

General Studies – 2; Topic: Separation of powers between various organs; disputes redressal mechanisms and institutions. Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, the conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Challenges faced by Indian Democracy

1) Introduction

- India is the largest democratic country in the world. Democracy is defined as a government of the people, by the people and for the people.
- Important issues like horse-trading in politics, the anti-defection law, pros and cons of post-poll alliances and discretionary powers of the governor has brought to light the various challenges facing Indian democracy.

2) Recent Issues

- Regional parties gaining importance across states.
- We have moved towards multi-party system, with fractured mandates becoming the norm.
- Another issue is that of the discretionary powers of the governor.
- Government formation now seems to be like who approaches the governor the fastest to stake claim to form the government.
- The issue of office of profit.
- Migration causing low voter turnout.
- Freebies given by political parties during elections.
- Four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court held a press conference and raised a banner of revolt against the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- Disruptions in parliament. The duration for which Parliament meets in India, compared with other democracies, is short.

3) Concerns / Challenges

- Illiteracy, Poverty, Gender Discrimination, Casteism, Communalism, Religious Fundamentalism, Regionalism, Corruption, and Criminalization of Politics.
- Anti-Defection law does not seem to be doing much to stop MLAs from defecting.
- This is primarily because MLAs are offered back-door entry to assemblies by rival parties.
- Ethics of post-poll alliances.
- Unlike pre-poll alliances, where the voters are aware of whom they are voting for, post-poll alliances present a new set of challenges.
- The post-poll alliance is seen as a betrayal of the trust of the voters by many.
- Misuse of data on social media sites, privacy of users and the power of social media to influence important political outcomes.
- The indiscriminate use of exemption for the office of profit.
- For instance same posts are exempt from the purview of office of profit in some states, while they are deemed as office of profit in others.
- While there are posts of parliamentary secretaries in several states, such posts were denied to Delhi and some states.
- Dynastic politics, lack of strong opposition at the centre and Religion based politics. Ex: Government's decision to classify Lingayats as a religious minority in Karnataka.
- The delay in disposal of cases by the courts is a concern to people.

4) Way Forward

- Universal literacy i.e. education for all, poverty alleviation, elimination of gender discrimination, removal of regional imbalances, administrative and judicial reforms and sustained economic, social and environmental development.
- What is required is a set of rules which would curb the menace of defection as well as the misuse of powers of the governor's office.
- A defecting MLA must be disqualified from contesting or becoming a minister for at least six years.
- A distinction needs to be drawn whether a member is leaving a party for ideological differences or for money and power.
- In case of hung assembly, whether the governor must call the single largest party first, or a post-poll alliance, the process must be uniform across the country.
- The governors' discretionary powers must be abolished and replaced with clear guidelines based on the Sarkaria Commission.
- Stricter data protection laws are required to ensure that political parties do not indulge in practices that involve undue influencing of voting behaviour.
- Voter education, electoral reforms and periodical highlighting of the performance (or nonperformance) of elected representatives should be high priority.
- People must exercise their right to vote, participate in democracy and contribute towards the development of the country.
- The youth must be aware of the problems that the country is facing and choose the candidate who is most likely to bring about a change
- Democracy cannot survive without both citizens' participation and politicians' accountability.
- The promises of democracy can only be realised through collective action in civil society.
- The state must respect the articulation of the politics of voice and not just the politics of the vote