Featured Article:

Shaky Foundations- Uncertainity In Alliance Based Politics

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DISCLAIMER

All articles in this magazine were composed prior to the general election of 2024

"Shaky Foundations: Uncertainty in Alliance- based Politics"

By Ansh Vora

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are on the horizon. For all intents and purposes, the elections are going to be an all-out battle between the two giant big-tent alliances led by the nation's principal National parties - The National Democratic Alliance and The Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance. The former is an alliance of the ruling Right-leaning Bharatiya Janata Party helmed by Prime Minister Modi, while the latter is a malaise of regional players and the disintegrating grand old party.

Let's start with the basics - Alliances. What exactly are alliances? In a multi-party system like India, like-minded parties can form an official alliance to have a stake in forming the government. India has seen coalition governments at the center very often, especially after the public was disillusioned with Ms. Gandhi and her brutal decisions during the Emergency. Morarji Desai stormed to power, courtesy of an alliance due to an amalgam of political parties who opposed the Emergency.

Since then, barring a rout that Rajiv Gandhi had following a sympathetic pro-Congress wave in the wake of Indira Ji's assassination, no political party could muster a majority by itself, and India entered the phase of Alliance politics.

This period also marked the Kamandalisation and Mandalisation of Indian politics - the rise of OBCs and also the BJP on the backs of The Mandal Report and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement respectively. In fact, the V.P Singh-led National Front alliance government fell in 1990 because of the withdrawal of support from the BJP due to Advani's arrest at Samstipur during the Ram Rath Yatra. The political events that followed shaped Indian politics and revealed the weakness in alliance politics - India had timid political alliances, often with minority support, and alliance partners would often withdraw support, toppling the governments and causing political instability - between 1989-99 India saw a record five general elections.

The fall of the National Front of VP Singh was followed by another weak Janta Dal-led Coalition headed by Chandra Shekhar which remained in the minority throughout its tenure with outside support from the Machiavellian Congress, who ultimately rescinded their support leading to the fall in less than a year. What followed next was once again a weak Congress minority government headed by Narasimha Rao - the only government able to complete its term despite a minority by engineering defections from other parties (Yes, this is not new).

By the 1996 elections, the Janta Party had disintegrated into regional forces, but the dark horse has risen. The elections saw the tremendous rise of the BJP but delivered an unclear mandate. Vajpayee was sworn in as prime minister as the BJP was the largest party but failed to prove the majority at the Confidence Motion, ending his short-lived but infamous 13-day stint as PM. The Congress, on the other hand, again looked for an alliance and did so with the Janta Dal with Deve Gowda (who later resigned) and IK Gujral but once again withdrew support to topple these governments. Yes, AGAIN!

The following elections, however, didn't show much difference; the BJP was still the largest party and even increased its seat share. It formed the NDA coalition government, which was stable for a year until in 1999, Jayalalitha withdrew support to the government ending Vajpayee's second term at the 13-month mark. Vajpayee lost the No-Confidence motion merely by one vote. However, the fresh elections in 1999 showed the tide was still in favor of the BJP and even though it couldn't secure a majority on its own, the partners in the National Democratic Alliance with outside support from TDP were able to finally get Vajpayee a full term of 5 years - the first non-Congress PM to do so!

Since the 1999 NDA government, India saw the rise of stable coalitions often involving regional players - NDA was followed by the Congress-led UPA 1 and 2 in 2004 and 2009 helmed by Manmohan Singh. These coalitions were more structural and stable than the messy coalitions of the Janta Politics era. But that's not to say that there was no friction. The Left parties which lent outside support to the UPA-1 walked out due to differences over the nuclear deal and other scam allegations, and defections often threatened the alliance. The last two elections in the country saw a saffron sweep with the BJP itself winning a majority with its extended National Democratic Alliance. The Congress reduced to but a shadow of its former glory.

Now that we have seen the history and intricacies of Alliance-based politics in the great nation of ours, let's see how it's shaping the politics today. Our ruling party seems to have stopped believing in an alliance or rather has soured relations with most of its political counterparts. It even lost its oldest ally in the form of Shiv Sena, though one can argue that Shiv Sena has lost its ideology along the way and it was a natural progression for the erstwhile friends to part ways. Similarly, BJP has parted ways with the SAD in Punjab and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu - important regional

players in states where the party enjoys minimal support. The prevalent belief, however, is that the reason for the bitterness in relations between former NDA member parties and the BJP is that the party is trying to ally with regional parties to increase its sphere of influence - which often happens at the cost of the regional NDA member party as evident in Bihar, where the BJP significantly gained traction at the cost of the dwindling appeal of JDU.

Currently, the NDA alliance still boasts a huge strength of 34 parties - but these include minor state parties. Another important feature of NDA's politics has been Operation Kamal - a series of quick and well-planned defections from opposition parties to bring down the government, which has now gone a step further with parties being torn apart and factionalized. The NDA often inducts breakaway factions like those of Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, Ajit Pawar-led NCP, and RLJP of Pashupati Paras. Most other members of NDA have Lok Sabha seats in single digits - often one or two.

And now coming to the alliance of the hour. The cabal called the INDIA allaince was created to ensure some people still enjoy political relevance which has somehow strengthened the NDA even more.

The INDIA alliance is a Big Tent alliance that brings all of PM Modi's detractors together - all of them - even the historically warring parties in Kashmir, the Left parties, the Right-leaning Shiv Sena, and even the AAP - a party birthed from Anti-Corruption protests against the Congress government. The common goals that the parties proclaim to have include "to restore and protect democracy" in the worlds largest democratic country and prevent the misuse of Central Investigative Agencies. They further opposed the suspension of Rahul Gandhi and wanted to defeat the incumbent BJP in 2024. They proposed a 1v1 challenge to BJP in all seats across the country, i.e. they would reach a seat-sharing formula where they all will jointly put up a single candidate against the BJP candidate in every seat to prevent the splitting of the opposition votes.

Let us analyze this alliance and what little chance they have of commanding the lower house of the Parliament.

The first factor that affects the winnability of any election is the Arithmetic - a pure number game. Considering a 100% vote share transferability in the INDIA bloc parties, the NDA would still be comfortably placed and secure more than 300 seats in the Lower House. Even with the INC and AAP coming together in Delhi in 2019, the BJP would still have swept all the 7 seats in the national

However, Arithmetic is not everything - the main concern is that of Chemistry. Historically warring party leaders often form alliances at top levels, but at a bloc level, the cadre of the battling parties rarely gets along despite mutual agreements between national and state-level leaders. A classic case of this was seen in the Mahagathbandhan in 2019. Bua and Babua - cutthroat rivals in state politics came together and seemed to pose a formidable challenge to the saffron party in the supremely important state of Uttar Pradesh. They had the arithmetic on their side -In the previous elections tbe BJP enjoyed a vote share of 39% while the BSP and Samajwadi Party got 22% and 21% respectively. They also had the MY factor in their support and enjoyed healthy backing from a section of Dalits and OBCs. An alliance between them would boost their prospects and put them ahead of BJP numerically. The allaince was also endorsed by the Congress and other opposition parties further fueling their alleged popolarity. Thus, political pundits expected a rout for the BJP in an extremely critical state; however, the Grand Alliance underperformed greatly. The differences in ideologies were apparent and the cadre on the ground couldn't forego the long history of skirmishes. The Vote transfer did not materialize. SP voters of a constituency where a BSP leader was fielded tended to vote for the BJP candidate, rather than the BSP candidate, thus, in fact, leaking the opposition votes. The alliance did help in gaining some critical information about alliance politics - firstly vote transfer in an alliance is never guaranteed and that alliances created without common goals and cohesion among member parties are doomed since their inception.

