

Agenda for India 2014 : Transforming India

The mandate of 2014 has been a result of a desire for change, and the leadership of Narendra Modi and his vision of Governance and Development for all Indians.

The Country is facing significant challenges:

- a. An Economy left very weak and vulnerable by a 'scorched earth' management of the economy, characterized by many quarters of Low growth / High inflation – 'Almost Stagflation mode'
- b. Poor Policymaking and Government spending.
- c. Very low Investor confidence
- d. Trust deficit between People and Government / Parliament
- e. Very high frustration amongst Youth and Jobseekers.
- f. A Delhi Establishment and Vested Interests' that has captured Government and will oppose change

Most of this has to do with Governance of the past decade, poor policy making, excessive centralization of power, administrative discretion and vested interests driving Government decision making.

This lack of reforms within Government, consequent administrative discretion and concentration of power in Political leadership has translated, in turn, into brazen corruption, scams and a lopsided development model that has not really benefitted most Indians. This is where the real reforms also need to focus on - Maximum Governance, Minimum Government.

In the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of USA, introduced the 'New Deal' for the US and its people. The phrase itself originates in FDR's acceptance speech at the 1932 Democratic Convention in Chicago, in which he promised "a new deal for the American people". The various measures included support for, and reform of the collapsing banking industry, a new stock market regulatory agency, moves to boost wages and prices, the creation of massive public works projects and – perhaps most important of all – the launch of Social Security, the American equivalent of National Insurance in the UK.

Taken together, they not only constituted a "New Deal" to help ordinary Americans, but also initiated a new era of government activism, in terms of both intervention and regulation of the economy. Many New Deal programmes still exist - part of a safety net that even today's most *laissez-faire* right-wingers in the US would not dare touch.

The ideas below could be part of the Government's New Vision for India.

The actions required are :

1. Revive the Economy

- a) Revive the Economy and put it on a sustainable growth path – with the objective of creating jobs and improving standard of living/prices for all Indians.
 - (i) Government should be an enabler and catalyst of growth.
 - (ii) Boost Investments with Focus on Long term; Focus on FDI and increase strategic capital flows into our Economy in all sectors.
 - (iii) Revive confidence in each of economic sectors (Telecom, Finance, Roads, Ports etc.)
 - (iv) Create a new PPP model and framework that assures equal Public and Private returns and is more transparent
 - (v) Launch a significant nationwide Infrastructure building program (using a combination of Private and Public Capital)
 - (vi) Reform financial sector with the objective of increasing competition, deepening and widening the debt and equity markets, and at the same time, ensuring good regulation of markets and market participants.
 - (vii) Tax Reforms to create a new stable and predictable tax regime
 - (viii) Create an Integrated inter-Ministry plan for boosting Manufacturing with a focus on Supply chain and Power issues.
- b) Government spending to be driven by Fiscal Responsibility (FRBM) and more directed spending strategy (including Rationalization of Plan programmes)
- c) Public Assets and Investments to be managed to maximize returns (either financial or public interest)

2. New Approach and Policies in Education , Health and Safety

3. Set new Standards of Governance, Improve trust of citizens with Government, and Communication with people

- a) All departments to use online disclosures for transparency, e-governance and more disclosures
- b) Make citizens part of the budget process by simplifying the Budget document and making it more readable.
- c) Many more continuous initiatives, including use of Social Media, Periodic Radio and TV addresses.

4. National Security - Protect National and Peoples' Interest

5. Political Reforms – to launch the next phase of our democracy - India Democracy 2.0.

1. Revive Economy and Boost Investments - Economic and Governance Agenda for India

1. Economy and Government - Maximum Governance, Minimum Government

The UPA Government's handling of the economy had become very 70-ish and control-oriented, with an obvious lack of innovation. The Indian Economy has to go back to its entrepreneurs and be consumer energy-led. India's economy should be seen and felt as an energetic economy driven by the energy and innovation of its millions of young and old entrepreneurs – big and small.

