

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

STEIN ROOM

ELECTIONS IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY

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ELECTIONS-2013/12/17

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Moderator:

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Concluding Remarks:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: I'm Strobe Talbott, and it is my great honor to work for the scholars of the Brookings Institution in my capacity as the President of the Institution.

And as some of you in the room know, Brookings is a very eclectic organization that's been around for almost 100 years. It's global in its scope. But those of us who work here are allowed to have our own particular passions.

And one of my passions -- in fact, right near the top of the list -- is India. And so I particularly appreciate the chance to participate -- at least in the beginning of this very important program.

And I'm going to issue an apology in that regard. We had, as some of you may know, a complete weather disaster -- Snowmageddon -- earlier this week, that, of course, gave the United States Congress another excuse to do something that it seems to like to do -- which is shut down the federal government.

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And when the federal government shuts down, we, Brookings, have to shut down.

And, as a result, it has completely fouled up the week, and I have some sloshed-over -- if I can put it that way -- administrator responsibilities that are going to require me to sneak out at some point in the course of the program, when my iPhone buzzes or vibrates. Please all turn off your iPhones, unless you want to tweet the event, of course -- in which case, keep them on.

So, I apologize for that. I'll be auditing the proceedings from the back of the room.

I would like, also, to thank our cosponsors: the U.S.-India Business Council and, of course, CII, which is a set of initials that is dear to my heart. I've been getting help from CII for many, many years, and, certainly, in all of our India activities, as we have proceeded to develop our program here at Brookings over the last dozen years -- including now having an organic part of the Brookings Institution in New Delhi, with an all-India portfolio in the form of

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Brookings India.

We're going to be discussing today what, when I was thinking about it this morning, I decided to call one of the major events of the calendar for the New Year. But Ron Somers, who is going to moderate the discussion today, outdid me considerably about three minutes ago in the other room. He called it the most exciting thing in the history of the world. He's nodding, so he's not going to deny that he said that, and he can elaborate on the point.

But what we're talking about here, of course, are the national elections in India early next year.

Now there's a phrase that has become something of a cliché, and that is to call India the world's largest democracy. But there is an interesting feature of clichés: They get to be clichés because they're true.

And there's no better example of that than the process whereby the people of India elect their own leadership.

Now India, as we all know, is the second-most populous country in the world. And, by the way, it's on a trajectory to surpass China in that regard. Unlike China, Indians elect their leaders. Voter turnout, according to the statistics that I have, are more than 700 million. Our speaker and guest of honor says it's going to be closer to 800 million, but he will elaborate on that. That is larger than the United States turnout and the entire turnout of the European Union combined.

Now making it possible for those somewhere between 700 million and 800 million eligible voters to cast their ballots requires 800,000-some polling stations. The process takes place in multiple phases over a period of weeks. In short, there's a very big difference between the Indian system and our own here in the United States, where we Americans go to the polls in the morning, and we know before we go to bed at night who has won.

Overseeing this process is our guest of honor today, Mr. Sampath. He is the head of the

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Election Commission, and he is one busy guy.

Earlier this month, he oversaw elections in five states of India. He's been a member of the commission for nearly five years, since 2009, which was the year of the last national election. He's also served as a Senior Administrative Service Officer in several key roles, including Secretary of the Minister of Power and Director-General of the National Institution of Rural Development.

So, he is not only a master of the process, but brings Indian leaders to office. He also has a firsthand understanding of what they do when they get there.

So, please join me in welcoming him to Brookings, and we will all benefit greatly from the discussion and the PowerPoint that we have ahead of us.

So, welcome to the podium, and we look forward to listening to you, Mr. Sampath.

MR. SAMPATH: Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished invitees for this program -- gives me

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great pleasure to share some of the features of election management in Indian elections, with the distinguished gathering gathered here.

In fact, I should apologize to you for forcing you to come so close to the Christmas. Usually, I am told, nothing can draw people in such close proximity to Christmas in USA or in Europe. But when I got the invitation from you, there was no way I could have come earlier, until almost perhaps all of the last things I did before boarding the flight was to sign the new constitution paper of Mizoram State Assembly elections.

After the elections are held, after every election, the list of candidates declared elected will have to be signed by the Election Commission, and forwarded to the government of the state. Based on this, government will constitute the legislature for the state. Similar thing we have to do after Parliament election is also over, based on our new constitution.

