

Turnout of overseas Indians in Lok Sabha election low, says EC

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Overseas Indians showed great enthusiasm in registering as electors, with nearly 1.2 lakh enrolling on the voter list, but a minuscule number turned up to exercise their franchise in the Lok Sabha election this year.

Data released by the Election Commission show that as many as 1,19,374 registered as overseas electors in 2024, with the highest registrations of 89,839 in Kerala. In 2019, as many as 99,844 registered as overseas electors.

The commission said only 2,958 overseas electors flew down to India to participate in the largest democratic exercise in the world in 2024. Of these, an overwhelming 2,670 were from Kerala.

Several large States such as Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu saw zero turnout of overseas electors.

Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State, saw only two out of 885 overseas electors cast-

The missing diaspora voter

Despite a 19.6% increase in registered NRI electors since the 2019 LS polls, their participation in the 2024 election was poor

■ Registered overseas electors

1,19,374

■ Overseas electors who voted

2,958

■ Highest NRI voter turnout: Kerala

(2,670 voters)

■ Some States with zero NRI voter turnout: Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Bihar and Goa



SOURCE: ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

ing their votes. Similar was the story in Maharashtra, where only 17 of the 5,097 NRI electors voted.

While there were 7,927 registered NRI electors in Andhra Pradesh, only 195 flew down to vote. In Assam, none of the 19 registered electors voted. Similarly, in Bihar none of the 89 registered NRI electors exercised their franchise. In Goa, none of its 84 voters cast their ballots.

While NRI voters is a generic term, the EC describes them as overseas electors.

ercise their franchise are described as voters.

In August 2018, the 16th Lok Sabha passed a Bill to allow proxy voting rights to eligible overseas Indians. The Bill, however, could not be brought to the Rajya Sabha.

Remote vote proposal

In 2020, the EC proposed to the Union Law Ministry to extend the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) facility, so far available only to service voters, to eligible overseas Indian voters as well. It would require changes in the election rules. But the government has so far not taken a call on the issue.

The EC had then told the government that it had been receiving several representations from the Indian diaspora to facilitate voting through postal ballots.

The electors cited travel costs, compulsions of employment overseas, and education, among other things, as reasons for their inability to cast their votes in person, the commission said.

Despite an increase of a little over 19,500 registered overseas electors since the 2019 election, their participation in the latest polls was poor.

Under the existing electoral law, registered NRI voters have to come to their respective Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies to vote. They have to show their passport as proof of their identity.

The commission says that while eligible Indian citizens who enrol in electoral rolls are called electors, those who actually ex-

AAP, BJP trade charges of voter list fraud in Delhi

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday accused each other of manipulating the Delhi electoral roll in an attempt to win the Assembly election due to be held in February.

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal accused the BJP of trying to manipulate the voter list in the New Delhi Assembly constituency to win the election by "unfair" means. AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said the BJP was even trying to get his wife's name deleted from the list.

Hitting back, the BJP said that it would not allow fake votes to be cast in Delhi. It claimed to have provided multiple pieces of evidence, and accused Mr. Kejriwal of attempting to cover his "wrongdoings" by creating confusion



Arvind Kejriwal

among the people.

"Today, I want to present some data from my New Delhi assembly constituency. BJP's 'Operation Lotus' began in this constituency on December 15. In just 15 days, they submitted nearly 5,000 applications for vote deletions and 7,500 applications for new additions," Mr. Kejriwal said at a press conference, claiming they were all bogus.

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AAP, BJP trade charges of voter list fraud

The AAP chief claimed that when the party verified 500 of the 5,000 applications for deletions, they found that 408 of those voters had been living at their addresses for the past 20 to 30 years. "This means valid, existing voters are being deleted. Deleting a legitimate citizen's vote effectively strips them of their citizenship," he said.

In one house, 47 votes were added, and in another, 22 votes were added, Mr. Kejriwal claimed. However, when inspected, these houses were found to be non-existent and this showed that it was a clear case of fraud, he added. Noting that there are 1.06 lakh voters in the New Delhi constituency, the AAP supremo claimed that the BJP was trying to delete 5% of the electorate and add 7.5% new voters. "This would amount to tampering with 12% of the votes. If 12% of the votes are manipulated, there's no point in holding elections as the process loses all fairness. This is a blatant and brazen act of misconduct," he added.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva accused the AAP of "manipulating" the electoral roll. "In Narela alone, over 2,000 people applied for new voter registrations on December 24. Similar applications have been observed in various constituencies on December 25, 26, and 27. This is not mere coincidence but evidence of Mr. Kejriwal's manipulation plan affecting 70 constituencies," he said.