- a) Reposition Government as an enabler.
- b) Government is efficient and cost conscious - Restructure Government through wide ranging Governance reforms, usher in transparency and reduce Government footprint ('Minimum Government' promise)
- c) Government is fiscally responsible - Roadmap to fiscal consolidation and FRBM Bill to be restored.
- d) Government is pro-Consumer - make the Government's focus sharper on Consumers
 - (i) A series of Consumer Rights initiatives with regard to Public services and competition and affordability in the private sector.
 - (ii) Introduce a new Consumer Price Index (replace the current WPI/CPI)
 - (iii) Introduce competition and increase choice by opening up sectors to private participation by foreign and domestic investors / corporates like :
 - Insurance
 - Media
 - Banking / Finance
 - Aviation
- e) The Government is Pro-Investor and job creator - Make India an attractive destination for long term, sustainable investment flows
 - (i) PPP contracts to be balanced with equal returns to Private and Public investments.
 - (ii) Make contracts and license agreements more complete with less administrative discretion, and hence, reduce the need to go back to government for further approvals.
 - (iii) Streamline / reform taxation - Launch a new Tax code

- (iv) Creating and nurturing/strengthening existing and new Independent regulatory institutions (Telecom, Coal, CCI, RBI)
- (v) Financial sector reform - recent instances of black money being channeled through Indian financial sector has raised credibility issues about India's financial sector. Reforms and cleanup required to restore credibility.
- (vi) PSU banking reforms :
 - 1) Remove PSU Banks from Finance Ministry supervision to a holding company structure.
 - 2) Address issues of PSU Bank Management & NPAs. Make PSU Bank Boards responsible for NPAs and willful defaulters. Create a New Law to track down assets of willful defaulters and big businesses.
 - 3) Address the issue of concentration of risk and loans to top 10 groups. Reform the CDR mechanism.
- f) Investment in Infrastructure (to remove supply side bottlenecks) - This is the only way in the long run to control inflation.
- g) Financing Infrastructure Projects
 - (i) Develop, on an urgent basis, long term debt market (15-20 years tenure) to fund infrastructure projects.
 - (ii) Initially, Government may use its own Balance Sheet or Balance Sheet of PSU Banks to fund infrastructure projects.
- h) Create an environment to kick start investment cycle through –
 - (i) Stable and transparent tax policies
 - (ii) Tax holiday
 - (iii) Accelerated depreciation
- i) Boost retail forex inflows through :
 - (i) Boosting tourism, Duty free zones etc., especially high-end tourism, by making India more competitive vis-à-vis other Asian destinations.
 - (ii) Developing other offerings like Medi Tourism, Education etc.
- j) Initiate and Implement next level of reforms - Message to markets & international community is that the government is committed to market reforms, i.e., implement the existing Bills pending in Parliament :
 - (i) FDI in Retail
 - (ii) FDI in Insurance
 - (iii) Introduction of GST - Has the potential to boost GDP by 100-150 bps
 - (iv) FDI in Civil Aviation
 - (v) Higher FDI in Defence

- k) Reduce personal taxes to induce consumption. Absolute Tax collections will grow owing to –
 - (i) Lower taxes will ensure higher compliance
 - (ii) Increase in economic activity will result in higher taxes.

2. Public Investments and PSUs

- a) Many PSUs have been systematically destroyed by the Political forces in UPA and their vested Interests. Eg.: BSNL - in 2004-2006, it was valued as a multi-billion-dollar company and a price asset that belonged to the people of India. It has been run to the ground and today makes multi-crore losses.
- b) Same is the case for almost all PSU banks. The Government needs to review how these public assets are managed to maximize returns to the people and Government, and not private interests. Eg.: the current arrangement of PSU banks and Insurance companies being overseen by bureaucrats and politicians from the Ministry of Finance represents a moral hazard, and opportunities for corruption and directed lending to favorites. This is obvious with the high NPAs in PSU banks only, while private sector banks remain robust and profitable. The PSU banks must be removed from the Ministry of Finance and made independent and accountable for their performance and profitability.

3. Telecom and Internet

a) India should take the lead in the Global debate on Internet Governance

- (i) India can emerge as one of the world's largest Internet user bases. However, Indian Internet penetration and growth lags behind Asian peers. With approx. 200 million Internet users, which corresponds to 16% Internet penetration, India, by May 2014, had an Internet penetration lower than Africa (at 20%) and Asia Pacific (at 34%) and an average of 32% penetration in developing countries (*Source - ITU 2014 ICT figures*).
- (ii) The world is looking at India to take the lead in the current debate on Global Internet Governance.
- (iii) The UPA Government has taken a badly thought-of position of intergovernmental control (rejecting the multi-stakeholder model) – which, in turn, is being rejected by most democracies and India's largest ICT investors as well as the largest markets for India's IT and ITeS revenues (EU, Americas, South Korea, Japan & Australia). This position needs to be changed. The new Government should take a new enlightened position on this issue that is consistent with open Internet and youth empowerment.