Another issue that comes into play in an alliance is the balance of power. The NDA has a clear leader in the form of the honorable PM and the BJP. In the INDIA alliance, Rahul Gandhi was considered a strong candidate but his history of electoral failures along with an unwillingness expressed by the Congress to seek any political positions seems to have reduced the possibility of him being a consensus candidate. Names of other leaders like Kejriwal and Ms. Banerjee also seem to be doing rounds, but these leaders enjoy endemic appeal and have pockets of support in their home states. In such circumstances, a logical conclusion is to have a party with a semblance of national appeal take the lead, and that, due to an utter unavailability of options is the Indian National Congress - and the leader who could emerge as a consensus candidate is INC President - Mallikarjun Kharge. This would be a good political strategy because projecting a Dalit face would improve
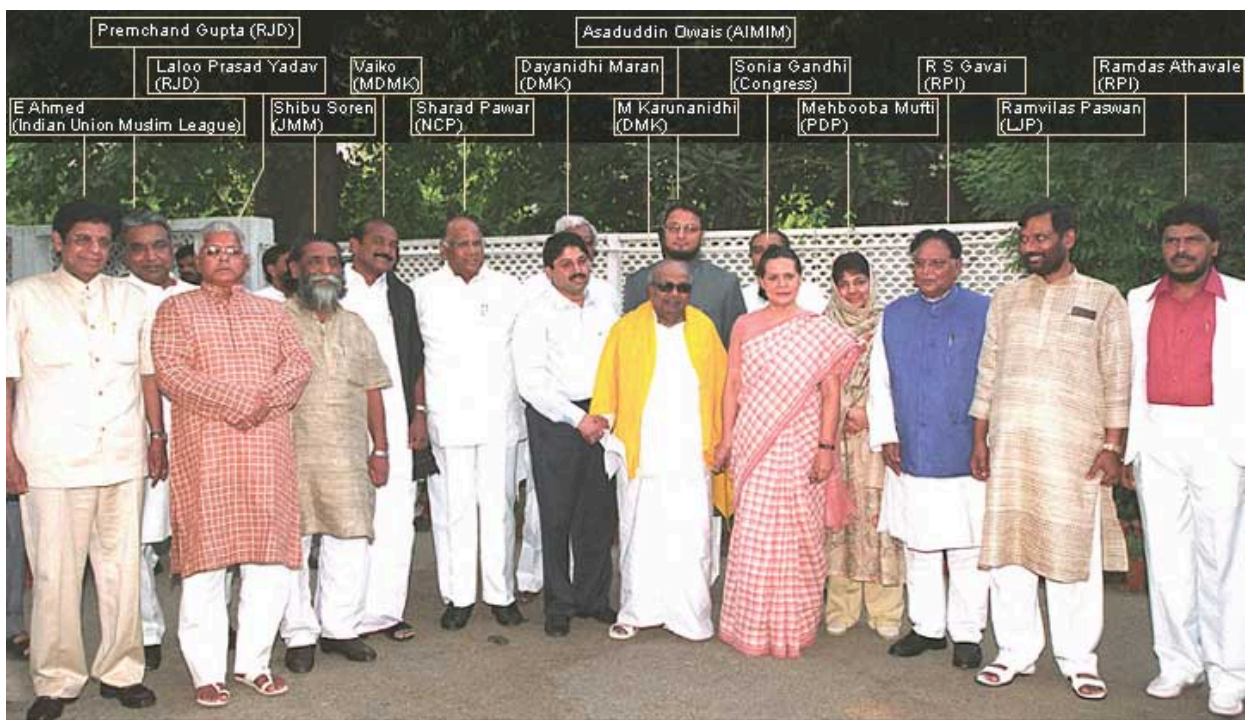
improve the alliance's caste arithmetic, maybe even attract Mayawati as a potential ally and boost poll prospects in Uttar Pradesh, where the current situation offers little respite to the alliance. Further, a face from Karnataka may also lead to a better performance in the state due to a pro-Kannadiga sentiment - akin to the electoral sweeps PM Modi enjoys in Gujarat. But at this moment, Mr. Kharge doesn't seem too receptive to being projected as the face against Modi ji.

The only edge that the INDIA Alliance has is in the south where it has an upper hand. The alliance partners have governments in four of the five major states and enjoy mass appeal. NDA has a presence in Karnataka in the south which has been boosted since JDS came back into the NDA fold. Further in Karnataka there is a belief that the Lingayat vote share seems to be shifting back to the BJP. Kerala will see all seats go to the INC-Left combined. Telangana will see a slightly tripolar contest between the congress, BRS of KCR, and the BJP. KCR's political movements in the upcoming months will be viewed closely to ascertain his affiliation in national politics. Interestingly in Andhra Pradesh, the BJP enjoys virtually no voter support, but despite that has everything to gain. Both the major regional players the TDP and YSR Congress enjoy cordial relations with the BJP. While

there are always rumors of Naidu being inducted back into the NDA fold, CM YSR remains neutral, but his party always supports BJP-backed resolutions in the parliament. In Tamil Nadu, BJP has lost a key ally in the form of the AIADMK - which has become a directionless liability after Jayalalithaa's demise. Dravidian movements are strong in this state with Periyar's beliefs being held up. The DMK has allied with the congress and many regional parties and formed a formidable alliance and is in the pole position to sweep Tamil Nadu - a state that has never been kind to National parties. However, the BJP has made significant headspace in this region courtesy of the firebrand BJP TN Chief Annamalai known for his candor and aggressive statements. The party seems to have considerably expanded its influence in the state and may end up with its first-ever Lok Sabha win in the state.

Now coming to the main issue plaguing the alliance - Ideology. While the parties have notionally agreed to oppose the BJP and be the protectors of democracy, the alliance is a coalition of parties having an assortment of differing ideological positions which are often at loggerheads with each other. The Left, the Congress, and the Trinamool are all historical rivals. The Sarvarkar controversy highlighted

Another roadblock for the alliance comes in the form of seat sharing. In Delhi and Punjab, the INC and AAP both want maximum seats, in fact, conflict arose when the Delhi Congress Unit chief announced their intention of contesting all 7 seats leading to widespread speculation of the alliance failing in the NCT. The AAP is also keen on contesting seats in Gujarat, Haryana and Goa. The Congress seeks six seats in Bengal, but Banerjee is only interested in conceding 2 seats and also wants to contest seats in Meghalaya and Assam. The Congress has called this offer humiliating while the TMC- supremo defended the offer by saying it's based on the INC's dismal and disastrous performance in Bengal in recent years. In Bihar, one assumed the seat sharing would be a cakewalk but the recent demand of left parties for a dozen seats might have spoiled the bonhomie in the alliance. Some respite comes from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Jharkhand where the seat-sharing formula is almost finalized. In UP, the Samajwadi party is keen on contesting 65 seats leaving the remaining 15 for the rest. Without concrete strategies, the alliance will dissolve into mayhem.

the Shiv Sena and Congresses' conflicting outlooks on the historical figure and his impact. The AAP was birthed from a movement against corruption in the INC government but is allying with them today. Alliance partners continue to make comments based on regional interests and the ideologies are no longer confined to regions alone.

