



PRESS RELEASE

Netindia rebuffs CEC Navin Chawla's allegations on collaborative EVM Tamperability research

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In a recent collaborative study organized by me along with Alex Halderman, Professor of University of Michigan and Rop Gonggrijp, security researcher from Netherlands, we have shown how the Indian EVMs are vulnerable to election fraud. A detailed video on the same and a detailed technical paper have been released on April 28, 2010 posted at our website <http://indiaevm.org/>. Two attacks on the EVMs that can change the election outcome with little chance of detection have been demonstrated on a *REAL* EVM made used in Maharashtra assembly elections.

The findings of the study were disseminated in public interest as the sanctity of the election process is of paramount importance in a functioning democracy. Rather than address such vulnerabilities in the Indian EVMs, Mr. Navin Chawla, Chief election commissioner has unleashed a vicious and malicious propaganda to discredit the research study and impugn motives of the researchers.

On June 5 instants, CEC Mr. Navin Chawla had made a baseless allegation that "*a private manufacturer, who failed to sell their machines for use in polls, were behind the propaganda that EVMs were vulnerable.*" He added, "*I would not like to name the private manufacturers. But one of them is behind the latest move.*" The CEC for sure was referring to NetIndia and to the recent scientific study that we coordinated.

We categorically refute these allegations and place the following facts and clarifications.

Allegation of Commercial Interest

Unlike what the CEC Navin Chawla claims, we never attempted to do any business with the ECI, either in the past or in the present on the EVMs. Netindia is a reputed company in the field of automation, surveillance and embedded protocol development. Our company was founded in the year 2000, long after the EVMs were introduced in elections by the ECI and manufactured by the public sector companies, the ECIL and BEL. The ECI had never solicited any proposals or bids or offers for manufacturing EVMs.



Given the above facts, where is the question of our company “failing to sell” our machines for use in polls? If the CEC has any evidence or basis to substantiate his claims, we challenge him to produce them before the media or withdraw them gracefully.

Rationale for Our Involvement

A question that naturally arises is: what had prompted our organization to undertake a study of the vulnerabilities of EVMs. First, it was the technical challenge thrown at us repeatedly by the Election Commission of India and its experts and secondly, the public interest involved in the subject.

Here is the background: we were approached by an NGO and activist V.V. Rao, main petitioner in the public interest litigation (PIL) in the Hon’ble Supreme Court last June to demonstrate the vulnerability of EVMs. When the apex court referred the matter to the Election Commission of India (ECI), the ECI repeatedly “dared” us to demonstrate the tamperability of EVMs all along unrealistically claiming that their EVMs are “tamper proof.”

After making several attempts in vain to convince the ECI on the need to adopt standard security audit procedures followed worldwide for testing the EVMs, we were left with no opportunity but to publish our research paper with complete details of vulnerability findings.

The scientific study that exposed vulnerabilities was actually initiated only due to the ECI’s repeated insistence on a demonstration and its unwarranted provocation of our technical capabilities. As the ECI had refused to give any EVM to us for demonstration purposes, we used the EVM provided to us for a brief period by an anonymous source. The machine used for the research was a real EVM used in elections and not a “look alike” or a fake machine as alleged by the chief election commissioner, Mr. Navin Chawla.

VeTA’s Open Challenge

CEC Mr. Navin Chawla claims that the EVMs are tamper proof and credits this assessment to his expert committee headed by Prof Indiresan, ex-director, IIT, Chennai. The CEC should know that the ECI’s own expert has accepted our research finding that the ECI-EVM can be tampered with. He is only wondering if it is possible on a big scale.

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We believe that it is time to settle the debate and not to engage in a verbal duel. **To put to rest all these doubts, claims and counter claims, VeTA (of which I am the Technical Coordinator) volunteers to make a public demonstration in front of the entire media on how the ECI-EVMs can be hacked.** VeTA, Citizens for Verifiability, Tamperability and Accountability in Elections is an advocacy body constituted last year to ensure integrity of Indian elections.

We would like the ECI to bring its EVMs to a public place accessible to all on which we shall show how they can be hacked. Or, the ECI may organize it in its own premises in the presence of the entire media. Anybody would consider this a fair challenge and would the ECI accept it?

If the ECI is unprepared for the challenge, it must at least constitute a national panel of experts drawn from industry, academia, political leaders and civil society representatives to study our research findings and discuss the future course of action.

In the interim, the ECI must stop its false “propaganda” and maintain its dignity and decorum as a well regarded public institution.