- (iv) Such a position by India will also create diplomatic alliances and bridges with people of Western Europe / Americas and Korea / Japan.
- (v) Government regulation of Internet should be lighter and careful.
- (vi) The current laws on Internet regulation in India have alienated youth and business alike, and has too much administrative discretion : Annul the Internet regulation rules and frame a new set of rules that are formed through a public multi-stakeholder consultation.

b) Resolve Telecom Sector issues – by addressing both consumers and investors

- (i) The Telecom sector is currently suffering from too much litigation from poor policies and bad administration and leadership by the UPA Government.
- (ii) Strengthening the Independent regulatory framework and scope, and addressing the sector's litigations will send a powerful signal to investors in general and reverse the current negative sentiment about India.
- (iii) Review the retrospective tax regime which is impacting some of the largest foreign investments in India. This is scaring existing and future investors, both in the services and equipment sector. Eg.: Vodafone, Nokia, Samsung.
- (iv) A comprehensive ICT manufacturing strategy. A massive initiative which is well funded to reach a global scale and markets is the only way to approach ICT manufacturing. Eg.: Huawei. Any half-hearted attempts through reservations / quotas or subsidy support for manufacturing will never make India self reliant.
- (v) Focus on the consumer by strongly taking up the issue of EMF radiation and public health issues arising out of Cellular towers – by ordering a full-fledged enquiry where decisions must be made based on scientific data and international best practices.

c) Address the issue of pricing of Natural resources by adopting the Ashok Chawla committee report and consistent with the Supreme Court Order dated 27 September, 2012 in response to Special Reference No.1 of 2012 under Article 143 (1):

- (i) At one level, the UPA Government had argued in its Presidential Reference that the Supreme Court has interfered with policy making. At another level, the only seminal work on policy with regard to the allocation of scarce natural resources – the 'Ashok Chawla Committee report', which has been signed by 15 Secretaries of the Government of India - has been kept in abeyance – in fact, a secret. This document should be released publicly – if required, have a final debate, and use it to formulate a policy.

- (ii) Governments should be trustees of Public assets and natural resources. It will usher in a new era of probity in Government and remove discretion and crony capitalism considerably.
- (iii) Choose transparent, predictable auction processes with minimum reserve price based on statutory recommendations made by the TRAI. Public Auctions or an equivalent process must ensure optimization of government revenues at one level, and serve as a process for transparent allocation of scarce, natural resources through a litigation-free process to select the most deserving winner(s). Such a process also ensures rapid deployment of infrastructure based on investors' expectations of RoIs, which in turn, fosters competition, ensures service delivery and lowers tariffs. In effect, policymakers / Governments, investors and consumers all gain through this process.

4. Urban Development – Modernization of Existing Cities and build New Cities – Strengthen Governance for Middle Class and Urban Poor, Increase Private Investments into Urban Infrastructure

- a) The current JNNURM is very ineffective in transforming our cities and needs major changes. It has no outcomes and has become simply a granting of money to pet projects of local politicians.
- b) The Government must re-launch a new restructured JNNURM with outcomes and statutory Modernization plans to ensure modern, slum-free cities in the next 5 years.
- c) Bring Private Investments and PPPs into Urban Infrastructure and Services.

2. Restore Peoples' Trust in Government - Governance Reforms and Public Policy Priorities

In the last decade or so, the focus has been on Economic reforms. Unfortunately, whilst the economy has moved ahead, the government and government institutions have declined significantly, in turn, eroding trust of people in Government and its institutions.

The institutions of the government, for the most part, have been corroded by political interference and influence. Professionalism has given way to political pandering, and hence, the institutions invariably fail (at high cost to the country and people) to fulfill their duty and role. These Government and state institutions must be made more accountable, responsive, transparent and outcome-oriented.

a) Depoliticize, Build and Strengthen Institutions

- (i) National Security, Law & Order Institutions - Armed Forces, Police, Paramilitary, Intelligence & Counter Terrorism agencies, and Investigation agencies to be professionalized, upgraded and removed from local Political interference and influence of any kind, including transfers, appointments, promotions.
- (ii) Economic - Strengthen the Independent regulators (Amend laws to make them stronger), make them accountable only to Parliament and independent from Executive/Ministries, have them depose to Parliamentary Committees, which in turn, are available for public viewing or transcripts made public, bring in non-bureaucrats into Regulatory cadre.
- (iii) Judicial - Increase budget to Supreme Court and all courts. Significantly expand Judicial Capacity by bringing in 80,000-100,000 new judges. Bring in a Judicial Review Commission consisting of Supreme Court Judges that will be responsible to address corruption in Judiciary and have the power to sentence corrupt judges. Improve technology to make judicial access for citizens easier.
- (iv) Election Commission - Strengthen Election Commission and depoliticize appointments to it. EC should be reformed and modernized. Better Electoral roll management and faster elections.