. Some parties are trying to capture the lucrative Hindu majority vote by establishing their pro-Hindu ideology while the rest tend to amass the minority votes through appeasement politics, while some other parties want complete separation of religion from politics but go about it in very aggressive ways - looking at you Udaynidhi Stalin. The Dravidian alliance partners are trying to create a north-south debate harming the motley crew's appeal in the North. The alliance is currently diffusing situations rather than strategizing. If ideological differences are coming to the fore, it could mean that despite the bonhomie displayed by top leaders of different parties, the alliance could fail on the ground. Voters may be partisan and cadres may be unwilling to ally with ideologically opposed constituents. The NDA on the other hand has its ideology perfectly curated, marketed, and communicated with little conflict of interest among constituent parties.

As the elections approach, India's political landscape is marked with intricate allainces and shifting loyalties. The NDA, through its developmental and pro-hindutva based aggressive nationalistic pull, seems to be consolidating power, but faces tough competition in certain areas especially if the INDIA allaince memebers are able to unite against all odds. The emergence of this allaince reflects an attemp to unite diverse political parties against the ruling coalition. But the success and the efficacy of the allaince relies of cohesion among various regional satraps, resoving idealogical conflicts, adressing the leadership crisis and chalking up an effective seat sharing formula. The future of 1.4 crore individuals lies uncertain shaped by a delicate interplay of chemistry, arithmetic and idealogy.

"Modernization, Tech and The Indian Armed Forces"

By Apurwa Kanitkar

A formidable force, an epitome of unity, the core of fortitude - The Indian Army. Where the day begins before dawn, and where night echoes Shankhnaad, the Indian Army embodies the quintessence of the 3Js - Josh, Jasba and Junoon. The saga of Khukri to K9 Vajra, the tale of the Vijayanta to the Zorawar, the ballad of Prithvi I to Agni III, all unfold verses of endurance and advancement.

Evincing conspicuous courage & exemplary leadership in the face of adversity, they now stand sturdier, equipped with modern methodologies and state-of-the-art infrastructure. With pillars of transformation cemented successfully, the Indian Army has embarked on a journey to turn into a modern, agile, adaptive & technology enabled future ready force. The year 2023 was observed as "On Path to Transformation", to set the course for its evolution to a future ready, technology driven, lethal and agile force, which establishes itself as an iron cast pillar of national power. The five pillars of this transformational change are - modernisation & technology infusion, force reconstructing & optimization, jointness & integration, systems processes & functions, and human resource management. Beginning from 15 January, the 76th Army Day, the Indian Army has been observing the year 2024 as the 'Year of Tech Absorption'.

From vertical wind tunnels, modernized air traffic control, remotely piloted vehicles, and swarm drones to light combat helicopters, it is active in its endeavours to infuse cutting edge technologies into its arsenal. Forging ahead in technical supremacy, the path is carved through AI & quantum labs, indigenised ammunition, weapon systems, surveillance, and mobility. Further, the army is expanding its human resources pool by creating specialist officers through the Territorial Army, including cyber experts through civil-military infusion.

In 2021, the Indian Service of Protection successfully developed its own operating system, Maya, to enhance the security of its computer systems. It boasts an additional security feature known as Chakravyuh, which is anti-malware and antivirus software. It makes a defensive layer between the netizens and the internet, subsequently protecting against malicious attempts to access or think twice about. A team of experts from various government agencies, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), and the National Informatics Centre (NIC), worked on developing Maya OS based on the open-source Ubuntu platform. Additionally, the Ministry of Electronics and Information

On 5th December 2023, Indian Army held an Idea & Innovation Competition and Seminar titled 'Inno Yodha 2023' at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. The event embraced modernisation and technological advancement through indigenisation and in-house innovations. 22 top innovations were displayed during the event and innovators associated with these innovations were felicitated by the Chief of Army Staff. From their present state, the selected innovations were taken forward by collaborating with Academia and Industry partners to develop military grade ruggedised solutions. Technology for innovation "Vidyut Rakshak- an IOT-based Generator Monitoring and Control System" was transferred to the Indian industry for mass production. During the event, a MoU was also signed between the Indian Army and the Foundation of Innovation and Technology Transfer for technological collaboration and consultation. These initiatives demonstrate their unwavering commitment, not only to safeguard the territorial integrity but also to inspire the current and future generations to think innovatively.

Aiming to fall in line with the mantra of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the Indian Army has indigenously developed an end-to-end secure mobile ecosystem aiming to provide secure communication with instant connectivity on the move. The ecosystem – SAMBHAV (Secure Army Mobile Bharat Version) – operates on the contemporary 5G technology and represents a significant leap forward in India's defence capabilities. The initiative is in line with the government's push for dual-use infrastructure and highlights the synergy between civilian and military applications in emerging technology. In its first rollout, there was a plan to deploy 35,000 sets in two phases. Out of which 2,500 sets were deployed by January 15 and the remaining sets by May 31, 2024. The ecosystem ensures a pan-India secure environment with multi-layered encryption, operating on a commercial network with built-in security measures.

Moreover, to invigorate operational excellence, enhance practices and sharpen special operations, the Indian Army believes in strengthening interoperability between armies and sharing tactical drills. Frequent joint exercises have been held with allied nations like - Exercise SadaTanseeq, Exercise Cyclone, Exercise Khanjar, Exercise Desert Cyclone among others. India's participation in the Bastille Day parade, stood as a testimony to the enduring friendship dating back to World War I. The parade witnessed a 269 member tri-services contingent of the Indian Armed Forces marching alongside their French counterparts, laying the groundwork for future cooperation.

Embodying the motto of 'Sevā Paramo Dharmaḥ', the Sabal, Saahasi, Shoorveer Indian Army continues to live a life less ordinary, daring to be more, as the child of the motherland. Thus continues the saga, the tale, the ballad, a tapestry of positive nation building, of undaunted courage & valour, of selflessness and dedication, catalyzed and amplified by the power of technology!

" The INDIAN GENERAL ELECTION : The Free World's Largest Democratic Exercise "

By Sarthak Chaudhari

As we enter the Global Year of Elections that is 2024, the year when more people go to the polls than ever in the existence of humankind before did, and the year when we as the youth of our nation participate as first-time voters in the festival and celebration of democracy that are the Indian General Elections.

The general elections i.e the elections for Lok Sabha are held every five years for the five forty-three Lok Sabha constituencies.

These constituencies are divided are the basis of population and several other factors combined. The number "543" brings with itself a exorbitant cost. This cost is what we pay for democracy's largest festival. As India gears-up in the run up to the General Elections 2024, let us analyse the statistics behind this mega-engineered event.

