

FINDER

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A round of elections that signals structural dominance

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

1. Context

- Since **2014**, Indian politics is seen as a “fourth party system” marked by **BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)-dominant competition at national and state levels**.

The **fourth party system** refers to the current era of Indian politics, **emerging around 2014**, characterized by the shift from a fragmented multi-party coalition model to a “**One-Party Dominant System**” led by the BJP, where **political competition revolves entirely around a single hegemonic pole**.

- Key debate: whether BJP dominance is **structural** or mainly driven by **Narendra Modi’s charisma**.
- After a slight dip in the **2024 general election**, BJP still performed strongly in the **2024–26 state election cycle**.
- The party has gained key states like **Odisha, Delhi, and West Bengal**, with Bengal being the most significant.

2. Nature of BJP Dominance: Beyond Charisma

- Modi’s leadership remains important but dominance now rests on a **system-wide political machinery**.
- This includes **BJP organisation, RSS/Sangh networks, industrial support, and state institutions**.
- In **Haryana and Maharashtra**, RSS mobilisation helped overcome **anti-incumbency and caste resistance (including Dalits)**.
- In **West Bengal**, Sangh networks mobilised groups like **Matuas and Rajbanshis** into a wider Hindu political narrative.

- BJP functions as a “**natural party of governance**”, similar to past Congress dominance, by:

- ➔ Splitting opposition parties
- ➔ Co-opting leaders
- ➔ Using administrative influence

3. Governance Model and Ideological Consolidation

- BJP’s strength is reinforced through **state-level governance structures embedded with ideological framing**.
- In **Assam**, the idea of “**Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant**” shapes policies like **NRC, D-voter tagging, detention centres, eviction drives, and surveillance**.
- This creates a strong **Hindu (indigenous) vs Muslim (outsider)** binary within governance itself.
- In **West Bengal**, election strategy included:
 - ➔ Use of **ED, CBI, and paramilitary forces**
 - ➔ Controversial **electoral roll revisions affecting TMC (Trinamool Congress) voter base**
- Overall, Hindutva ideology is **institutionalised through administrative mechanisms, not just rhetoric**.

4. Opposition Weakness and Party System Transformation

- Opposition parties (Congress, TMC, regional parties) failed to build strong **counter-hegemonic strategies**.
- Their strategies relied on **caste, identity, and welfare coalitions**, which proved ineffective against BJP’s system.
- This reflects the rise of the “**electoral-professional party**” (**Panebianco**):
 - ➔ Led by **campaign managers and consultants rather than ideological cadres**
 - ➔ Focused on elections and governance delivery.

- Southern states show this shift:
 - ➔ **DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (Kerala) became centralised, leader-driven welfare machines**
 - ➔ **TMC cadres** shifted from welfare delivery to **vote mobilisation**
- Despite efficiency, these models are **electorally fragile**, enabling:
 - ➔ Rise of **populist alternatives (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu)**
 - ➔ Strengthening of **BJP in several states**
- Kerala remains relatively insulated but **future political balance is uncertain due to weakening Left structures.**
- Opposition parties need **strong ideological rebuilding and cadre-based organisational revival** to counter BJP's structural dominance.
- Traditional debate:
 - ➔ **Dravidian model (social justice, welfare) vs Hindutva model (centralisation, rights concerns)**
- Vijay offered a vague **"third alternative"**, without clear ideology.
 - ➔ He relied on a **familiar welfare-oriented and anti-Hindutva approach.**
- Key issues:
 - ➔ **Corruption seen as normalised**
 - ➔ **Welfare schemes** (cash transfers) fail to address **deep economic distress**, especially among women
- Many groups feel excluded:
 - ➔ **Rural poor, Dalits, and working-class women**
- **Fear of BJP is not** a strong factor due to Tamil Nadu's past acceptance of **authoritarian leadership.**

Capitalising on changing Tamil voter mood

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Salient features of the Representation of People's Act

1. Rise of Vijay & TVK

- Joseph Vijay's party **TVK (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam)** has emerged as a **major political force.**
- Voters **shifted away** from traditional parties like DMK and AIADMK.
- His strategy of **contesting alone (no alliances)** increased appeal.
- Campaign relied on:
 - ➔ **Mass appeal, simple messaging, and dramatic, attention-grabbing political presentation**
 - ➔ Strong use of **persona/image as political capital**
- Attracted **young and first-time voters**, especially those less engaged with ideological debates.