One Nation One Election and representative democracy

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, that was tabled in the Lok Sabha, proposes simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State/Union Territory Legislative Assemblies with the insertion of Article 82(A). This ambitious reform seeks to synchronise elections, fix the tenure of the Lok Sabha, and simultaneously align elections to the State Assemblies. If the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly is dissolved before its five-year term, mid-term elections will only cover the remainder of the original tenure.

The Bill also amends Articles 83, 172, and 327, with changes effective from an 'appointed date', post-2029 general elections, thereby initiating simultaneous elections in 2034. A second Bill, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, aligns the tenure of Union Territories' legislative Assemblies with the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

While the proposal seeks administrative efficiency and reduced election fatigue, critical questions arise: has the 'One Nation, One Election (ONOE)' process been truly inclusive and representative? Are there limits to our understanding of the representative spirit of Indian democracy?

Understanding representative democracy

Representative democracy is a system wherein citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Rooted in the principles of free and fair elections, political accountability, and the protection of individual rights, it balances majority rule with the protection of minority interests. This form of governance becomes especially critical in diverse and populous countries such as India.

The theoretical underpinnings emphasise that elected representatives act as intermediaries, ensuring stable governance while accommodating competing interests. Citizens, being too numerous and diverse to participate directly in governance, delegate authority to their elected representatives. The system thrives on periodic elections, informed citizen participation, and institutional checks and balances.

Despite its theoretical merits, representative democracy faces growing challenges in practice. A 2024 Pew Research Center study across 24 nations, including Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, revealed widespread disillusionment with



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The process adopted for the One Nation One Election Bill had lapses that affect India's democratic fabric

the system. Citizens increasingly questioned its effectiveness, with some exploring alternatives such as direct democracy, expert rule, or even authoritarian regimes.

In 13 countries, significant segments supported strong leaders bypassing parliamentary checks, reflecting frustration with institutional inefficiencies. Alarmingly, military rule garnered between 15% to 17% support in nations such as Greece, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. Such trends underscore growing distrust in representative systems, driven by perceived inefficiencies, corruption, and unfulfilled promises.

Jayaprakash Narayan's critique

In India, debates about representative democracy are not new. Jayaprakash Narayan, in his seminal work, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959), offered a deep critique of parliamentary democracy. JP argued that the reliance on individual voting created an 'atomized society', where fragmented, partisan politics overshadowed the collective national interest.

JP highlighted the following defects – risks of minority governments: In a multi-party system like India, he warned that parliamentary democracy risks unstable and unrepresentative governments.

First, demagoguery and populism: JP highlighted how political parties manipulate public opinion through half-truths, empty promises, and divisive rhetoric.

Second, centralisation of power: Parliamentary democracy, according to JP, concentrates power in the state, weakening intermediary institutions between citizens and the national government.

Third, financial costs of elections: JP critiqued the exorbitant cost of elections, tethering democracy to moneyed interests and large organisations.

While critical, JP's analysis aimed to reform and strengthen democracy. His concerns resonate today as India debates ONOE and its implications for democratic representation.

For a reform as significant as ONOE, an inclusive and representative process is crucial. In representative democracies, public opinion shapes policy, holding governments accountable to citizens' aspirations and concerns. To achieve this, pre-legislative consultation becomes indispensable, enabling policymakers to gather diverse views, address challenges, and enhance transparency.

The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, 2014,

mandates a minimum 30-day period for public feedback on proposed legislation. It requires draft Bills to be accompanied by explanatory notes that clarify key provisions in accessible terms.

However, the process adopted for ONOE fell short. First, inadequate consultation period: The high-level committee issued a public notice on January 5, 2024, inviting suggestions on ONOE. Citizens were given just 10 days – until January 15 – to respond, undermining the spirit of the 2014 policy. Second, lack of explanatory material: Despite the high-level committee being established in September 2023, no explanatory notes or background papers were provided, limiting citizens' understanding of the proposal's scope and challenges. Third, framing of questions: The high-level committee's approach, seeking 'yes/no' responses on supporting ONOE, appeared perfunctory, giving the impression the matter was already settled.

Such procedural lapses risk alienating citizens and stakeholders, undermining trust in the reform process. In a diverse democracy like India, meaningful public engagement is vital to ensure that policy reflects varied perspectives and fosters consensus.

