

Election system of India and France

Why in news?

A French left-wing coalition recently won the most seats in the elections but fell short of a majority and faces a hung parliament and potential political paralysis.

How the elections are held in France?

- France holds two national elections for the general public to participate in
 - The Presidential election
 - The Legislative election
- **Two-round system** - - It is a simple election of candidates. Usually, ***2 rounds of voting is held***.
- The first round sees voting between all candidates.
- Should a candidate achieve the majority, they are elected President immediately.
- If not, a second round is held between the two candidates with the highest vote percentage.
- In order to be eligible for the second round, candidates must have obtained a number of votes equal to **at least 12.5%** of the total number of registered voters.
- The winner is elected president for a term of 5 years.
- **Term** - The elected representatives hold the position for a ***period of 5 years***.
- **Qualification** - Polling stations are open to any French citizen ***over the age of 18*** and on the electoral roll.

What are the similarities between Indian government system and French government system?

- **Term** - The President is elected for 5 years in both India and France.
- **Multiple rounds of voting** - In case of no majority in the first round both systems undergo multiple rounds of voting to gain a majority party to win the elections.
- **Electoral College** - Both the systems have the electoral colleges to choose their presidents and legislative assembly heads.
- **Ballot system** - Both the countries use the secret ballot system to not reveal the identity of the voter.
- **Absolute Majority** - Both the systems require absolute majority (50%+1) to form a government, if no party attains majority during the rounds then it is a hung parliament.
- **Role of the President** - In both systems it is similar as the president is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.
- The President in both countries also has the power to grant pardons, appoint judges, and to sign bills into law.

What are the difference between Indian government system and French government system?

Feature	Indian System	French system
System of Government	Parliamentary	Semi-presidential
Executive	The President is the ceremonial head, the real executive power is with the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers	The President has significant executive powers along with the Prime Minister
President's Role	Largely ceremonial, elected indirectly	Significant powers, elected directly
Prime Minister	Leader of the majority party in the Lok Sabha, real head of government	Appointed by the President, must have support of Parliament
Parliament Structure	Bicameral (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha)	Bicameral (National Assembly and Senate)
Election of Upper House	Elected by members of State Legislative Assemblies and by the President for nominated members	Elected by an electoral college including local elected officials
Dissolution of Lower House	Can be dissolved by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister	Can be dissolved by the President
Amendment Process	Requires a special majority in Parliament and, in some cases, ratification by half of the State Legislatures	Requires a simple majority in both houses of Parliament or a referendum

What is Hung Parliament?

- A Hung Parliament refers to a Parliament wherein ***no party has a working majority***.
- It occurs when neither of the parties has gained an outright majority and the Parliament is equally balanced.
- Hence, no party can automatically assume control over the executive.
- When this situation occurs, the government has ***3 choices*** left -
 - Form a coalition government
 - Form a minority government
 - Conduct re-elections.
- A Hung Parliament is not a time-specific phenomenon.
- Even when a party or a pre-electoral alliance has gained the majority and formed the government, a reduction in the membership of this party of alliance can cause a Hung Parliament.

Majority needed in India	Majority needed in France
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To register majority in the Indian Parliament, a party or a coalition <i>must bag more than 50% seats in the Lower House</i>, which is the Lok Sabha. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first round candidate must secure absolute majority (50%+1). • If no person qualified in the first round, second round is held between the two candidates with the highest vote percentage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members - There are a total of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, with two nominated members making it 545. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members - 577 members are elected to the National Assembly. • A party needs a majority of 289 to form the executive body and elect their prime minister.

What are the reasons for a hung parliament?

- **Strength of regional parties** - Regional parties have dominated national politics thereby making it difficult for the national parties to form a government.
- **Low election turnout** - India has an election turnout of 60% since the first elections and this percentage is not rising. Due to low turnout, the possibility of a hung parliament enhances.
- **International scenario** - In India, the concept of Hung parliament has been inspired by international situations. 90% of the governments formed in Denmark have resulted in a hung parliament. Norway, Sweden, Germany and many other European nations have seen Hung Parliaments.
- **Defection** - The 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution permits political parties to change their parties after the elections if one-thirds of the party decides to split.

What are the impacts of Hung parliament?

- **Political instability** - With no party having a majority, forming a stable government becomes challenging. This can lead to frequent changes in government, political alliances, and coalitions, causing uncertainty.
- **Policy Paralysis** - Legislative decision-making can become sluggish as coalition partners may have divergent views and interests. This can lead to delays in policy formulation and implementation.
- **Compromised Governance** - In a bid to maintain coalition support, the ruling party may have to make concessions, potentially compromising on key policy decisions and governance standards.
- **Economic Uncertainty** - Political instability and policy paralysis can lead to economic uncertainty, affecting investor confidence, stock markets, and overall economic growth.
- **Frequent Elections** - If coalition governments fail to sustain, it can lead to repeated elections, imposing a financial burden on the exchequer and causing voter fatigue.
- **Checks and Balances** - a hung parliament can enhance checks and balances, preventing any single party from exercising unchecked power and encouraging more inclusive governance.

References

1. [The Indian Express | French elections](#)

2. [iPleaders | Hung parliament](#)
3. [Deccan Herald | French national assembly elections](#)