The proceedings -- government or the

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President, as the case may be -- he not only constitutes the House; he also invites the leader of the party, which has secured a majority of seats in the House for forming the government.

So, we're leaving that other role as Election Commission -- gets over in that phase of election.

So, because of that, I have to indicate, actually, ideally, I should added on Monday -- Monday, I thought would be further close to the Christmas, so the earliest I could make is this, and I am really very happy, in spite of such delayed coming on my part, I could find such good and enthusiastic response by way of significant participation.

Now I will take a little while to talk to you about the features of election management in our elections.

Just to give you an idea -- actually, the teaser of that has already been given -- how big is our electorate? The entire Europe is, you can see, 449. Entire Africa, 44 countries, 566 million. So,

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North America, all countries put together, 324 million -- is electorate, not populace. And South America, 235. And North and South America, 560. And entire Commonwealth, minus India population, is 900, roughly. About, you know, 60 percent of this would be the electorate.

As against this, we hold elections for an electorate. As of today, that is before the revision of the rules we are doing for the current year, this is the strength of the electorate -- 718 million -- right now, an exercise for the enrollment of those who have reached 18 years as of January 1, 2014. In anticipation, they will be enrolled in the rolls.

With that, we expect the strength of the electorate to cross 900 million in India. And virtually, the Parliamentary election, which is due in the first half of 2014, would have this number as the electorate.

This is to give an idea of the last Parliamentary election, which was held in 2009 -- 714 million voters, almost 834,000 polling stations. We

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expect the number of polling stations for the forthcoming election to be 900,000. India does electronic voting. Number of electronic voting machines implied would be 1.18 million. Number of personnel who will be actually engaged in the task of election would be 11 million. Both civilian and security personnel put together -- number of recognized, again, in India -- we have two categories of political parties, national parties, based on some criteria.

They are recognized as national parties, and those which are recognized only for the purpose of the state elections. At the time of last election, it was seven recognized national parties. Now it has become six, because one of the parties fell short in several parameters that got be recognized. It is six now. 34 are state-recognized parties. Total number of registered parties last time -- again, we are very liberal with regard to registered national parties. So, registration is different from recognition.

Recognition comes after they participate in

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election and meets certain minimum requirements. This registration, it was 1,035 at the time of last election. Now it has crossed 1,300, and the (inaudible) candidates in last Parliament election was 8,017.

These are the constitutional provisions which went into before the Election Commission, and our electoral exercise was taken up for the country.

And one of the main reasons for creating an autonomous Election Commission was to take care of the preparation of an error-free electoral role. The founding fathers of the constitution attached greatest importance to the registration of voters. Perhaps those of you who might have an idea of the pluralistic society in India, the kind of conflict which receded before the country became independent and became a republic.

So, their main concern was to see that every adult Indian should have an opportunity of participating in the electoral process.

In fact, the Indian Election Commission was
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created a day prior to the Republic of India came into existence. January 26, 1950 is the date when the country became a republic -- whereas, one day before that, January 25, 1950, is the creation and induction of Election Commission of India. They sought to give a message to the nation about the importance of Election Commission of India by this.

Some of the constitutional provisions -- there is one Article 324 in the constitution, which is the almost omnibus provision in the constitution, which gives very considerable, even inconceivable, powers to Election Commission in the conduct of the elections.

So, very recently, in one of the state elections, we found after the date for final publication of electoral list, one of the candidates was contesting the election in Delhi. On that last day, his name was there in the roll. And by the time he filed his nomination, it came up for scrutiny. It was found that his name was missing.

And in a situation like that -- and there's

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another story. We ordered an inquiry. We go into it, how it has happened, et cetera. But on the day of the scrutiny, if a person is not a voter, he loses his right to contest. His candidacy can be disqualified.

It is under Article 324. We gave a direction that his name shall be restored after we have checked up, and ensured that he was a validly-registered voter.

Like this, there are so many occasions where the powers of the commission were put to test (inaudible) for the purpose of election management.

Another thing which is a unique feature in our setup is, the Election Commission can requisition the services of the employees of both provincial government and the assembly government for the purpose of conduct of elections. It is there in the constitution itself. When they require, it is the responsibility of the state government, as well as central government, to make available the requisite number services of those people.

In fact, India is one of the unique

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countries where entire election is conducted with the help of civil servants.

