

## INDIA

**Dates of Elections:** March 16 to 20, 1977

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the *Lok Sabha* as a result of the premature dissolution of this House on January 18, 1977 — 15 months before the expiry of its extended term\*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The bicameral Parliament of India consists of the House of the People (*Lok Sabha*) and the Council of States (*Rajya Sabha*).

The prescribed maximum strength of the *Lok Sabha* is 547. It currently has 544 members, of whom 542 are elected for 6 years and 2 are nominated by the President of the Republic to represent the Anglo-Indian community. In accordance with the Constitution, 116 seats are set aside for Scheduled Castes (78) and Scheduled Tribes (38) elected in as many "reserved" constituencies.

The prescribed maximum strength of the *Rajya Sabha* is 250 members, of whom 12 are to be nominated by the President of the Republic and 238 indirectly elected by the Assemblies of the States and Union Territories. All members have 6-year terms of office, one-third of them retiring every 2 years. The present strength is 244.

### **Electoral System**

Every Indian citizen aged 21 years or over who is ordinarily resident in a constituency may vote therein if he is not disqualified on grounds of insanity, crime or electoral offences.

Electoral registers are normally revised before general and by-elections in all constituencies. Voting is not compulsory. Postal voting is permitted for certain public officials, members of the armed forces, police forces serving in another State and Government employees abroad.

Qualified electors who are at least 25 years old are eligible to be candidates for the *Lok Sabha*. Requirements for the *Rajya Sabha* are 30 years of age

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections X* (1975-76), p. 14.

and residence in the State or Union Territory where election is sought. Disqualified from being a member of either House are undischarged bankrupts and persons owing allegiance to a foreign State. No members of the armed forces or persons holding certain offices of profit, whether public offices or government contractors, can at the same time be members of Parliament.

Candidates must be nominated by one qualified elector and make a deposit of 500 *rupees* (250 *rupees* for those standing for seats representing the Scheduled Castes or Tribes), which, in the case of the *Lok Sabha*, is refunded if the candidate is elected or obtains more than one-sixth of the total of valid votes polled in his constituency and, in the case of the *Rajya Sabha*, if he obtains more than one-sixth of the number of votes prescribed as sufficient to secure the return of a candidate. An individual who is candidate for both Houses may be fully reimbursed if he fulfils these two requirements.

The 542 members of the *Lok Sabha* are elected by simple majority vote in a like number of constituencies. Popularly chosen members of the *Rajya Sabha* are elected indirectly by the 23 Legislative Assemblies of the States and Union Territories in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, with each elector indicating his order of preference among the candidates; each constituency has from one to 34 seats, depending on its population.

By-elections are held to fill vacant seats of elected members between general elections. Nominated seats are filled through nomination of the President.

### **General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

Reasons given for the premature dissolution of the *Lok Sabha* and the scheduling of fresh elections were that the Government sought a fresh mandate from the people for carrying out its programmes and policies. This same House's term had been extended twice beyond March 1976 since a state of emergency was in effect in the country.

Altogether 2,439 candidates were nominated for the *Lok Sabha* seats, the total membership of this House having been increased to 542 as compared to 518 for the previous (1971) general elections on the basis of the 1971 census.

On January 20, 1977, the four main non-Communist opposition parties — the Organization Congress (also known as the Opposition Congress), the *Jan Sangh*, the *Bharatiya Lok Dal* and the Socialist Party — announced that they would contest the elections as a single party, to be called the *Janata* (or People's) Party; it launched its campaign ten days later. The ruling Congress Party, led by outgoing Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, fielded the most candidates — 493.

The campaign was fought entirely on domestic issues. Much of the debate centered around the pros and cons and consequences for civil liberties of the state of emergency which had been imposed by the Government in June 1975. Headlines also surrounded the programme of compulsory sterilization, city slum clearance and the defection of Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, from Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet in February; Mr. Bam thereafter allied himself with the *Janata* in forming the Congress for Democracy Party (CFD). The Congress Party manifesto emphasized the need for a strong central Government.

The four-day voting pattern by one of the world's largest electorates resulted in the Congress Party being voted out of office for the first time in India's 30 years of independence, as the *Janata*, led by Mr. Desai, a former political prisoner released two months before the elections, obtained a landslide total of 298 seats (28 of these won by the CFD), and the Congress lost nearly 200 seats. The pro-Congress Communist Party of India for its part lost 17 seats.

In the wake of this outcome, the Government decided on March 21 to revoke permanently the state of emergency and Mrs. Gandhi, in office since 1966, resigned the next day. Mr. Desai became India's fourth Prime Minister on March 24.

## Statistics

### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Lok Sabha

Number of registered voters. . . . .	320,682,589
Voters. . . . .	193,953,183 (60.48%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	5,514,273
Valid votes. . . . .	188,438,910

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Number of Votes	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats
<i>Janata</i> Party/Congress for Democracy	423	81,355,333	43.17	
Indian National Congress. . . . .	493	65,088,520	34.54	
Communist Party of India . . . . .	91	5,310,775	2.82	
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	53	8,103,723	4.30	
Other Parties & Independents . . . . .	1,379	28,580,559	15.17	

542\*

\* Elected seats

2. *Distribution of Members of the Lok Sabha according to Sex*

<b>Men . .</b>	524
Women.	<u>18</u>
	<b>542</b>