2. Weakening of Dravidian Politics

3. Crisis of Social Justice & Reservation Politics

- **Reservation policy** no longer seen as a **critical political issue**
 - ➔ Treated as a **routine administrative matter**
- Dravidian parties failed in:
 - ➔ **Political education on social justice**
 - ➔ Sustaining discourse on **caste equality**
- Reality on ground:
 - ➔ Continued **violence against Dalits**, especially **inter-caste relationships**
- **Dominant castes** have used reservation politics for **power consolidation**
- Bharatiya Janata Party:
 - ➔ Gains support among **caste Hindus**
 - ➔ Strengthens **caste identities**, not just religious polarization

4. Decline of Other Parties & New Political Culture

- Biggest losers:
 - ➔ **Dalit parties** like Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi
 - ➔ **Left parties**

- Problems:
 - ➔ Stuck in **alliances**, unable to assert **independent ideology**
- AIADMK weakened due to **caste arithmetic issues**
- Rise of a **new political culture**:
 - ➔ Driven by **social media**, **instant reactions**, and **image politics**
 - ➔ Decline of **ideological engagement** (Periyar, Ambedkar, Marx traditions)
- Vijay benefits from:
 - ➔ **Failures of existing parties**
 - ➔ A generation oriented toward **speed, visuals, and personality-driven politics**

Did the PM's broadcast violate MCC?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Salient features of the Representation of People's Act

1. Evolution of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- The **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)**, which guides **political parties and candidates during elections**, was first drafted by the **Kerala government** in **1960**.
- The **Election Commission** formalised it in **1968**.
- Key developments:
 - ➔ **1974**- Revised
 - ➔ **1979**- Added rules for **party in power (Part VII)**
- Strengthened by T. N. Seshan in **1991** through strict enforcement
- Comes into force from **announcement of election schedule**
- Backed by **Article 324** (broad powers of EC)

2. Key Provisions & Legal Framework

- MCC restricts ruling party from:
 - ➔ Using **government machinery** for campaigns
 - ➔ Mixing **official duties with electioneering**
 - ➔ Misusing **public media (Doordarshan, AIR, etc.)**

- Violations can lead to:
 - ➔ **Censure**
 - ➔ **Suspension of party recognition**
- Related law: Representation of the People Act, 1951
 - ➔ **Section 123(3)** → bans appeals based on **religion, caste, etc.**
 - ➔ **Section 123(7)** → bans use of **government officials for campaigns**

3. Controversy over Prime Minister's Broadcast

- Narendra Modi's **April 18 speech** raised concerns.
- Broadcast used **public platforms** like:
 - ➔ **Doordarshan, Sansad TV, All India Radio**
- Issues:
 - ➔ Targeted **opposition parties**
 - ➔ Urged voters (especially **women**) to vote against them
- Possible violation:
 - ➔ **Misuse of state-funded media**
 - ➔ Falls under **MCC Part VII restrictions**

4. Legal Debate & Institutional Response

- Court interpretations:
 - ➔ Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner → EC has **wide powers**
 - ➔ Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen → expanded scope of **identity-based appeals**
- Current petition questions:
 - ➔ Whether use of **public broadcasters + PMO staff** violates **Section 123(7)**
- Key distinction:
 - ➔ **Law (RPA)** → less flexible
 - ➔ **MCC** → **flexible and broader**
- Election Commission of India has **not taken action yet**
- Raises concern about **weak enforcement** of MCC

What does the latest ruling mean for Forest Rights Act?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1.Context

- On April 20, the **Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court held that earlier court orders inconsistent with a later law are null and void.**
- The **Court struck down the District Level Committee's (DLC) March 2021 decision rejecting forest rights claims of the Tharu tribe** in Lakhimpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- The DLC had **relied on a 2000 Supreme Court interim order restricting de-reservation of forests**, which was inconsistent with later law.
- The Forest Rights Act, 2006 provides that forest rights are recognised "notwithstanding anything contained in any other law" **meaning this law prevails even if other laws say otherwise.**
- The Court **held that the DLC violated FRA provisions.**

The **District Level Committee (DLC)** is a **statutory body** constituted under the **Forest Rights Act, 2006** at the district level. It is **headed by the District Collector** and includes forest, tribal welfare officials, and elected panchayat members. Its main function is to examine, verify, and approve or reject forest rights claims submitted by forest dwellers.