Implications for representative democracy

The ONOE Bill raises critical questions about the representative nature of Indian democracy. First, centralisation versus federalism: synchronising elections risks a further centralising of power, potentially undermining the federal spirit of the Constitution. State-specific issues may be overshadowed by national narratives. Second, inclusivity and participation: by curtailing consultation and rushing reforms, the government risks sidelining citizens' voices, weakening democratic inclusivity. Third, electoral accountability: frequent elections, while resource-intensive, enhance accountability by enabling voters to evaluate governments regularly. Simultaneous elections could dilute this accountability.

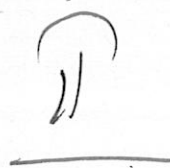
India's democratic fabric thrives on citizen participation, inclusivity, and accountability. Reforms such as ONOE, while aimed at efficiency, must not compromise these principles. A rushed process undermines trust and risks centralisation. Only by adhering to the principles above can our democracy remain truly representative in letter and spirit.

The views expressed are personal

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BJP plans to manipulate poll roll in Delhi: Kejriwal

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC 29

Claiming that the BJP's "operation lotus" was in action, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that the saffron party was planning to manipulate electoral rolls data by deleting over 5,000 names from the voters list of the New Delhi Assembly constituency, from where he is contesting the election. He also

alleged that the BJP has been orchestrating this operation since December 15 to influence the upcoming state Assembly elections.

Speaking at a press conference alongside Chief Minister Atishi and Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha at the party's headquarters, Mr Kejriwal said: "BJP is trying to win this election by any means. The BJP neither has a CM face, nor

candidates. Last time, they tried to remove the names of 11,000 voters from another constituency, from where we won the polls by 5,000 votes. If they would have been successful, we would have lost the election. The staff of the election offices had even started working on the deletion but this was stopped due to the intervention of the Chief Election Commissioner."

■ P4

BJP PLANS TO MANIPULATE POLL ROLL IN DELHI: KEJRIWAL

FROM PG 1

AAP MP Sanjay Singh also claimed that the BJP submitted an application to delete the vote of his wife Anita, who resides in the New Delhi Assembly constituency. Mr Singh, accompanied by his wife, told reporters, that the BJP

was trying to delete the names of people from Purvanchal settled in Delhi. Mr Singh and his wife belong to eastern Uttar Pradesh. Purvanchalis are people from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar settled in Delhi for decades, and form a significant chunk of voters in the city.

Deccan Chronicle

Dated: 30.12.2024

Sachdeva: AAP trying to register 'illegal voters'

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

The BJP on Sunday accused the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP of trying to register "illegal voters", fearing defeat in the Delhi Assembly polls. The BJP's city unit chief Virendra Sachdeva said in a press conference that his party would not allow "fake votes" to be cast in Delhi.

"We have provided multiple pieces of evidence but Mr Kejriwal is merely attempting to cover up his 'wrongdoings' by creating confusion among the people," he charged.

Elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly are due in February.

AAP's Kejriwal alleges BJP fudging voter list

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday accused BJP of tampering with the voters list in Delhi, calling it part of its 'Operation Lotus'. He alleged there was an "unusual increase" in voter list modifications, including removals and additions. P9

'Unusual' rise in voter list modifications in New Delhi: Kejriwal

Abhinav.Rajput@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday accused BJP of



tampering with voters' lists in Delhi, calling it part of its "Operation Lotus". The former

CM alleged that there was an "unusual increase" in voter list modifications, including both removals and additions, specifically in New Delhi constituency, during the recent period. He also submitted a letter to the district election officer on the matter.

Holding a press briefing, Kejriwal alleged that over 5,000 voter names were deleted and 7,500 "fake names" added in just 15 days. "BJP neither has a CM face for Delhi nor a clear vision for what it wants to do for the people of the city. It lacks credible candidates as well. Now, it is resorting to dishonesty to win elections at any cost," he claimed.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh, meanwhile, accused BJP of

An attempt to divert attention from govt's 'inadequacies': Verma

New Delhi: BJP functionary and former MP Parvesh Verma on Sunday dismissed AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's claims regarding 'Operation Lotus' in New Delhi assembly constituency and said it was merely a tactic to divert attention from Delhi govt's "inadequacies". "Kejriwal's baseless allegations about 'Operation Lotus' are a clear indication of his insecurity and fear of losing public support. Filing applications for voter addition or deletion is a routine process in any democracy, and to paint this as a conspiracy is laughable," Verma, who is likely to contest from New Delhi against Kejriwal, said. TNN

attempting to get his wife Anita Singh's name deleted from the voters list. Singh claimed that two applications were filed on Dec 25 and 26 for deletion of his wife's name.

