

SHRI MUN 2024

BACKGROUND GUIDE



LOK SABHA & RAJYA SABHA:
JOINT SESSION



*Agenda: Viksit Bharat 2047
Goals in light of the
General Election, 2024
Freeze Date: 3rd June, 2024*

Letter from the Executive Board

Namaste Parliamentarians,

The political parties of the Indian Union are coming together at a very challenging time. According to most internationally recognized standards, the state of our national democracy is deteriorating. During this period of turmoil, it is crucial to uphold the spirit of our Constitution and the visions of our forefathers. Although we cannot enforce cooperation between opposing political ideologies or factions, and finding common ground may be difficult due to fundamental differences, this committee should at least agree on ensuring our national elections are free and fair. The results should be respected, and the processes should be credible by both domestic and international standards.

As the moderators for this conference, we will do our utmost to encourage dialogue and cooperation between competing parties and to maintain a level of sanctity, dignity, and mutual respect in our Parliamentary discussions. However, the rest is up to you. Whether different factions can find common ground is uncertain. The committee will either succeed collectively in respecting and upholding the Indian Constitution or fail collectively, leading to a new era of chaos, autocracy, and disorder.

As Parliamentarians, it is your responsibility to research and understand the positions assigned to you. While some creative freedom is encouraged and even expected in your constructions and portrayals of your character portfolios in the committee, you must ensure a degree of realism in terms of how far your designated characters can compromise on certain key principles. Although some variance or creativity on your part is not discouraged, keep in mind that doing so could invite intense scrutiny from a highly inquisitive Executive Board or Press Conference that will demand explanations for any apparent contradictions from previous statements. Most importantly, be cautious of your fellow Parliamentarians, who will undoubtedly come well-prepared and well-researched to challenge any lapses in judgment or consistency.

We encourage you to extend your research beyond the confines of this agenda to raise other relevant issues concerning the state of Indian democracy, national or state elections and their conduct, or recent events in the Indian Parliament.

This committee will follow UNA-USA rules of procedure throughout the conference. Please note that the only documents considered credible proof for any allegations or statements made in the committee are reports or documents from any UN agency, government reports (not necessarily limited to Indian national or state governments), or articles from Reuters, CNN, BBC, or Al Jazeera.

Any formal queries regarding ShriMUN or this committee can be directed to the official email address (shrimun@tsrs.org). Any form of documentation sent before the start of committee sessions will not be marked or considered legitimate or applicable in any way.

The Indian Political System

India follows a quasi-federal structure of government, although the word is not used in the Constitution itself. The Constitution of India delineates the national framework consisting of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. However, there is a centralizing tendency in the distribution of powers, with the Union Government having overriding authority on all matters listed in the Concurrent list, in case of conflict.

The Central Government

Executive Branch: The executive branch consists of the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Council of Ministers, and Attorney General of India.

President: The President is the ceremonial head of state and the first citizen of India. They also are the commander-in-chief of the Indian Armed Forces. The president is indirectly elected by an electoral college comprising the Parliament of India (both houses) and the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

Prime Minister: The Prime Minister is the head of government and has the executive powers; the President appoints the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister leads the executive branch of the government and is the leader of the Council of Ministers. They also advise the President who can declare a state of emergency and dissolve the Lok Sabha.

Legislative Branch: The legislative branch comprises the Parliament, a bicameral body that includes the President, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), and the Lok Sabha (House of the People).

Rajya Sabha: The Rajya Sabha, or the Upper House, is a permanent body not subject to dissolution, with one-third members retiring every two years. The members are elected by the elected members of the State Assembly with the number of members a state sends based on its population.

Lok Sabha: The Lok Sabha, or the Lower House, consists of directly elected representatives, with the Prime Minister typically being a member of this house. It has a maximum strength of 552 members, and the general elections are held every five years.

Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court of India is the apex court in the country and the final court of appeal under the Constitution of India.

State and Local Governments India is made up of 28 States and 8 Union territories. Each state, like the central government, has its executive, led by the Governor and the Chief Minister, legislative (State Legislative Assembly or Vidhan Sabha, and in some states, a Legislative Council or Vidhan Parishad), and judiciary. The local government bodies include

the Panchayats in rural areas, Municipalities in urban areas, and the Metropolitan authorities in large cities.

Political Parties Political parties in India are an essential part of the democratic system. The Election Commission of India recognizes political parties, and they are the primary entities contesting elections. Major national parties include the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), and many others. There are also several state parties.