ELECTION COMMISSION :

Election Commission of India (ECI) is the sole body responsible for conducting elections throughout India. ECI was established on January 25, 1950. Provisions concerning the Election Commission are contained in Article 324 of the constitution of India. Article 324 talks about the the structure, power, authority and other miscellaneous responsibilities to be undertaken by the aforesaid commission.

In the meanwhile this announcement had rung a knell in the then Minister of Commerce, Pranab Mukherjee's ears. The reason being that his ministerial berth was at stake, Mukherjee had been a minister without being a member of any of the house. And, In order to continue as minister he had to secure membership within six months from initial appointment. Seshan's announcement came at a time when the six month time frame was at it its end. Seshan, adamant as ever on his words, cost Mr. Mukherjee his ministerial berth. Then came the supreme court's verdict regarding the commission's independence post which Seshan ordered to conduct elections and in due course Pranab da was reinstated as minister.

Seshan was know for his actions, in an interview given to Doordarshan in 1994, when asked about how would he take the challenge to conduct elections peacefully in Bihar, Seshan responded, "Bihar is a state that I admire for several reasons. We have the responsibility to conduct free and fair elections. ….If the ground becomes too difficult I always have the long whistle, I will call off the election and start it afresh." Another achievement of Seshan's tenure was that of introduction of the "Election Photo Identity

card" in the year 1993. These were introduced to prevent electoral frauds. By 2004 it became a mandatory document to cast a valid vote. The keen-eyed among you may notice that this is the very document that for the past few months, our college has been so strongly suggesting us to furnish.

SEATS FOR LOK-SABHA :

The first Lok Sabha had only 489 seats where the current seat number is at 543. The increase in seats has not been an abrupt phenomenon but it has been a gradual process with several factors contributing to the same.

The Second Lok Sabha saw a slight rise with the seat number rising to 494. The number of seats significantly rose in the year 1967 taking it to 520. An addition of another 22 seats was made in the year 1977, making it 542 and then to 543 which still remains.

The following graph represents the seat increase trends :
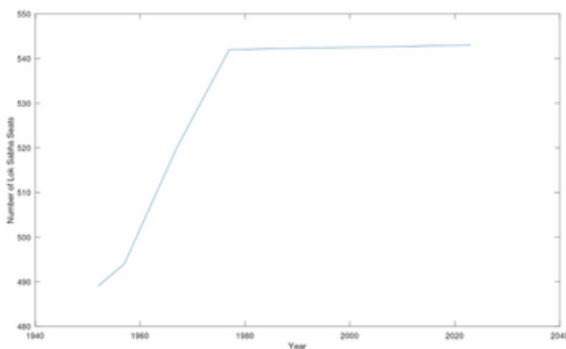
CRITERIA FOR SEAT DISTRIBUTION :

Distribution of seats across states is not uniform while some are at a upper hand with more number of seats, where some feel underrepresented having less number of seats . The aforementioned distribution has been a topic of fierce debate between the north and the south.

From the first elections, it had been mandatory to carry out delimitation (redrawing of boundaries of constituencies) before every election. This practice was however halted for 25 years in 1976, during the emergency by the Govt. of Hon'ble PM Indira Gandhi. It was found that as the South had implemented Family Planning Policies and the South, Punjab and Maharashtra had developed economically, the birth rates and consequently, the population had seen a sharp decline, which was not the case in the BIMARU states (BIhar & Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh & Chattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand) which were still underdeveloped and overpopulated. This would mean that the south would pe punished by awarding them lesser political representation for carrying out family planning which, by the way, the centre had asked all states to do since Independence. This has however, 50 years later, also led to gross underrepresentation of the North and overrepresentation of the South where one Northern vote costs less than one Southern vote. The question of whether to continue the Freezing of Delimitation fell on the AB Vajpayee Govt. in 2001, who decided to continue this as his coalition government had a lot of Southern allies. This question, will however, once again be presented to the Govt. that forms in 2024, in 2026. Whether the reader supports the North, or the South, this question deeply affects all Indians as it has extreme legal and social ramifications for the Union, and sets a lot of bad precedents. Should the government award the North for being overpopulated and dragging down India? And flout the One Vote One Value? Or Should it punish the South for its contributions in developing and subsidizing the Indian economy just because it will be fair and democratic?

That dear reader, is for you to decide at the polls this summer.

Focusing back to the statistics Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number of Lok Sabha seats, 80 in number only next to Maharashtra which has 48 Lok Sabha Constituencies. Some are reserved for the SC/ST communities, while the restcan be openly contested. Around 20.44% seats are reserved
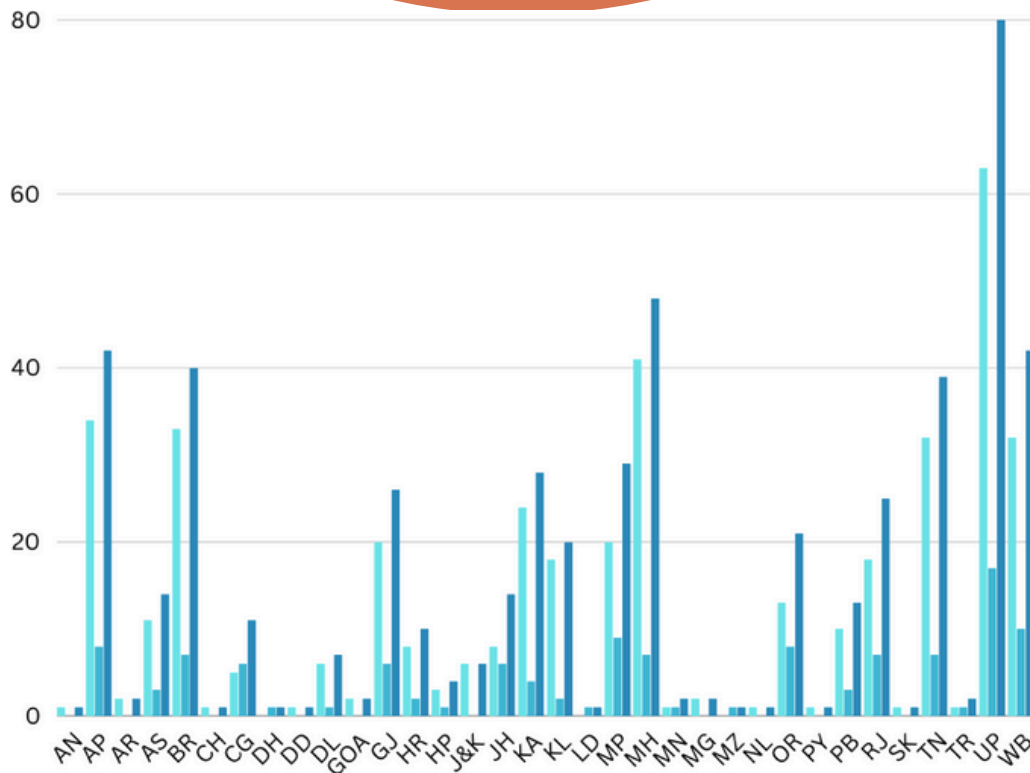
It is often said if one wants to win India one must eye on UP for the simple reason that it houses maximum number of constituencies that a state could. UP has had a significant impact on India's polity with most Prime Ministers being MP's from UP with a few exceptions such P.V. Narasimha Rao, H.D. Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, Dr. Manmohan Singh etc. Interestingly Prime Minister Modi chose Varanasi over Vadodara, Gujarat. Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party played a crucial role in the UPA-1 and UPA-2 governments.

