

## INDIA

**Dates of Elections:** 3 and 6 January 1980

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all popularly-chosen members of the *Lok Sabha* following the premature dissolution of this House on 22 August 1979. General elections had previously been held in March 1977.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

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

The prescribed maximum strength of the *Lok Sabha* is 547. It currently has 544 members, of whom 542 are elected for 5 years and 2 are nominated by the President of the Republic to represent the Anglo-Indian Community. In accordance with the Constitution, 119 seats are set aside for Scheduled Castes (79) and Scheduled Tribes (40) 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 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

On 22 August 1979, President of the Republic N.S. Reddy dissolved the *Lok Sabha* in the midst of a political crisis touched off by a stream of defections from the *Janata* (People's) Party that had ruled India since the previous general elections of March 1977. The January election dates were announced on 26 October, two separate voting days and a three-day interval being required due to the size of the electorate.

The consequently weakened *Janata* Group was chiefly opposed by the Congress (I) party headed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It will be recalled that the Congress party incurred heavy losses in 1977 after having for years been the dominant political force. Congress (I), a breakaway group, was founded by Mrs. Gandhi in 1978. *Janata* was led by Mr. Jagjivan Ram. Another leading contender was *Lok Dal*, founded in 1979 and headed by Mr. Charan Singh, Prime Minister after the toppling of Mr. Morarji Desai (*Janata*) in July 1979 and, at the request of President Reddy, holder of the same post as head of the caretaker Government following dissolution.

During the campaign—which officially began in early December—Mrs. Gandhi laid greatest emphasis on domestic issues, especially the reduction of inflation, social problems and the restoration of law and order.

Voting in 17 of the 542 constituencies was postponed because of disturbances, deaths of candidates or climatic conditions. Some 4,600 candidates vied for the 525 other seats.

On the polling days, Congress (I) gained a large triumph, capturing 351 *Lok Sabha* seats. None of the other parties won the percentage of seats required to qualify as the official opposition party, *Janata* winning only 32, *Lok Dal* 41. The country's two Communist parties together won 46 seats and the Congress faction opposed to Mrs. Gandhi captured 13. Congress (I) also received promises of support from a number of legislators elected as independents or members of regional parties.

On 10 January, President Reddy asked Mrs. Gandhi to form a Government.

In April 1980, partial elections for the *Rajya Sabha* were held\*.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 15.

## Statistics

I. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats  
in the Lok Sabha

Number of registered electors. . . . .	354,024,081
Voters. . . . .	201,269,129 (56.8%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	4,884,424
Valid votes. . . . .	196,384,705

Political Group	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held in August 1979
<i>Congress (I) and allied parties</i>		
Congress (I). . . . .	351	80
<i>Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</i> . . . . .	16	1
National Conference. . . . .	3	2
Moslem League . . . . .	3	2
Kerala Congress (Joseph group) . . . . .	1	2
<i>Lok Dal (Janata Secular)</i> . . . . .	41	77
<i>Janata Party and allied parties</i>		
<i>Janata Party</i> . . . . .	31	203
<i>Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</i> . . . . .	2	17
<i>Akali Dal</i> . . . . .	1	8
Congress . . . . .	13	56
<i>Left Front</i>		
Communist Party of India (Marxist) . . . . .	35	22
Communist Party of India . . . . .	11	7
Revolutionary Socialist Party . . . . .	4	4
Forward Bloc. . . . .	3	3
Kerala Congress (Mani group). . . . .	1	-
Others . . . . .	3	19**
Independents . . . . .	6	33
	525*	536*

\* There are 544 *Lok Sabha* seats. Elections in 17 constituencies were postponed. Two members are nominated.

\*\* Including the two nominated members.

\*\*\* Excluding eight vacancies.