The political party or coalition with the majority of seats in the Lok Sabha forms the government. The leader of that party becomes the Prime Minister. If no single party obtains the majority, then a coalition of parties may come together to form the government, with agreement on who will take the Prime Minister's role.

History of the Electoral System in India

At the stroke of the midnight hour on August 15, 1947, India became an independent nation, freeing itself from British rule. India chose to be a democratic republic, embracing universal adult franchise – a bold move given the high levels of illiteracy, stark social inequities, and immense diversity. The Indian Constitution, adopted on January 26, 1950, established a parliamentary system of representative democracy, entailing periodic elections to choose the governing body.

Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous constitutional authority, was established on January 25, 1950, tasked with administering and overseeing the election process. Initially, it was a single-member body, but since October 1993, it functions as a multi-member body consisting of a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (EC). They have equal powers and receive the same salary, allowances, and other perquisites, equivalent to those of a judge of the Supreme Court of India.

The primary functions of the ECI include the preparation of electoral rolls, demarcation of constituencies, scheduling and conducting elections, scrutinizing nomination papers, monitoring the election campaign, including candidates' funding and expenditure, and ensuring free and fair elections.

Representation of the People Act

The Representation of the People Act of 1950 and 1951 was enacted to administer the conduct of elections in India. The 1950 Act primarily deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. The 1951 Act sets out the conduct of actual elections and by-elections, qualifications and disqualifications for membership of the Houses, corrupt practices and electoral offenses, dispute resolutions, and registration of political parties.

Since their enactment, several amendments have been made to these acts to accommodate the evolving socio-political landscape and address challenges in the electoral process. Key amendments include:

- The 1956 amendment reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years.
- The 1988 amendment introduced the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).
- The 2002 amendment made provision for voting rights to Non-Resident Indians.
- The 2003 amendment allowed for the use of "None of the Above" (NOTA) option in ballots.

Evolution of the Electoral System

The first general election in India was conducted in 1952, a massive exercise in a nascent democracy that saw an electorate of 176 million voters. Since then, the electoral process has witnessed significant developments.

The introduction of EVMs in 1988 was a revolutionary step towards efficient and transparent elections. These machines reduced the time in casting a vote and eliminated the possibility of invalid votes. However, concerns over the security of EVMs led to the introduction of Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) in 2013, providing an additional layer of transparency and reliability.

In an attempt to curb the influence of money and muscle power in politics, the ECI started conducting "clean" elections by strictly implementing the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and placing limits on election campaign expenses.

To empower the electorate, India introduced the NOTA option in 2013, allowing voters to reject all candidates. However, even if the majority choose NOTA, the candidate with the most votes still wins.

Despite these reforms, India's electoral system still grapples with challenges such as criminalization of politics, opaque political financing, underrepresentation of women, misuse of religion and caste for electoral gains, and the distortions of the first-past-the-post system. Addressing these requires continual evolution and reform of the electoral system.

Existing Electoral Process in India

The electoral process in India is a multi-step procedure governed by the Election Commission of India (ECI). It begins with the announcement of the election schedule and culminates in the formation of the government. Here's a step-by-step breakdown:

Delimitation of Constituencies:

India is divided into 543 Parliamentary Constituencies, each represented by one member in the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of Parliament. Delimitation is the process of redrawing the boundaries of these constituencies based on the population census.

Election Announcement:

The ECI announces the schedule of the election. This includes dates for nominations, polling, and counting. With this announcement, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) comes into effect, providing guidelines for political parties and candidates to ensure free and fair elections.

Nomination of Candidates:

Candidates file their nomination papers in the prescribed form, along with a deposit fee. The Returning Officer scrutinizes these papers, and objections, if any, are addressed.

Campaigning:

Campaigning begins after the nominations are accepted and ends 48 hours before polling. It is a crucial time for candidates and parties to reach out to their constituents and make their case.

Polling:

On the polling day, voters cast their votes at polling stations using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). The ECI has also introduced the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) system for enhancing the transparency of the process.

Counting and Declaration of Results:

After polling, the EVMs are sealed and taken to secure locations. On the pre-announced date, counting of votes takes place. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes in a constituency is declared the winner.

Formation of the Government:

The political party or alliance that secures a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha forms the government. The leader of this majority group is appointed as the Prime Minister by the President.