Regarding the Election Commission of India -
- in fact, until 1993, it was a one-member commission -- literally, Chief Election Commissioner.

In 1993, by legislation, two more commissioners were inducted. In fact, number of commissioners can be varied from time to time by statute.

And in order to give autonomy in functioning, Chief Election Commissioner enjoys the same status as that of your Judge of the Supreme Court -- that is, the removal procedure. Once a person is appointed as Chief Election Commissioner (inaudible) cannot removed him. If at all removal, it has to be by passing a resolution in Parliament, with 2/3 of the members sitting and voting.

And similarly, the other Election Commissioners are given the protection that, except on the recommendation of Chief Election Commissioner, they cannot be removed.

And, again, in India, the only authority which has a say in fixation of date for the conduct of the election is Election Commission -- whether it is state elections or national election. Of course, we are given a window of six months before the date when the (inaudible) it is for the commission, taking into various factors, designed it and the date on which poll shall be taken.

This is just to mention about your judicial support, which was given to the Election Commission of India by the highest accord in the country, Supreme Court of India.

Well, the situation does not have a solution in the law, or in the rules, or in the procedures. Election Commission is not just to sit with its hands folded, looking for some divine intervention. They are to act, do whatever is required to see that the election is conducted.

From our experience, we can see there are any number of occasions where, but for this kind of an empowerment under Article 324, supported by judicial

pronouncements, we would have found it very difficult to go through with the election process.

This is just to mention the sources of strength for Election Commission, constitution, legislation by Parliament. There are two enactments - representation of the People's Act 1950, and the representation of the People's Act 1951.

The 1950 Act, as I have mentioned to you earlier, entirely deals with registration of workers. One complete enactment, dealing only with registration of workers. Next one is about various positions relating to conduct of the election. It's about (inaudible) rules made by the government from time to time, judicial pronouncements. More than the law, it is the judiciary in India, whether it is the high courts in the state or Supreme Court at national level. They invariably come to the support of the Election Commission.

In fact, there is both a written and unwritten law in the country that, once the election process is set in motion with the announcement of

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election by the Election Commission, until the declaration of results, no court can interfere with the election process. It is only the Election Commission competent to decide all various activities during the course of election management.

The only time when courts' role comes into play is after the declaration of results. The election petition by the candidate or by the voters, challenging an election can be filed before the High Court of the state, within some time limit. Only then, the jurisdiction of courts comes.

One of the instruments which helps Election Commission during the conduct of election is moral code of conduct. This was, in its initial form, started in 1960. Basically, this was to regulate -- because people, particularly authorities in charge of election management, were finding it difficult about meetings by political parties, candidates, rallies, the kind of speeches they were making, the kind of acrimony that was generated, and misuse of power by the party in power.

Like at the time of election, we (inaudible) and, naturally, in certain situations, party in power tries to use their position in their favor to give advantage, to give the electoral advantage to their candidate.

Keeping all this in mind, moral code of conduct was (inaudible) -- first in southernmost state of the country, Kerala. From then on, it underwent so many iterations, and the refinements, sometime from the '90s, it is universally applicable.

Even the biggest political leader in the country, whether he is the Prime Minister or the President of the ruling party, or the president of the main opposition party, or the Prime Minister, you know, Designate of the main opposition party -- whoever it might be -- once there is a complaint that they have spoken something or done something in deviation of moral code of conduct, Election Commission gives notice to such a person -- you know, giving very short time -- like 24 hours or 36 hours, 48 hours -- to give his explanation (inaudible).

But under this, this doesn't have the force of law. We cannot disqualify the candidate under moral code action. But it acts more as your moral code. Once we reprimand a person, the way that is highlighted by the media, once we censure a person, or once we caution him not to repeat something, when he does it next time, even (inaudible) you've already been told by the commission not to do it. Why are you doing it? Things like that.

That is the kind of force of moral this has. Though there are, you know, different opinions on this -- whether it should continue to be only like this -- some people calling -- it is your toothless power. You cannot disqualify a person. You cannot send a person to jail. What is the use of it?

But then we have all this (inaudible) during the election process. We are not interested in sending somebody to jail. What we are interested in is, he behaves. He adheres to the prescriptions during moral code period.