b) New Architecture and Approach to Government Spending

- (i) Public spending is notoriously leaky and fosters corruption, and worst, a small percentage of spending reaching the target. Fundamental reforms in this area are necessary and long overdue. Reduction of corruption and leakages in public spending is a key requirement to meet Government's spending plans.
- (ii) All Social spending to be outcome driven. All Social programmes must have clear annual outcomes.
- (iii) New and more effective (less leaky/corrupt) Subsidy delivery model - Aadhaar and NPR to be merged.
- (iv) Scrap Planning Commission - Start a Strategic Planning Team in PMO. Restructure central programmes and move most of them directly to States - add allocations to State budgets, and States can administer these programmes or other programmes as they see fit. Independent spending auditors to oversee these programmes and publish quarterly report cards in the public domain.
- (v) A new Social Security framework that covers unemployment, health and education.
- (vi) New comprehensive policy to address Urban Poor. There is sufficient focus on rural poor today, but not enough on Urban Poor.
- (vii) Restructure JNNURM for accelerated redevelopment and rejuvenation of our cities and urban centers. Currently, JNNURM has become more of a programme to fund individual projects, rather than a full city's development.

c) New Transparent Model for Monetizing Public Resources for Private Use

- (i) A new Mineral Depletion Policy, including possibly nationalizing mineral mines that will serve to protect the interests of the public, maximize revenues for government and also protect the environment.
- (ii) A new transparent tendering approach to spectrum, coal etc.

3. National Security and Integrity – Make our People Safe and Protect Nation's Economic Interest

a) Modernize our Armed Forces to Protect National Security and Economic Interest

- (i) Increase Special Forces capacity of Army.
- (ii) Induct new Training and Combat Aircrafts, Mid-Air Refuelers, AWACS, and extend Indian Air Force capabilities.
- (iii) Improve Navy Capability - Establish a modern fleet of Submarines and enhance Coastal Security.

b) Reform and Modernize all Defence PSUs. Make them more Competitive, Efficient and Innovative in Design & Technology. Integrate Defence Labs into Defence PSUs.

c) Create a new Department of Veterans and Ex-servicemen affairs.

d) Ministry of Defence – Support those who keep us safe and secure

Veterans and Armed Forces disenchantment : Ensure that the concerns and outstanding demands of the Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces and Ex-servicemen, on welfare and resettlement are addressed.

- (i) Announce the National Military Memorial in Delhi.
- (ii) Announce One Rank, One Pension.
- (iii) Nominate one Armed Forces veteran to Rajya Sabha amongst the Nominated members of Parliament (in addition to the usual cricketers and film stars)
- (iv) Make voting for active serving soldiers possible all over India at place of posting.
- (v) Tax exemption for Corporates that recruit Veterans making the resettlement process easier for Veterans.
- (vi) Pass the Armed Forces Covenant Bill in Parliament.

e) National ID card for all citizens. Start with all Border states (Merge Aadhaar with NPR)

f) Create a clear policy towards illegal immigration and migrants.

g) Stronger Anti-terror laws, Fast track Anti-terror Courts and audit/review Commissions to oversee application and use of these laws.

h) Expand and expedite the implementation of the NATGRID Project in the Home Ministry.

i) A new Counter Terrorism Agency

j) Align all security forces and agencies to our principle threat of Terrorism and evolve a new structure that ensures full, seamless co-ordination.

4. Develop a New Vision for North East Region

- a) Improve Infrastructure Investments and Economic Activity in North East
 - (i) Create a Infrastructure plan for North East including connectivity
 - (ii) Create a strategic plan for tourism development
 - (iii) Entrepreneurship and investments in Organic food, Meat processing, Textiles, Music etc.
- b) Make North East well and completely connected to Mainland. Connectivity is critical for tourism and for integration into the country.
 - (i) All North East capitals to have Airports
 - (ii) Incentives for Feeder Airlines and Heli Services
 - (iii) Road network (currently under Border Roads Organization) to be completely funded
- c) Bring North East leaders into our Look East Diplomatic Leadership