First Past the Post (FPTP) Voting System:

India follows the FPTP system, also known as plurality voting. In this system, the candidate who receives the highest number of votes in a constituency is declared the winner, even if they haven't secured more than 50% of the votes.

Comparison with Proportional Representation:

Contrary to FPTP, the Proportional Representation system ensures that the number of seats won by a party is proportional to the number of votes received. So, if a party gets 40% of the total votes, they should ideally get 40% of the seats.

While FPTP is simpler and results in clear winners, it can lead to a party with less than a majority of votes forming the government. Proportional Representation, on the other hand, can lead to a more representative government but may result in political instability due to coalition governments.

2019 National Election:

Lok Sabha 2019 The 2019 Indian General Elections were held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The votes were counted and the result declared on 23 May. The main contenders were two alliances: the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by the Indian National Congress (INC).

Key issues that dominated the election discourse included economic policies, unemployment, national security, and corruption. The BJP extensively campaigned on the issue of national security in the backdrop of the Pulwama terrorist attack and India's subsequent military response.

The results saw a landslide victory for the NDA, with the BJP alone winning 303 seats, exceeding its previous tally of 282 seats in 2014. The INC secured 52 seats, a marginal increase from its historically low 44 seats in 2014. The scale of the NDA victory raised questions about the effectiveness of the opposition.

Several controversies marred the elections, with allegations of misuse of the Armed Forces for political gains, violations of the Model Code of Conduct, and questions on the credibility of EVMs. The Election Commission's role also came under scrutiny, with demands for reforms to ensure more transparency and independence.

Problems faced by India Internally

India, with its vast population and diverse socio-economic landscape, faces several key issues that require urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. One of the most pressing issues is poverty. Despite significant economic growth, a large portion of the population still lives below the poverty line. This disparity is exacerbated by unemployment and underemployment, particularly among the youth, leading to widespread economic insecurity.

Another critical issue is education. While enrolment rates in primary education have improved, the quality of education remains a concern. Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack proper infrastructure, qualified teachers, and essential resources. The education system also struggles with high dropout rates and gender disparities, which hinder the overall development of the country's human capital.

Healthcare is another major challenge. India faces a dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, with inadequate healthcare infrastructure to address these issues effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the gaps in the healthcare system, including insufficient medical facilities, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and unequal access to healthcare services across different regions.

Environmental degradation poses a significant threat to India's sustainable development. Air pollution, water scarcity, and deforestation are critical issues that affect the health and livelihoods of millions of people. Rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to severe environmental consequences, and there is an urgent need for sustainable practices and policies to protect natural resources and combat climate change.

Social inequality and discrimination continue to plague Indian society. Despite legal frameworks and policies aimed at promoting equality, caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and religious intolerance remain pervasive. These social issues hinder social cohesion and the overall progress of the nation.

Agricultural distress is another key issue, with many farmers facing financial instability due to unpredictable weather patterns, fluctuating market prices, and inadequate support systems. The agrarian crisis has led to distressing incidents of farmer suicides and highlights the need for comprehensive agricultural reforms and support mechanisms.

Corruption is a pervasive problem that undermines governance and development efforts. It affects various sectors, including politics, business, and public services, leading to inefficiency, mistrust, and a lack of transparency. Addressing corruption requires strong institutional frameworks, effective enforcement of laws, and a cultural shift towards greater accountability and integrity.

Lastly, infrastructure development remains a significant challenge. While there have been improvements in recent years, many areas still lack basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and sanitation facilities. This disparity between urban and rural areas hampers economic growth and development, particularly in remote and underdeveloped regions.

Addressing these key issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving government intervention, public-private partnerships, and active participation from civil society. Sustainable and inclusive development strategies, effective policy implementation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to overcoming these challenges and ensuring a better future for all citizens of India.

Viksit Bharat 2047

Viksit Bharat 2047 is a visionary goal set by India to transform the nation into a fully developed country by the year 2047, marking the centenary of its independence. This ambitious plan encompasses various dimensions of growth, including economic prosperity, social equity, environmental sustainability, and technological advancement. At its core, Viksit Bharat 2047 aims to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, and ensure a high standard of living for all its citizens. By fostering a more inclusive society, the initiative seeks to empower marginalized communities, providing them with equal opportunities and access to resources.