SEAT SHARE :

Every party across the political spectrum tries to reach the magical 272 number to secure a simple majority in the house. Since the 1990's with no political party gaining a simple majority like-minded parties formed coalitions to run the government with majority.

During the initial few general elections congress would bag in land slide victories in a row. This record was only broken in the year 1977 when congress suffered a huge electoral loss. Emergency single handedly accounts for the debacle of 1977. JP movement gained momentum and the coalition emerged victorious in the following elections. Thereafter

only Rajiv Gandhi could win by large margin bagging over 404 seats. Rajiv Gandhi's victory is largely attributed to the sympathy wave following the gruesome assassination of his mother and then PM Indira Gandhi.

Thereafter an era of unstable coalitions began which settled briefly in the year 1991 when Narasimha Rao took over as Prime Minister, the same year saw a historic economic reform. Famously termed as the "Liberalisation of Indian Economy."

Instability was on its way back, after Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 13 day government fell. Janta Dal with Congress' outside support could run a 10 month government in it's first phase the United Front (UF) with H.D. Deve Gowdaas the Prime Minister. In it's second phase the United Front could run the government for nearly 12 months with I.K. Gujral at its helm. Subsequent to the fall of the UF government general elections were announced to a surprise it was again a hung parliament with BJP asthe single largest party it could muster support and formed a government which lasted only for about an year. The period of instability came to an end only in the year 1999 when A.B. Vajpayee led National Democratic Alliance emerged victorious and could complete it's 5 year tenure. Upon completion of the tenure, elections for the 14th Lok Sabha were called.

Congress this time could manage to be the single largest party which formed a coalition government under the UPA-1 (United Progressive Alliance -1). Congress for the second time, became the single largest party in 2009 and could form the UPA-II government which demitted from the office in 2014. Since 2014, BJP has been successful to cross the 272 figure on its own. In the 2019 general elections BJP won a whopping 303 seats. 2024 will see a electoral battle between the NDA and the I.N.D.I.A.

Here is the seat share among the parties (Major parties) the parties since 1990.

1999 General Elections

1991 General Elections

2004 General Elections

1998 General Elections

2009 General Elections

2014 General Elections

2019 General Elections
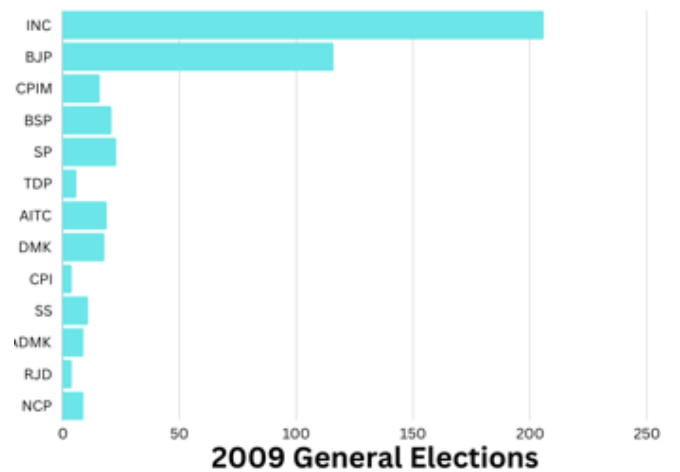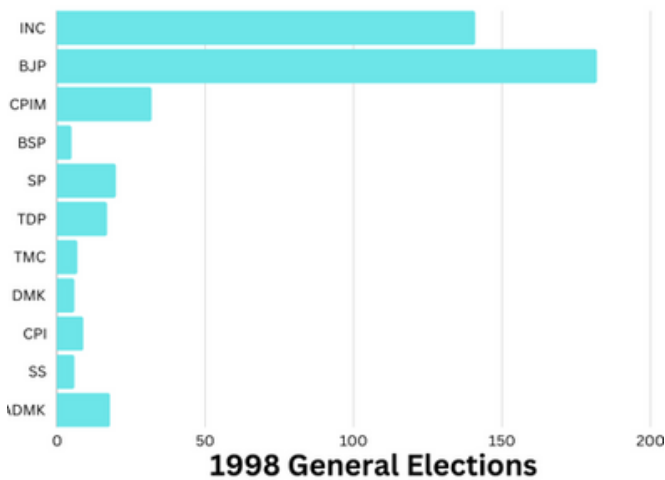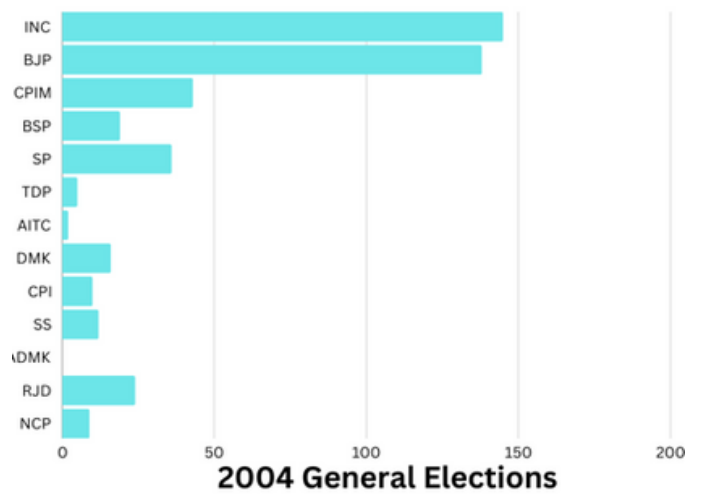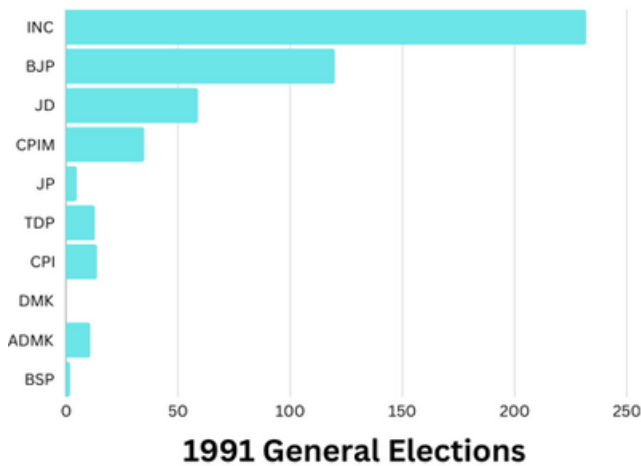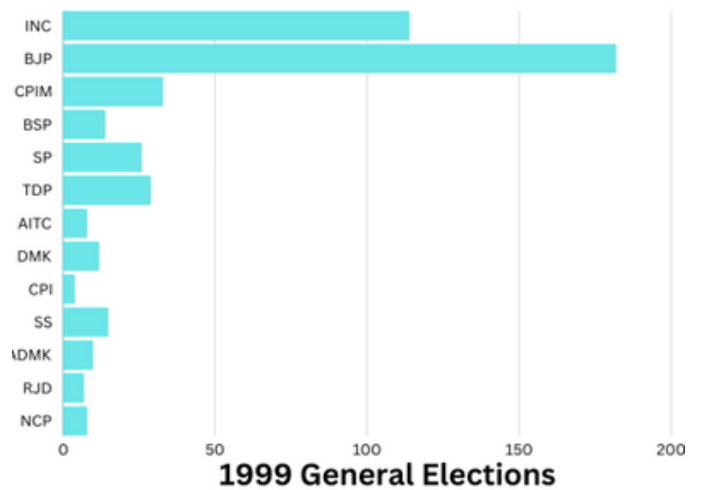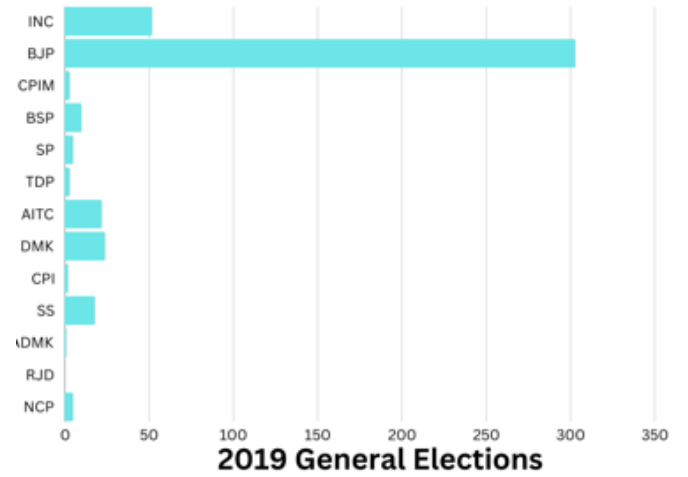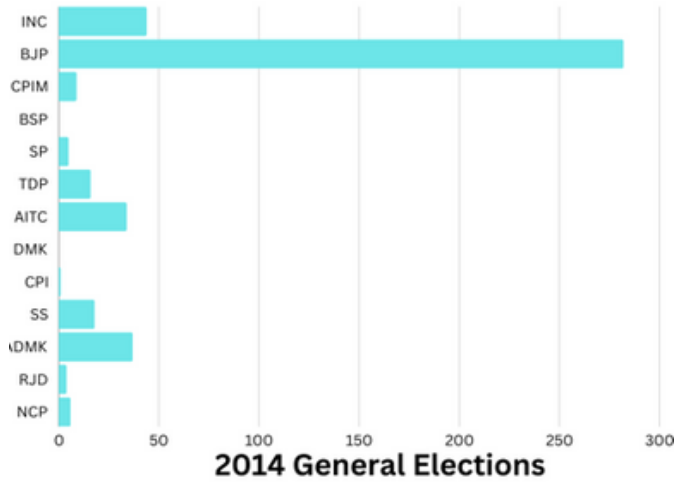
As India gears up for the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. It would be interesting to see whether BJP manages to sweep a clear majority or is it the I.N.D.I. Alliance , which currently suffers a battle for survival with the latest development being Nitish's exit back into the NDA folds.