5. Restore People's Trust in Parliament and Politics – Political Reforms

The Constitution, as framed and amended at various times in our history, has not factored for two modern phenomenon - Coalition politics and the modern, opportunistic politician. The founding fathers of the Constitution had assumed that we would always have one party in rule and that there would be good, capable people being elected to power to steer the country. Unfortunately, both those dreams and wishes have proved to be just that - dreams.

a) Constitutional, Legal Amendments and Reforms

- (i) Special Sessions of Parliament – There should be at least one or two Special Sessions of Parliament every year reserved only for debating and discussing issues of National Priority. Discussions on National Security, Poverty, Economy etc. without voting, which will also draw the attention of the People and Media to these real issues, instead of only acrimony in Parliament. This will bring back trust in the Parliament and Government.
- (ii) Parliamentary Standing Committee Proceedings to be made public - Make Parliamentary Standing Committee proceedings public, either via transcripts and/or broadcast of special sessions of the Committee.
- (iii) Extensive Electoral Reforms – including Fixed Term for Legislature; Concurrent State and Central Elections; Recall Elections etc. (*See section on Electoral Reforms*)

- (iv) Amend the Constitution to make Labor a State subject.
- (v) Pass legislation - Make Inducements for religious conversions a criminal offence.

b) Devolve more Powers to the State

Currently for many issues, there are two separate and distinct government overheads / superstructures / bureaucracies at work, adding costs and impacting effectiveness and efficiency. There is no logic for many of the central ministries except to give un-gainful employment to ministers and bureaucrats.

- (i) The Constitution should be amended to move some of the concurrent subjects to State list - like Labor, Health, Education, Roads.

6. Electoral Reforms

The essence of any democratic system is the healthy functioning of political parties and, consequently, free and fair elections. While there are examples of some exemplary people in public life, there has been a steady deterioration in the standards and practices of many others in the political class, which fights the elections.

Over the years, several measures have been taken by Parliament to amend the laws relating to elections with a view to check the aforementioned forces. Yet, the improvement has only been limited.

The People of India want a change in the way they are governed. Millions of people in the country are angry, disillusioned and detached from democracy. The first part towards this change is reform in the existing framework in which they exercise their franchise. A number of reforms are required in the political and electoral process to align them with the aspirations of the people, uphold the principles of probity and transparency in public life, and to maximize participation of citizens in the electoral process. These are outlined as follows :

1. Strengthening the Election Commission (EC) and Rebuilding the faith in the institution

a) Depoliticize appointments to the EC

The Election Commission is the electoral referee who ensures that elections are free and fair. Given its role of providing a level playing field for all political parties, the process for appointment of officials to the EC should be done by an impartial and bipartisan selection committee, in consultation with the Chief Justice, to ensure that people do not lose faith in this prime institution of democracy. A provision debarring Election Commission officers from joining political parties after retirement should also be put in place.

b) Strengthen the EC to form its own laws

To ensure the autonomous functioning of the Election Commission, it is important to give powers to the EC to form its own laws, unlike the present scenario wherein the EC has to wait for the elected representatives to approve its recommendations. Also, the EC should be granted financial autonomy, to avoid any potential conflict of interest and ensure that it works in a transparent and impartial manner.

2. Increasing Transparency and Accountability of Elected Representatives

a) Fixed Term for Legislature

To prevent repeated elections and political volatility, a fixed term for legislature is required. This will also curtail unnecessary election expenditure and ensure stable governments at both the Centre and in the States. If governments fall, the same legislature is forced to form another government and if that fails, President's/Governor's rule will continue till the term is over or legislators form a new government.

b) Concurrent State and Central Elections

Following from the above, to reduce costs and to ensure that elections do not come in the way of governance as they do today, elections to be held once in 5 years. The arrangement of simultaneous elections can be extended to the elections for the municipal corporations and other Panchayati Raj institutions.

c) Recall Elections

The Constitution should be amended to provide for Recall Elections whereby people have the right to recall their elected representatives if they are found to be non-performing or violating the trust of the electorate in forms of impropriety, conduct etc.

d) Audit and Disclosure of Campaign Financing of all Mainstream Political Parties and Candidates

To ensure financial transparency, audits and disclosures of all political parties and candidates' campaign finances must be conducted, and a discussion on campaign finance reforms needs to commence, including the possibility of state-funding of campaigns.

e) Ban Candidates Convicted of Criminal Offences

Criminalization of Politics is a worrying phenomenon. Candidates who have been convicted of criminal offences should not be allowed to contest elections. Disqualification should be upon conviction and not upon framing of charges.