2.Accountability and Punishment under FRA

- The **Allahabad High Court did not punish the District Level Committee (DLC)** despite finding a violation of the law.
- Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, **the Gram Sabha can initiate action by giving a 60-day notice to the State-Level Monitoring Committee.**
- This mechanism is **meant to proceed against authorities violating FRA provisions.**
- The High Court **ignored this procedure and instead directed the DLC to reconsider its own decision.**
- The **FRA does not provide for such self-review**, highlighting a gap in enforcement of accountability.

3.How FRA Has Been Superseded?

- The **Forest Rights Act, 2006 prohibits eviction of forest dwellers** until recognition and verification of claims is complete.
- In January 2026, **the Uttarakhand High Court upheld this principle by restraining eviction** until final adjudication.
- Despite this, **there have been repeated violations of FRA provisions** across states.
- The **Madras High Court dismissed FRA claims (2014–2022), often treating applicants as encroachers.**
- Authorities **continued issuing eviction notices under the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882**, even though FRA overrides such state laws

4.Grazing Rights under FRA

- Forest Rights Act, 2006 **allows grazing in all forest areas, including protected areas.**
- Madras High Court upheld a grazing ban** under Tamil Nadu Forest Act.
- Ban first applied to all forests**, later limited to protected areas.
- The **judgment did not consider FRA provisions**, which legally permit grazing rights.
- As a central law, **FRA overrides conflicting state laws on grazing permissions or prohibitions.**
- The Allahabad High Court ruling reaffirmed that later laws like FRA prevail over inconsistent earlier laws and court orders.

KEYWORDS

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)

- The **Forest Rights Act, 2006** recognises land and resource rights of forest-dwelling communities to address historical injustice.
- It applies to Scheduled Tribes (STs) residing in forest areas and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs)** who resided in forests for at least three generations (75 years) prior to 13 December 2005.

- It grants **Individual Forest Rights (IFR)** for **cultivation and habitation up to 4 hectares per family**.
- It provides **Community Forest Rights (CFR)** including **collection and use of minor forest produce, grazing, and water access**.
- The **Gram Sabha is the primary authority to initiate and verify claims**, with further review by committees.
- The **Act ensures no eviction of forest dwellers until rights recognition is complete**.

North Tech Symposium 2026

- The **North Tech Symposium 2026** is a major **Indian defence innovation event held from May 4-6, 2026, in Prayagraj**.
- It is **organized by the Indian Army and the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers under the theme "Raksha Triveni Sangam – Where Technology, Industry & Soldiering Converge."**
- The **event features participation from over 284 companies, startups, and MSMEs** showcasing indigenous and AI-based defence technologies.
- Key focus areas include **soldier safety, future warfare solutions, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and drone systems**.
- It **aims to bridge the gap between armed forces' needs and industrial innovation**, with highlights such as live demonstrations of logistics drones, AI surveillance, and indigenous artillery systems.

Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs)

- The **National Stock Exchange of India launched Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) on May 4, 2026**, to improve transparency and efficiency in India's gold market.
- EGRs are digital representations of physical gold, traded on stock exchanges, similar to shares stored in SEBI-accredited vaults.
- The **initiative aims to bridge the gap between physical gold and financial markets** by enabling regulated and secure trading of gold.

- It is **expected to enhance price discovery, boost participation, and build trust among stakeholders** like jewellers, traders, and investors.

Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)

- The **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)**, launched in **September 2023**, is a **Digital Public Infrastructure** with the following key objectives and features:
 - ➔ To **integrate training, assessment, certification, and other skill development services** on a **single digital platform**
 - ➔ To provide **end-to-end digital services** for **candidates, training providers, and assessment agencies**
 - ➔ To enable **course discovery, digital enrolment, assessment, and certification**
 - ➔ To ensure **digitally verifiable and portable credentials**
- The **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** has enhanced **access to skilling opportunities** by offering a **unified digital interface** for **course discovery, enrolment, assessment, and certification**.
- Through integration with **Central Ministries, State Governments, and national digital systems**, it ensures **seamless, secure, and verified access** to **skill development programmes** across **regions and languages**.