These are -- and, again, as I mentioned,

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while moral code does not have the power to convict a person or to enforce any, you know, devastating, you know, punishment on the violator, there are so many other provisions in law. What our action will take in moral code is in addition to all these law provisions under which action can be taken. First, information reports can be filed, criminal cases can be filed, further action can be taken on the violator under normal laws of the land.

And these are some of the measures we have to check and ensure correctness. Like, you know, the electoral vote is the soul in the conduct of the elections. So, we ensure -- we make every effort to ensure every eligible person name is included in the roll. This is unlike the practice in USA, where even a citizen, if he wants to vote, he has to register for voting -- whereas in India, if a person is enrolled in the roll, roll is a permanent one, as long as his name is not removed.

By following your due process, he will continue to be on the roll. He's entitled to vote in

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the polling station that he is registered as a voter.

And similarly, nomination -- the process dealing with nomination is a very transparent one -- nomination, which is followed by scrutiny. It is almost public scrutiny from the last day for filing of nomination to the date of the scrutiny, which is two days. All his details are put on the notice board. They are put on the website. If a person has concealed his criminal background, if he has concealed certain relevant information about himself, which he is bound under law to disclose, anyone can bring it to notice. They can be (inaudible) for disqualification of nomination.

And under the orders of the Supreme Court, which was made into a law subsequently, like "know your customer," "know your candidate." Every candidate is required to disclose by affidavits -- affidavits, as you all know, is a legal sworn statement by a person. For filing a false affidavit, he can be prosecuted in a court of law. He can be sent to jail, also. He has to give all (inaudible)

details about his educational background, his financial background, his criminal background. Criminality among politicians is one of the burning issues in India.

All details are put in public domain. We have ensured, with the advent of the electronics, all these are put on the website. There are a number of civil society organizations. They download them. They try to make their own analysis. They try to tell the people, how much was the wealth of a particular person during last election? From last election to this election, how much is their wealth? How could anybody have reasonably amassed so much wealth during this five-period period? Like that -- all these things will come into public domain for the information of the voters.

To continue, the same thing, these are also other measures which we are taking to ensure that -- all those are requirements for ensuring correctness of election. They are done. And one of the things is observers.

In India, as you know, there are 35 states and union territories. Each state has got its own senior officers and the civil servants. Most of these elections, though conducted by Election Commission, they are all held at state level.

So, we depute officers, like senior officers, to the rank of a permanent (inaudible) in other smaller countries. They will be sent as observers. For example, from the Southern state of Kerala, somebody will go as an observer to Punjab. It is almost like your foreign observer, as far as that state is concerned.

So, like this, we send people from different parts of the country to go as emissaries of Election Commission to observe. Actually, this is one of the reasons why we don't take usual foreign observers to observe our elections. We send other people from one state to another.

Security -- security continues to be relevant even today. Security at the polling station, maintenance of general law and order during a poll --

even today, when we visit the states on the eve of conduct of the elections, people will be complaining that certain sections of the people are intimidated. They are not allowed to come to the polling station to exercise their franchise, as it were.

We have developed a mechanism called vulnerability mapping. People who live in such locations, they are called vulnerable locations. We take special care at the time of enrollment to see that their names are enrolled properly, that they continue to be intact on the date of the election.

Our security personnel -- we have people like Sector Magistrates and mobile parties. They will be visiting those locations, checking up with them personally, whether they anticipate any problems in going and casting their vote. Give them all assistance like this -- it's all part of election management.

I had mentioned to you about electronic voting. The country is fully covered by electronic voting system. Our electronic voting machines are the

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simplest possible devices. They are standalone measures. They are standalone instruments. They are direct recording machines.

First, they were introduced sometime in 1982, very small scale. And almost from the year 1999, they have been used in a number of state elections. For the first time, these were issued in 2004 Parliamentary elections.

After 2004, they are used in every state, every national election. 2009, we have used. Now we'll be using them in 2014 election, also.

So, in between, there are some activists in our countries, also, who were carrying on a campaign - - that mere, you know, lighting of a lamp, burning of some bulb against some candidate may not be (inaudible) that what has been resisted in favor of that candidate.

These were some of the doubts which were raised by people from time to time; went into litigation, also, and political parties were also requesting the Election Commission, why not provide

something more to build the confidence than what is seen in direct recording machines?

In response to those, for a period of two years, we have (inaudible) verifiable paper auditing trail -- which is a printer, which is attached to the machine, and when the voter casts his vote, in addition to electronic display, there will also be a paper display.