" A Comparative Analysis of BRI and IMEC "

By Tanmay Shingvi

For years China had been prospering as the manufacturing hub of the world. With its low labour cost and developing economy it had become the best choice for Western companies to set up their manufacturing centres. Added with the country's infrastructure projects, the Chinese economy had become the fastest growing economy in the world.

But come the second decade of the 21st century, things were about to take a turn. The government was running out of more infrastructure projects to undertake, the cheap labour that had helped boost the foreign investments, had started to become expensive. All of this had started to affect the GDP growth of the country negatively. The once fastest growing economy was losing its pace. During these times, the Xi Jinping led Chinese Communist Party came up with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The plan was to heavily invest in infrastructure projects all over the world to connect China through a direct route to Africa and Europe to not only boost trade but increase the Chinese influence all over the world.

Since 2013 China has invested in more than 150 countries and given out more than 1.5 trillion dollars in loans. However BRI has been criticised for its "debt-trap" model, where China provides high-interest loans to developing countries for infrastructure

projects. This raises concerns about long-term economic dependence and potential political influence.

For years China's BRI has dominated the scene, however recently a new economic corridor the India Middle-east Economic Corridor (IMEC) has emerged.

IMEC takes a different approach, emphasising mutual benefit and collaboration. This initiative, backed by India, the US, EU, and several Middle Eastern and European nations, envisions a multi-modal network of railways, ship-to-rail connections, and roads. Two key corridors form the backbone: the East Corridor linking India to the Arabian Gulf and the Northern Corridor connecting the Gulf to Europe.

Beyond transportation, IMEC aims to build an integrated ecosystem with electricity cables, hydrogen pipelines, and high-speed data links.

This holistic approach could foster not just trade but also deeper regional cooperation in energy, technology, and communication.

IMEC also aims at maintaining healthy and peaceful relationships between Israel as well as Arab countries, a cause that U.S has been backing for years.

However ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict has strained the relationships between Israel and the Arabs which has ultimately led to a roadblock in IMEC's progress. Additionally, China's ten-year head start with BRI gives it a significant advantage in terms of established infrastructure and partnerships.
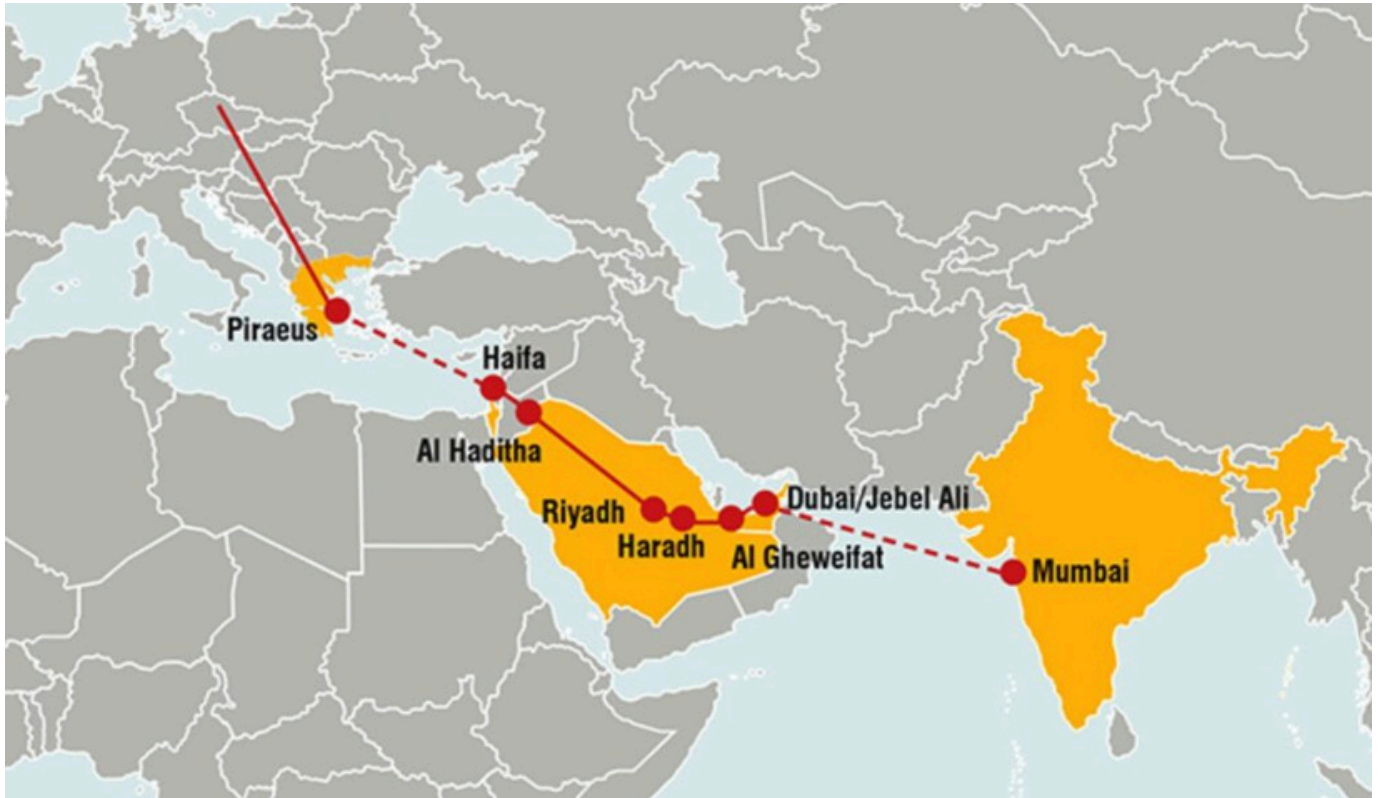
Both BRI and IMEC represent ambitious attempts to reshape global connectivity. While BRI faces concerns about debt and influence, IMEC's collaborative approach offers a promising alternative. Ultimately, the success of these initiatives will depend on their ability to deliver tangible benefits, navigate geopolitical complexities, and adapt to a constantly evolving global landscape. So, who will emerge victorious in this race for relevance? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain: Asia's economic landscape is set for a fascinating transformation.

" Why the congress lost the Hindi heartland? "

By Shloka Shetty

Once the undisputed leader of Indian politics, Congress now stands at a point where they find themselves navigating through challenging times.

The idea of an Indian Nationalist Movement against the colonial rule of the British gave birth to the Congress in 1885. Although it started with the humble intentions of changing British policies in India it progressed to greater heights. It became the leading force of our country's independence movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi after 1920. The Congress we see today however is vastly different from the Congress back then.

In 1950, Congress started its democratic journey with a landslide victory. They retained this position in the next election under Nehru's leadership. In 1962 Jawaharlal Nehru bagged another one-sided victory where Congress won 361 of the 494 elected seats, in his third and last campaign. Despite a significant reduction in the majority, Congress continued to establish dominance in the 1967 elections. This loss of majority was made up for in the next election under the leadership of Indira Gandhi who focused her campaign on tackling the rise in poverty and helped Congress win yet another election. The national emergency declared by the then leader of Congress, Indira Gandhi was one of the major reasons for the party's loss in the 1977 election. The Janata party which had come to power amidst the crowd's anger with Congress for the declaration of emergency, split in 1979 and in the ensuing election, Congress won the support of the majority back.

The absence of a resilient and charismatic leader who would help the party bounce back from major setbacks severely affected Congress. The party also has poor internal organization as is seen by the fact that Rahul Gandhi who is just a committee member, is more famous and publicly known than the actual people in charge. Many people thus believe that this party is a

In 1984 led by Rahul Gandhi the Congress won yet again also making history in the process since the 1984 elections are the only time when a party won more than 400 seats, till date.1991 elections, resulted in Congress forming a minority government with the support of other parties since nobody could muster a clear majority. In 1996 again no clear majority was formed but BJP with the most seats formed a short-lived government which was then followed by a United Front coalition securing the majority and forming the government in 1997. Due to this instability, early elections were held in 1998 which led to a hung parliament resulting in Atal Bihari Vajpayee forming a coalition government which then collapsed in 1999 after AIADMK withdrew support, leading to fresh elections. The Lok Sabha elections of 1999 resulted in the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance securing a majority. A new era of voting began in 2004 with elections being carried out fully with electronic voting machines and so did a new era begin for Congress when they regained power after eight years out of office. Congress retained its power in the next elections as well when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by the Indian National Congress formed the government after winning a majority of seats The 2014 Lok sabha elections were the first ring of war bells at their doorstep when they recorded their lowest-ever seats,44. This continued to lead to a steady decline due to multiple reasons, one of the major ones being the lack of proper leadership.

party run by dynasty politics and is ruled by a family making them lose their reliability amongst the public. Another major handicap would be the lack of an evolving mindset. Under Nehru, the Congress party in India was inclusive, incorporating various ideological positions from the right, center, and left. It formed a broad consensus to govern the country, limiting the space for other left or right-oriented political parties to gain influence. This however is no longer the case. The stagnant approach of this party to the elections leads to voters losing their trust. Since a major section of the electorate happened to be a follower of the Hindutva ideology, other parties and their ideals resonated more with the public. In a diverse and multicultural society, a party's inability to connect with the varied aspirations of its citizens can lead to a loss of credibility and support.

However, every cloud has a silver lining. Congress and their rich political legacy will always be a strong safety net for the party, as seen evidently from their victory in the 2023 Telangana elections where they secured 64 out of the 119 seats. The Gandhi family, like the pied piper of Hamelin, has a bunch of supporters who will follow and support them in whatever they do. The adulation of these people will always be Congress's biggest weapon. But like a double-edged sword, this Gandhi name and their dependence on the reputation of the family has caused quite a lot of harm to Congress.

Pushing the Gandhi family to the forefront instead of other leaders with great potential such as Kanhaiya Kumar, Deepender Hooda, Srinivas BV, etc is harming the party. Many good leaders have left the party as they saw no future in it because of the overwhelming power of the Gandhi name. A recent example would be the current chief minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma, who during an interview mentioned that he feels like he wasted 22 years in Congress before his move to BJP.

Still, in the 90s mindset, the ideas of the youth are also not nurtured and the party lacks foresight. In such a fast-developing country this attitude of Congress was a major stumbling block. This approach also hinders the party from effectively utilizing emerging technologies and communication strategies that have become integral in contemporary political campaigns. The BJP equipped with their rightist agenda and **Ayodhya Ram Mandir**

as a weapon is stronger than ever and the biggest hurdle between Congress and their quest to regain glory in our country.

All hope however is not lost, since Congress is still a political powerhouse capable of making a strong comeback by working on certain areas where there is scope for improvement.

One of the most recent examples would be its public outreach rally the **Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra**, a march from the east to the west of India whose aim is to unite and bring light to social, economic and political injustice in the country. It will cover 110 districts in 15 states. The duration of the yatra will be 66 days and it will start in Manipur and conclude in Mumbai. Also by using political tactics such as making the few states they rule over a model state, like AAP did with Delhi, Congress can revive the public's trust in them.

