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2024 LOK SABHA GENERAL ELECTIONS IN INDIA

Overview

The Lok Sabha elections are scheduled to take place in seven phases from April to June 2024, during which 969 million eligible citizens will cast their votes to elect representatives for the 543 seats in the Lower House. The results of the elections are set to be announced on June 4th.

The two major players in the elections this time are the BJP-led NDA comprising 40 parties, and the newly formed Congress-led I.N.D.I.A. bloc comprising 26 parties.

Phases	Polling Dates	No. of States
Phase-I	19 April 24	21
Phase-II	26 April 24	13
Phase-III	7 May 24	12
Phase-IV	13 May 24	10
Phase-V	20 May 24	8
Phase-VI	25 May 24	7
Phase-VII	1 June 24	8

Competing Alliances

2024 Lok Sabha elections are pitting multiparty coalitions characterized by two blocs against each

other. BJP claims that it will win 370 seats in the 18th Lok Sabha while Modi claims of getting more than 400 seats. The primary opposition to the BJP is spearheaded by the Indian National Congress (INC), commonly referred to as "the Congress," which is the largest party in I.N.D.I.A coalition. Besides Congress, the other main opposition parties that form I.N.D.I.A are the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC or AITC), which governs the crucial West Bengal state; the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which is in power in the southern Tamil Nadu state; and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which rules in Delhi and Punjab states. Another prominent ally, the Janata Dal-United (JD-U), led by Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar decided to part ways and joined NDA, resulting in major blow in their stand against the ruling party amongst the voters. The voters turn out in 2019 elections was 67% out of which BJP alliance won 55% seats in Lok Sabha while securing 38.4% votes.

Elections Campaign/Strategies

Following are the main key takeaways from the manifestoes of the leading parties from both alliances: -

Agenda	BJP <i>Manifesto Title – Modi's Guarantee: Developed India 2047</i>	INC <i>Manifesto Title - Nyay Patra</i>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make Bharat 3rd largest economy- Make Bharat a global manufacturing hub- Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana – Free ration for next 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- New economic policy with increased focus on jobs and social welfare- National minimum wages of 400/day.- Mahalakshmi scheme – 100,000/year to poor families
Defence	Expand Bharat's defence footprint across strategic locations and partner with friendly countries to protect Bharat's and the Indian Ocean Region's security interests.	Reverse the decline in defence expenditure by ensuring that sufficient funds are allocated and spent to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces.

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Terrorism	BJP will continue with its zero tolerance policy. The Surgical Strikes of 2016 and the Air Strikes of 2019 are examples of our dedicated efforts towards countering terrorism. We are committed to defend Bharat's citizens and interests at home and abroad from all threats of terrorism.	Congress is implacably opposed to terrorism anywhere in the world. We will work with other countries to eliminate terrorist groups, terrorist acts and cross-border terrorism. Engagement with Pakistan depends fundamentally on its willingness and ability to end cross-border terrorism.
Foreign Policy	We will continue being a trusted and responsible partner in the subcontinent, promoting regional cooperation and ensuring stability and prosperity.	Congress re-affirms its firm belief in the continued relevance of the established policy of peaceful co-existence, strategic autonomy in thought and action, and increased bilateral engagement in its relations with the countries of the world.
Cultural/Law Amendments	- Enforce Uniform Civil Code (UCC) - Enact Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)	We will immediately restore full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. We will amend the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to include the tribal areas of Ladakh.
Employment and Gender	Increasing employment opportunities through Make in India Program - Implementation of women reservation bill - Building infrastructure (hostels and day cares) for women near industrial and commercial centers	- Right to Apprenticeship Act - 3mn job vacancies in central government - 10% quota in jobs - Implementation of women reservation bill - Reserve 50% of central government jobs for women starting 2025

Prospects

• A comparison of manifestoes indicates BJP's preference for continuity of policies followed earlier, whereas, Congress focuses on human security centric policies. However, the manifestoes are only statements of intent and do not necessarily translate into making any significant difference in the electoral outcome.

• Despite economic distress, rising prices and increasing unemployment being significant concerns among voters, raising questions about the sustained popularity of Modi, BJP's narrative has resonance among voters, while the Congress's narrative does not carry the same appeal. The resonance for BJP is based on the belief that Modi is best placed to protect Hindu interests. Moreover, the formation of I.N.D.I.A bloc is being meticulously weaved in the tapestry of populism as Modi is being projected as the representative of the 'people' versus I.N.D.I.A as a grouping of 'corrupt and dynastic elite.' Modi's latest allusion to Muslims as

those who breed prolifically and thus present a danger to Hindu majoritarianism while making an election speech indicates the identity and race paranoia being exploited by him for electoral gains.

• The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya stands out as Modi's most admired work to restore the glorious Hindu past, resonating strongly among Modi's Hindu voting base. But Mandir alone is not expected to garner the kind of support that was secured through communal riots of Muzaffarnagar in 2014 and stage managed Pulwama incident in 2019.

• Local electoral alliances are likely to cast an impact on this year's election results. For instance, West Bengal which is governed by the All India Trinamool Congress Party led by Maamta Banerjee, is part of the congress-led I.N.D.I.A alliance. Although, the coalition is set to transform these general elections from a cakewalk to a contest for Modi, the BJP is

Comparison of States' Electoral Dynamics

State	Total Seats	2014		2019		2024
West Bengal	42	BJP = 2	TMC = 34 INC = 4	BJP = 18	TMC = 22 INC = 2	Likely victory for I.N.D.I.A
Maharashtra	48	BJP = 23 Shiv Sena = 18	INC = 2 NCP = 4	BJP = 23 Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) = 18	INC = 1 NCP = 4	Likely victory for BJP since Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) is part of NDA alliance while Shiv Sena (UBT) is part of I.N.D.I.A. alliance

Tamil Nadu	38	BJP = 1 INC = 0 AIADMK ¹ = 37	BJP = 0 DMK = 23 INC = 8	Likely Victory for I.N.D.I.A
Telangana	17	BJP = 1 INC = 2 TRS ² = 11	BJP = 4 INC = 3 TRS = 9	Likely Win for Independent regional party TRS
Karnataka	28	BJP = 17 INC = 9	BJP = 25 INC = 1	Likely victory for BJP

well-organized, well-placed and popular enough to secure a comfortable victory even without the NDA alliance.

- Although the 26-party I.N.D.I.A alliance is presenting a strong challenge; however, it does not present a united front as there is a clear discord within the alliance on party positions, seat sharing, agenda and constituencies. I.N.D.I.A alliance however is exploiting issues like economic inequality, joblessness and inflation to make inroads into BJP vote bank.

- Furthermore, Modi’s vision 2047 is also gaining traction among the voters while the other parties are being viewed as visionless and fragmented in their approach.

- In an interview with Karan Thapar, Indian scholar Mr Parakala Prabhakar has claimed that under Modi’s ten years of rule, India has been taken back to ten years in terms of economy, 77 years in terms of polity and over 200 years in terms of social cohesion.³ According to Prabhakar, Modi’s chances of getting 220-230 seats are bright but getting 370 seats is a pipe dream.

Notes

¹ All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

² VTelangana Rashtra Samithi

³ “Modi’s a Dictator & His Return Would be a Disaster: Parakala Prabhakar,” Interview with Karan Thappar, The Wire, 12 Apr 24, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLy3YOJeogA>