But in our country -- actually, (inaudible) demand was, voter should be given a receipt as to whom he has voted. That can be misused. Political parties can intimidate. Candidates can intimidate -- or it may lead to other, you know, inducement, you know, possibilities.

Keeping those things in mind, we have devised a printer in such a manner it will be (inaudible) voter can only see the paper, which will be exhibited for about eight seconds. After that, it gets cut, falls into a box where it gets collected. And there are some rules when it can be counted. These are provided in the rules. Naturally, when

there's an election (inaudible) will ask this to be done.

And we have been asked -- when the matter went right up to Supreme Court, Supreme Court said, "You can do it in your (inaudible) geographical area gradually, depending upon how it works."

So, (inaudible) has been introduced. Those of you who know, in the recently-concluded election in Delhi, in New Delhi, constituency (inaudible). When it comes to the Parliament election, we expect to provide this as an attachment to EVM in larger number of constituencies.

So, though, you know, over a period of time -- so the Election Commission has been engaged in voter (inaudible) measures. We call them SVEEP -- systematic voters' education and the electoral participation -- because we found, over a period of time, the participation of voters in election process was coming down -- not only in India, so universally, in different countries.

We thought if democracy is to be meaningful,

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there should be healthy voter participation. As a result, in the last three or four years, after this initiating by the commission with the special focus on voting enrollment and participation by youth, women, urban -- in India, urban apathy is one of the serious maladies. In urban areas, voting percentages will be only 40 percent, 35 percent, 45 percent -- like that.

As a result of this, (inaudible) election, this time, it was 65 percent. Like this, we have problems in other places, also.

This is to continue -- and, also, to give formal recognition to our voter (inaudible) measures. We are observing the foundation bed of Election Commission as National Voters' Day. Usually, we invite the constitutional dignitaries, like President or Vice President of the country. President has agreed to come for this year, 2014, January 25, in a function where we honor the newly-enrolled youth voters.

This kind of a function will be held not only at national level or at state level, but at your

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very polling station. We have over 800,000, you know, polling stations. On that day, there will be a brief function where we have a functionary called Booth Level Officer, who is in charge of electoral activities at that level.

He will invite newly-enrolled voters, particularly youth, in a small function. They will be given the elector photo identity cards on that day. This is one of the things which we have started in the last three or four years.

Another feature which we have introduced is -- in addition to giving every voter the elector photo identity card, which is more or less a permanent one, we give them, also, voter slips -- just on the eve of the election, three or four days before the date of the poll, when our Booth Level Officer will go to every household, give them. This will be one confirmation to the voter that his name continues to be in the roll.

So, in addition, it will also give address, description, date of the poll. It serves as a

reminder for the voter, for an average voter, about the date of the poll, location -- particularly in cities where the number polling stations will be in your close locality.

These are some of the facilitation measures which we'll do for the voters (inaudible).

And election expenditure -- at some point in time, we have the problem of muscle power; subsequently, the money power. India is a country where, particularly voters in poorer localities, voters who are illiterate, they can be swayed by offering inducements -- either cash or giving them some gifts (inaudible).

So, we have started -- and, again, some limits have been fixed for each candidate how much amount he can spend in an election. To ensure that he doesn't overspend, and, also, to ensure that he spends only on permitted items, whatever amount permitted for him, he cannot give to the voters on that. That is given only for campaign purposes. For all these things, we have started the expenditure monetary wing

of Election Commission. This is also a fairly recent innovation of the commission.

Another thing which is almost (inaudible) is paid news. That is, advertisement masquerading as news. When a candidate attempts (inaudible), even if the audience is only some 200, it can always be projected as if it is a humanity of 20,000. This can come in a newspaper picture. It can come in the electronic media.

We identify some of these things as paid news. And right now, law on paid news is not evolved. Paid news is not a penal offense. But we address that from the expenditure angle. That which is identified as paid news, we calculate that likely expenditure, included in the expenditure account of the candidate.

One of the consequences for exceeding the expenditure limit is in the election petition -- is, election can be disqualified.

And, similarly, if it does not (inaudible) account of this expenditure, even Election Commission can disqualify the person.

From both these angles, this works.