3. Increasing Voter Awareness and Participation in our democracy

a) Giving a 4-month Pre-Election Budget to EC for Advertising & Communications

A 4-month pre-election advertising and communications budget should be given to the EC, to be used for communicating and promoting awareness about registration and voting processes, and the impending elections.

b) Easier & Simpler Voter Registration Process

The process of registration for a new voter is very tedious and discourages the young citizen from being a part of the democratic process. The EC website is also not user-friendly and doesn't divulge the necessary information for voters who create accounts for online voter registration. Sometimes, voting forms itself are not available in the ward offices or head offices. The Election Commission must take steps to make the process of voter registration easier. Effective pre-election mobilization of voters through effective advertisements etc. is necessary.

c) Increase the ambit of Absentee Ballot and Providing Opportunities for Advance Voting

In order to enable citizens who live away from their homes, including NRIs, to vote, the EC should increase the ambit of the absentee ballot, by moving an amendment to the Representation of People Act, 1951. Several civic society organizations have already advocated this amendment to the Act to allow NRIs and people on the move to cast their vote through absentee ballot system, through a combination of internet and postal ballot. Citizens who may not be able to cast their vote on the day of the election should be allowed the opportunity to exercise their vote in advance.

d) Increasing the number of polling booths

One of the biggest problems which a common man faces while exercising his/her right is standing in long queues in scorching sun, travelling several kilometers for making one's vote and so on. These shortcomings should be curtailed by increasing the number of polling booths and also by providing proper waiting shelters at the booths.

e) Making EVMs tamper proof

There is an urgent need to address the credibility of Electoral Voting Machines. EVMs do not have a cross verification programme that further raises questions. The EC should experiment by using ballot boxes along with EVMs to ensure cross checking.

f) Fully Enable Voting for Armed Forces and Paramilitary Forces Personnel

Until end-March 2014, when the Supreme Court passed an interim order on the issue of enabling armed forces and paramilitary personnel to vote, most of our serving officers and soldiers could exercise their right to vote only on retirement. The Supreme Court set aside an obstructive ruling by the Election Commission (namely, the requirement of a three-year tenure posting for armed forces personnel, and that too, with their families, to be eligible to vote at the place of posting as an ordinary voter), and directed the EC to facilitate registration of armed forces personnel posted in peace stations, as on 01 January, 2014, and their families, as general voters in the constituency of their posting. Emphasizing that the soldiers could not be deprived of their right to vote, the Supreme Court referred the matter to a 3-Judge bench. Though this landmark ruling by the Supreme Court paved the way for many of our defence personnel in peace stations to exercise their franchise in the recent Lok Sabha elections, there are several other deficiencies in the voting systems for soldiers which can be addressed through the following measures:

- (i) Personnel serving in forward areas must also get to vote as General voters of those constituencies.
- (ii) EC needs to create greater awareness about the voting systems amongst armed forces and paramilitary forces personnel. Local electoral officers should take greater initiative to reach out to military stations and cantonments.
- (iii) Provision of virtual voting booths at various command posts before elections so that soldiers are able to cast votes centrally easily and participate in the democratic process. The votes can then be transmitted to their respective constituencies.
- (iv) The postal ballot system has to be revitalized and made more efficient.
- (v) Introduce advance voting / early voting, in line with practices adopted by many other countries, to increase voter participation. Armed forces personnel who are routinely sent on military exercises need to have a system in place that allows them to vote as well.

g) Reservation of 33% of Seats for Women

The United Nations states that the number of women in the Indian Parliament is lower than the global average. Only 11% of Members of our Parliament are women. For a truly representative Parliament, the Women's Reservation Bill must be passed at the earliest to reserve 33% of seats in the Parliament and State Legislatures for women.

h) Popularizing the Graduates Constituency and Teachers Constituency in Legislative Councils.

Enrollment levels for voting in the Graduate constituency and Teachers Constituency seats in Bicameral States are very low. For example, Bangalore has over 22.52 lakh graduates. But only 17,406 applications were received in response to the notice by the Election Commission for elections in 2012. In the last election for the Bangalore graduates' constituency in 2006, 60,000 people enrolled in the electoral rolls. Coupled with the number of applications received in 2012, the rolls contain 77,406 voters, against the total enfranchised population of more than 22 lakh voters. The dismal enrolment rates are due to the absolute lack of information about the enrolment process. For those who seek to register, attestation of documents has become a huge bottleneck owing to the lack of dedicated staff. The Election Commission must take steps to create greater knowledge and awareness among citizens about the Graduates Constituency and create adequate publicity during enrolments.