If Congress keeps taking such initiatives they could easily turn the opinion of the majority to their side. The 2024 elections are going to be the determining factor of the future of this party. The way they approach and carry themselves during the current elections will show the country whether Congress is still capable of reclaiming its spot in the Indian political landscape.

> # "The Lok Sabha: A Closer Look at India's Lower House"

Diverse Oaths: Embracing India's Linguistic Tapestry in Parliament

The Lok Sabha witnessed a display of linguistic diversity, with the newly-elected MPs taking their oaths in English and Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Dogri, Bengali, Assamese and Odia.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the MP from Odisha's Sambalpur, took oath in Odia. Suresh Gopi, the first BJP MP to be elected from Kerala, took his oath in Malayalam.Union Minister Jitender Singh, the MP from Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur took his oath in Dogri. Union Minister of Port and Shipping Sarbananda Sonowal and Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu took their oaths in Assamese and Telugu, respectively. Steel and Heavy Industries Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi took their oaths in Kannada while Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy took his oath in Telugu.

Shripad Yesso Naik, the MoS for Power and Renewable Energy, took his oath in Sanskrit. MoS for Education and Development of North Eastern Region Sukanta Majumdar took his oath in Bengali. Pune MP Muralidhar Mohol, the MoS for Aviation, took his oath in Marathi.

These instances highlight personal and cultural identities, underscoring the importance of regional languages in national representation.

SPECIAL SECTION

Arjun Ram Meghwal Pedaling into Parliament, Setting a Low-Carbon Example

Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union minister for Law and Justice, pedals his way into the Lok Sabha, leaving traffic jams and fuel prices in his dust. Who needs a chauffeur when you've got spokes? With his trusty cycle, he's not just a lawmaker but a low-carbon legend on two wheels. His colleagues might take cars, but Meghwal takes the scenic route to Parliament — and probably arrives without breaking a sweat. Keep spinning, Mr. MP!

From Patel to Sitharaman: The Budget Speech Spectrum

Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Finance Minister,holds the record for the longest Budget speech in India's history, lasting 2 hours 42 minutes. On the other hand, the record for the shortest Budget speech is held by former Finance Minister Hirubhai Mulljibhai Patel, for his Budget speech contained 800 words

18th Lok Sabha Sees Significant Continuity with 262 Returning MPs, 35 Ministers Re-elected

262 MPs elected to the 18th Lok Sabha have previously served as members of Lok Sabha.216 sitting MPs were re-elected. Of these, eight changed their constituency. One MP was re-elected from two constituencies, including the earlier one.
Nine re-elected MPs represented a different party in the 17th Lok Sabha. Eight others represented a party that split from their earlier party.
Out of the 53 ministers who contested, 35 have won

SPECIAL SECTION

% of first-time MPs from each party

% of re-elected MPs
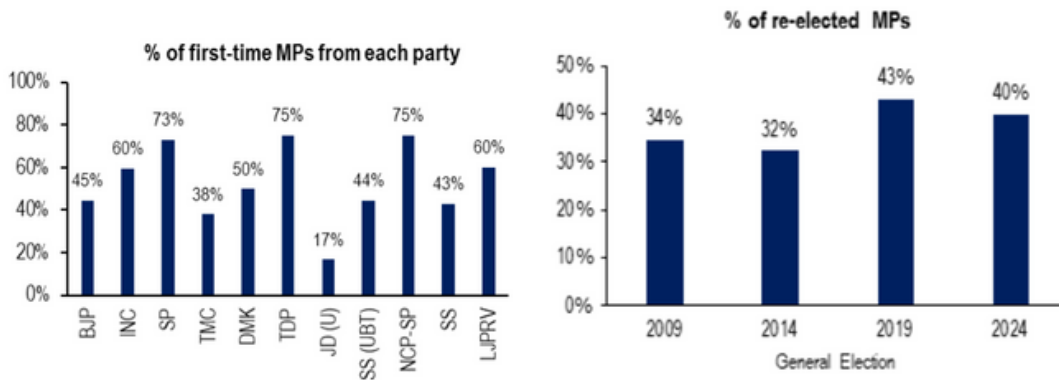
Wealth Gap Among MPs: The richest stands at Rs 5700 Crore in assets, Poorest at Rs 5 Lakh.

Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, the Guntur TDP candidate, will become the richest Lok Sabha MP with an asset of Rs 5700 crore. Jyotirmay Singh Mahato from Bengal (BJP) with assets worth Rs 5 lakh was the poorest candidate.

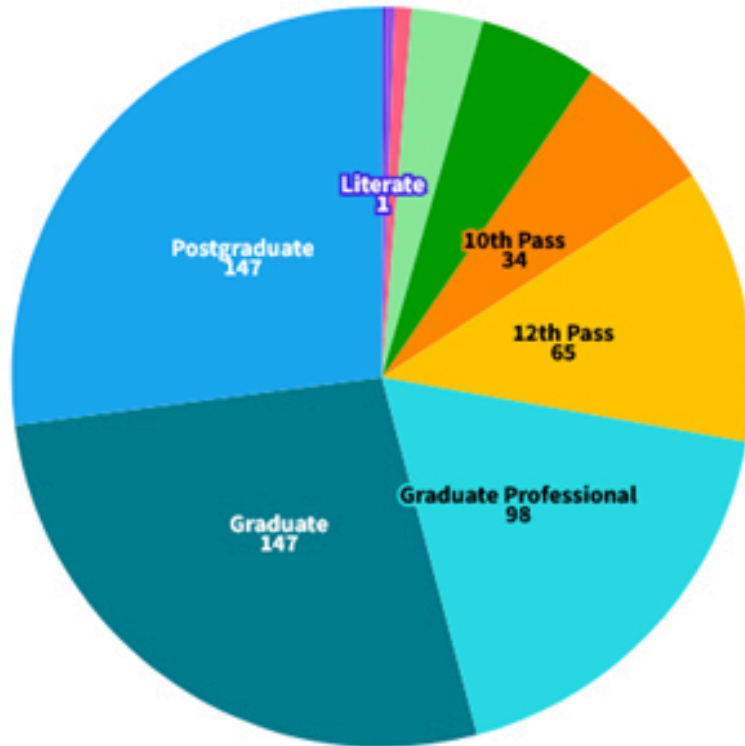## The Educational Profile: From ABCs to PhDs

In a significant milestone for India's democratic landscape, the newly-elected 18th Lok Sabha has no illiterate MPs. This marks a departure from previous trends where candidates with no formal education were elected. About 105, or 19 percent, of the winning candidates, declared their educational qualification between Class 5th pass and Class 12th. Out of the newly-elected 543 MPs, an overwhelming majority are highly educated, with only one MP self-identifying as literate. The rest of the elected representatives have various education degrees, showcasing a spectrum of qualifications from primary school to higher studies.

SPECIAL SECTION

Educational Profile of the 18th Lok Sabha

The pie chart shows the educational qualification of 543 MPs in the newly elected 18th Lok Sabha.

■ Literate ■ 5th Pass ■ 8th Pass ■ 10th Pass ■ 12th Pass ■ Graduate ■ Postgraduate
■ Graduate Professional ■ Diploma ■ Doctrate

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