Technology, GIS, live webcasting in some of the remote areas where it is not possible to put our own (inaudible) we install this. We try to look at the proceedings in that place. In one place, in a state called Manipur, where some terrorists entered the polling station, and shot at people, they were caught on the web camera -- which we could see, sitting in our office, in Delhi Election Commission Office. For whatever further action that can be taken, this will be useful.

In the result, the Election Commission of India -- not to boast -- we have been able to successfully organize 15 general elections to Parliament. The forthcoming one in 2014 will be the 16th election to House of the People in Parliament, and over 350 elections to the state government. Many of our states -- like in a state like Uttar Pradesh -- has 120 million voters. An average state like Karnataka or Tamil Nadu will be having about 60 million voters -- 60, 70 million voters.

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Virtually, you know, what we're seeing --
conduction of election in most of the states in India
is almost like overseeing your national election.
Like this, the Election Commission has conducted 350
general elections. We are also the ones to conduct
Presidential and the Vice Presidential elections. So
far, 14 such elections have been held.

One of the requirements, as I told you, is,
before the expiry of the current time of the House,
elections will have to be held. We have to give new
constitution to the Governor or the President, as the
case may be, so that there will be continuity in the
legislature. Never once the Election Commission has
failed in that task over the last six decades.

By and large, of course, losers have so many
things to blame. Sometimes, they blame various
factors, including the electronic voting machine.
These are all done, you know, routinely. However,
general acceptance of verdict by the political parties
-- even as results are coming by the afternoon -- the
losing party will concede defeat -- that the Chief

Minister candidate or sitting Chief Minister will come on the television, and say that he accepts the verdict of the people.

That is something which is unique even in the worst of times: Most bitter conflict and contest, still people have been accepting the verdict.

Just to give you an idea of voter turnout in the recently-concluded general elections --those of you who have an idea of the states in India (inaudible) which is known for, you know, the extremist activities. Conducting elections is the real challenge in their state. In their state, 77 percent was voter turnout, which is recorded -- which is the highest ever in the history of (inaudible) -- even where last election, they could do only 70 percent; this year, 77 percent -- almost a 10-percent increase over the 70 percent (inaudible) 72.66, which is the highest-ever for the state from the start of an election process in that state.

Similarly, Mizoram -- so 83.4 percent.

Mizoram is one of the northeastern states in India.

For longer, it was notorious for some rebel activities. And so the voting is highest ever.

And Rajasthan, those who have an idea, it is a desert state. Parts of it are desert, with very inaccessible areas. There, also -- that 75 percent is the highest.

Again, the feature in this is, generally, in the initial days, participation of women in voting was less compared to men. You can see in this -- at least in two states -- women participation is more than men's participation. We take special efforts to see that -- like doing our educational promotional programs, asking women to come out and vote (inaudible) state known for women participation lagging compared to men.

Delhi national capital -- there, also, we have achieved highest-ever turnout -- you know, 66 percent.

And these are some of our anticipatory preparatory action for 2014 (inaudible) election.

This is going to be the 16th one. Tenure of present

House of the People comes to an end on May 31, 2014. So, the next House has to meet before June 1. It is our responsibility to conduct the election before that date. There are 543 members in the House of the People. Roughly, each Parliamentary constituency (inaudible) constituency, on an average, will have about 1.5 million voters.

These are some of the measures which we have taken, approaching (inaudible). Here, one of the requisites for holding the poll is having the electoral roll ready. In India, we have the practice of revising the roll every year -- which is done in the last quarter of the current year, for the roll for the next year.

Right now, the exercise of rolls revision is going on. Any voter who reaches 18 years as of January 1 of the year is entitled for enrollment. So, even the voter who will be reaching 18 years on January 1, 2014 can apply for, you know, registration now, during this revision period. Our roll for 2014 will be published in the first week of January 2014,

With that, on the electoral rolls front, our axiom will be complete and ready for conduct of Parliament election.

We take all of the other measures, like drafting employees from employees database, making (inaudible), liaising with the different ministries for getting security forces (inaudible). All this work is going on location, conditional polling stations, and resources -- poll material required. All this work is going on.

And the mobilization of millions of personnel for the conduct of the election -- all measures, as required, would be completed.

After rolls revision work is over, we start voter educational activity. That would start immediately, after January, before the actual conduct of the poll.

These are, again -- even (inaudible) to complete, it is not possible to have poll for the entire country in one day. Last Parliament election was held in six places. So, this time, also, we have

to decide in how many places we will conduct the election. Normally, before the first day of the poll, about three weeks before, the notification for the poll will be issued.