The vision includes achieving robust economic growth through innovation, industrialization, and the development of a skilled workforce capable of competing on a global scale. Investment in research and development is a critical component, promoting cutting-edge technologies and encouraging startups and entrepreneurship. Education and healthcare are prioritized to build a knowledgeable and healthy society, with a focus on universal access to quality education and healthcare services. The initiative also aims to enhance vocational training and skill development programs to create a future-ready workforce.

Infrastructure development, particularly in rural areas, is emphasized to bridge the urban-rural divide and ensure balanced regional development. This includes improving transportation networks, building smart cities, and ensuring access to clean water and sanitation. The development of digital infrastructure is also a key aspect, aiming to provide high-speed internet connectivity across the country and promoting digital literacy.

The initiative also focuses on sustainable development, promoting green energy, and addressing climate change to protect the environment for future generations. Efforts are made to reduce carbon emissions, increase the use of renewable energy sources, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Conservation of natural resources and biodiversity is also a priority, ensuring that development does not come at the cost of the environment.

Governance reforms aim to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability, fostering a more inclusive and participatory democracy. This involves leveraging technology to improve public service delivery and encouraging citizen engagement in the policymaking process. Strengthening institutions and promoting good governance are essential to building a just and fair society.

Technological advancements are leveraged to create smart cities, improve digital connectivity, and boost the digital economy. The integration of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and other emerging technologies aims to revolutionize various sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, and finance. Enhancing cybersecurity measures is also critical to protecting the nation's digital infrastructure.

The Viksit Bharat 2047 goal envisions India as a self-reliant, resilient, and globally influential nation, where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the nation's progress. Through collective effort and unwavering commitment, India aspires to realize this transformative vision, setting a benchmark for growth and development in the

21st century. This journey towards a developed nation involves collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society, ensuring that the benefits of development are shared by all. With a clear roadmap and a shared vision, India aims to create a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive future for its people.

Undeniable flaws of the Viksit Bharat 2047 Plan

While the Viksit Bharat 2047 plan is an ambitious and visionary initiative aimed at transforming India into a fully developed nation by the centenary of its independence, it is not without its potential flaws and challenges. One significant concern is the implementation gap. India's history of ambitious plans often highlights a disconnect between policy formulation and on-ground execution. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and red tape can hinder the effective implementation of such a comprehensive vision, leading to delays and suboptimal outcomes.

Another flaw lies in the risk of unequal development. Despite the goal of balanced regional growth, there is a possibility that urban areas and already prosperous regions may benefit disproportionately from development initiatives, exacerbating the urban-rural divide. This could leave rural and marginalized communities behind, counteracting the plan's aim of inclusive growth.

Financial constraints also pose a significant challenge. The extensive scale of the Viksit Bharat 2047 plan requires substantial financial resources. Given India's existing fiscal pressures and economic constraints, mobilizing adequate funding for all proposed projects and reforms might be challenging. This financial strain could lead to prioritization issues, where some critical areas may receive less attention and funding than needed.

Moreover, the plan's reliance on technological advancements and industrialization may overlook environmental sustainability. While the plan includes provisions for green energy and sustainable practices, rapid industrialization and urbanization could still lead to environmental degradation if not carefully managed. Balancing economic growth with environmental preservation is crucial, and any oversight in this area could have long-term detrimental effects on the country's ecological balance.

Social issues such as caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and religious intolerance are deeply rooted and may not be adequately addressed through policy measures alone. These societal challenges require significant cultural and attitudinal shifts, which are difficult to achieve within a specific timeframe. The Viksit Bharat 2047 plan may fall short if it does not incorporate robust strategies to tackle these deep-seated social issues comprehensively.

Another potential flaw is the overemphasis on economic indicators as measures of development. While economic growth is crucial, it should not overshadow other important aspects such as quality of life, happiness, and well-being of the citizens. The focus should be on holistic development, which includes mental health, work-life balance, and overall societal happiness, rather than just GDP growth and industrial output.

Furthermore, the success of the Viksit Bharat 2047 plan depends heavily on political stability and continuity. Given India's vibrant and often turbulent political landscape, changes in government and policy direction could disrupt the momentum of the plan. Political will and commitment across different administrations are essential to ensure the plan's continuity and success.

Lastly, there is a risk of insufficient public participation and buy-in. For a plan of this magnitude to succeed, it requires the active involvement and support of citizens at all levels. If the public perceives the plan as top-down or disconnected from their immediate needs and aspirations, it could face resistance and lack of engagement, undermining its effectiveness.

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