transgender persons in the 'Other' category for voter identity cards, thereby providing them with a separate identity. The third gender was recognised by the Supreme Court only recently.
It was a unique experience for the Namibian team who were interacting with transgender persons. "I am impressed with their self-confidence and candour. We do not have a separate category that permits gender minorities to identify themselves as per their choice but we must take that into consideration," a UNDP release said. UNI MCN SY 2002 NNNN

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