Full report on www.toi.in

தமிழ்நாடு, கர்நாடகா உள்ளிட்ட மாநிலங்களில்

வெளிநாட்டுவாழ் வாக்காளர்கள் ஒருவர் கூட வாக்களிக்கவில்லை

புதுடெல்லி, டி.ச.30-

கடந்த ஏப்ரல், மே மாதங்களில் நடந்த நாடாளுமன்ற தேர்தல் தொடர்பான புள்ளிவிவரங்களை தேர்தல் கமிஷன் வெளியிட்டுள்ளது. அதில், வெளிநாட்டுவாழ் இந்திய வாக்காளர்கள், மிகக்குறைவான அளவில் வாக்களித்து இருப்பது தெரிய வந்துள்ளது.

இந்தியாவில் நடைபெறும் நாடாளுமன்ற, சட்டசபை தேர்தல்கள் மற்றும் இதர நேரடி தேர்தல்களில் நேரடியாக இந்தியாவுக்கு வந்து வாக்களிக்க விரும்பும் வெளிநாட்டுவாழ் இந்தியர்களுக்கு வாக்காளர் பட்டியலில் பெயர் சேர்க்க தேர்தல் கமிஷன் வாய்ப்பு அளிக்கிறது.

அதன்படி, 1 லட்சத்து 19 ஆயிரத்து 374 பேர் வெளிநாட்டு வாழ் வாக்காளர்களாக பதிவு செய்து கொண்டுள்ளனர். கடந்த 2019-ம் ஆண்டு நாடாளுமன்ற தேர்தலுக்கு பிறகு பதிவு செய்தவர்கள் மட்டும் 19 ஆயிரத்து 500 பேர் ஆவர்.

ஆனால், இந்த ஆண்டின் நாடாளுமன்ற தேர்தலில், வெறும் 2 ஆயிரத்து 958 பேர் மட்டுமே இந்தியாவுக்கு வந்து வாக்களித்துள்ளனர். அவர்களில் கேரளாவை சேர்ந்தவர்கள் மட்டும் 2 ஆயிரத்து 670 பேர் ஆவர்.

தமிழ்நாடு, கர்நாடகா, உத்தரபிரதேசம், அசாம், பீகார், கோவா ஆகிய மாநிலங்களில் வெளிநாட்டுவாழ் இந்தியர்கள் ஒருவர்கூட வாக்களிக்கவில்லை.

பிரதமர் மோடியின் சொந்த மாநிலமான குஜராத்தில், 885 வாக்காளர்கள் பதிவு செய்திருந்தும், 2 பேர் மட்டுமே வாக்களிக்க வந்தனர். மராட்டிய மாநிலத்தில், 5 ஆயிரம்பேருக்கு மேல் பெயர் கொடுத்தும், 17 பேர் மட்டுமே வாக்களித்தனர்.

போக்குவரத்து செலவு, பணி, கல்வி போன்ற காரணங்களால், நேரடியாக வர வெளிநாட்டுவாழ் இந்தியர்கள் விரும்புவது இல்லை. அவர்களுக்கு தபால் ஓட்டு வசதி அளிக்க தேர்தல் கமிஷன் 2020-ம் ஆண்டு பரிந்துரை செய்தது. ஆனால், மத்திய அரசு எந்த முடிவும் எடுக்கவில்லை.

Dinamalar, Dated: 30-12-2024

ஓட்டளிக்க ஆர்வம் காட்டாத வெளிநாடு வாழ் இந்தியர்கள்

புதுடெல்லி, டி.ச. 30-

நாட்டின் வாக்காளர்களாக பதிவு செய்வதில் பெரும் ஆர்வத்தை காட்டிய வெளிநாடு வாழ் இந்தியர்கள், அதை பயன்படுத்துவதில் எந்த ஆர்வத்தையும் காட்டவில்லை என்பது, தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷனின் தரவுகளின்படி தெரிய வந்துள்ளது.

இது குறித்து, தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷன் நேற்று வெளியிட்ட அறிக்கை:

கடந்த ஏப்., - மே மாதங்களில் நடந்த லோக்சபா தேர்தலையொட்டி, 1 லட்சத்து 19,374 பேர் வெளிநாட்டு வாக்காளர்

ஆந்திராவில், 7,927 பேர் பதிவு செய்த நிலையில், 195 பேரும், குஜராத்தில் 885 பேர் பதிவு செய்த நிலையில், இருவர் மட்டுமே ஓட்டளித்துள்ளனர்

களாக பதிவு செய்தனர். இதில் அதிகபட்சமாக, கேரளாவில், 89,839 பேர் அடங்குவர். 2019 லோக்சபா தேர்தலையொட்டி, 99,844 பேர் வெளிநாட்டு வாக்காளர்களாக பதிவு செய்தனர்.

நடப்பாண்டில் வாக்காளர்களின் எண்ணிக்கை அதிகரித்திருந்தாலும், பதிவு செய்த 1 லட்சத்து 19,374 பேரில், வெறும் 2,958 பேர் மட்டுமே, நம்

நாட்டுக்கு வந்து லோக்சபா தேர்தலில் ஓட்டளித்துள்ளனர். இதில், 2,670 பேர் கேரளாவைச் சேர்ந்தவர்கள்.

கர்நாடகா, தமிழகம், உத்தர பிரதேசம் ஆகிய மாநிலங்களில், வெளிநாடு வாழ் இந்தியர் ஒருவர் கூட ஓட்டுரிமையை பயன்படுத்தவில்லை. குஜராத்தில் 885 பேர் பதிவு செய்த நிலையில், இருவர் மட்டுமே

ஓட்டளித்துள்ளனர்.

இதே போல், மஹாராஷ்டிராவில் 5,097 பேர் பதிவு செய்த நிலையில், 17 பேரும், ஆந்திராவில், 7,927 பேர் பதிவு செய்த நிலையில், 195 பேரும் மட்டுமே லோக்சபா தேர்தலில் ஓட்டளித்துள்ளனர்.

பயணச் செலவுகள், வெளிநாட்டு வேலை வாய்ப்புக்கான நிர்ப்பந்தம், கல்வி உள்ளிட்டவை, நேரில் வந்து ஓட்டளிக்க முடியாமல் போனதற்கான காரணங்களாக வாக்காளர்கள் தெரிவித்தனர்.

இவ்வாறு அதில் குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.

Daily Thanki

Date: 30.12.2014

**டெல்லி சட்டசபை தேர்தலில் வெற்றிபெற
வாக்காளர் பட்டியலில்
முறைகேடு செய்ய முயற்சி**

பா.ஜனதா மீது கெஜ்ரிவால் குற்றச்சாட்டு

புதுடெல்லி, டி.ச.30-
ஆம் ஆத்மி ஒருங்கிணைப்பாளர் அரவிந்த் கெஜ்ரிவால் டெல்லியில் நிருபர்களுக்கு பேட்டி அளித்தார். அவர் கூறியதாவது:-
டெல்லி சட்டசபை தேர்தலில் வலிமையான வேட்பாளர்களையோ, பிரச்சினைகளையோ முன்வைக்க முடியாமல், நியாயமற்ற வழிகளில் வெற்றிபெற பா.ஜனதா முயற்சிக்குிறது. அக்கட்சிக்கு முதல்-மந்திரிக்கான ஆளோ, சரியான வேட்பாளர்களோ இல்லை.

இருப்பினும், முறைகேடு மூலம் வெற்றிபெற திட்டமிட்டுள்ளது. ஏற்கனவே ஒரே தொகுதியில் 11 ஆயிரம் வாக்காளர்களை நீக்குவதற்கான விண்ணப்பங்கள் கொடுத்தது. தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷனர் தலையீட்டால், அம்முயற்சி தடுக்கப்பட்டது. தற்போது, எனது டெல்லி தொகுதியில், 5 ஆயிரம் வாக்காளர்களை நீக்கவும், 7,500 வாக்காளர்களை சேர்க்கவும் விண்ணப்பங்கள் கொடுத்துள்ளது. இதன்மூலம், அத்தொகுதியில் 12 சதவீத ஓட்டுகளை மாற்றியமைக்க முடியும். 'ஆபரேஷன் தாமரை' என் தொகுதிக்கு வந்துவிட்டது.

இத்தகைய முறைகேடு, ஜனநாயகத்தை சிறுமைப்படுத்தும். இதை தடுக்க தொடர்ந்து தீவிர கண்காணிப்பில் ஈடுபடுமாறு தேர்தல் கமிஷனை கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறோம்.

இவ்வாறு அவர் கூறினார்.