We make announcement of the election on or about three weeks in advance. Virtually, about six weeks before actual first day of the poll would be the announcement of the elections by Election Commission. And from the day we announce the elections -- I mentioned to you earlier about moral code. Moral code of conduct will come into operation.

These are, again, to repeat what I have been telling you, conducting election in a fair, impartial manner, rigorous enforcement of moral code. These are all some of the things on which Election Commission brooks no compromise.

Roll -- again, repeating what I already have told you all along -- this is the vision of the commission, which we have been trying to follow as much as we can, through elections that are completely free of crime and abuse of money. (inaudible)

electoral roll, and with full participation of voters.

This is just to give you the taste of last 60 years, which (inaudible) in the conduct of the elections, is the first Chief Election Commissioner of the country, Mr. Sukumar Sen. These are all (inaudible) Chief Election Commissioners.

I told you, whenever we complete an election, we go with the list of elected candidates certified by Election Commission. When it is a Parliament election, it is personally presented to the President. That is the roll -- that is a list of the elected candidates given by the commission in 1996 to the then-President, Mr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. This one, the second picture, when Madam Pratibha Patil was the President.

Mr. (inaudible) myself -- we, too, are the Commissioners. Mr. (inaudible) was the Chief Electoral Commissioner. We presented for 2009 election -- we submitted the list to Madam Pratibha Patil.

These are some of the earliest-known, you

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know, photos and pictures relating to conduct of the election.

Just some other things here -- in one place, how we know the voting material is carried across, everywhere? (inaudible) this is the only way. There is not even a bridge. They have to take it across a ropeway. This is the place where the electronic voting machines are traveling on the back of the elephants, to reach some of the inaccessible places in Assam.

Again, in some places where -- like, this is, again, an extremist-affected area called (inaudible). Is there anybody from Maharashtra here? You, you're from Maharashtra. So, (inaudible) is considered to be (inaudible) district. There are some areas where it is not safe for people to go by normal roads, even carrying polling material. These are sent by, you know, helicopter.

Some of the earliest available campaign photographs -- (inaudible) was first Home Minister of the country. After (inaudible) he is addressing an

election campaign (inaudible). She's the sister of Mr. (inaudible). She is, you know, addressing (inaudible) in 1950.

This is Mr. (inaudible). He's one of tall leaders from West Bengal State. He is addressing their meeting.

This is Mr. (inaudible). He was the leader of a party called (inaudible). The present party (inaudible) is an offshoot of this party. He was the first President of that party, and he's addressing the meeting -- so election meeting.

This is in Kashmir, behind snow-clad mountains. So, this (inaudible) is one of the leaders of Kashmir. He is addressing a public meeting sometime in 1969.

Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri, he was the Prime Minister of India sometime in 1965. He is addressing -- and Mrs. Indira Gandhi -- perhaps, you know, some of you might have seen her, also. She is addressing an election rally.

Mr. (inaudible) -- he is one of the leader

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(inaudible) activist, a Socialist leader -- who is a nonpolitical leader. He is addressing meeting, 1977.

This is the practice of mark election, which is being conducted in 1951, where people have to be told how the election is conducted. This is in a place in (inaudible) where tribals are standing in the queue to go and cast their vote in 1967. Now they are all clothed in those days.

This is the voters going on camelback to exercise their franchise in Rajasthan. I told you, of course, this is (inaudible).

This is (inaudible) Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. He is now casting his vote in 1962.

This is Mr. Morarji Desai, who also became Prime Minister later. He is casting his vote.

These are some of the regional leaders, just to give you a flavor of the different parts of the country.

That person is called (inaudible). He's a Rationalist leader of (inaudible). He is casting his

vote.

Mr. Rajaji, he's called -- Rajagopalachari -
- he was first Governor-General of India. After Mr.
Mountbatten handed over power, he became first
Governor-General. He is casting his vote there.

(inaudible) he was the Chief Minister of a
state in West Bengal for record number of years. He
is casting his vote.

Mr. (inaudible) he is the tallest leader
among (inaudible).

Mr. (inaudible) he was also (inaudible) for
some time. He is one of the leaders from Southern
state of (inaudible).

(inaudible) he was the first non-Congress
Chief Minister of (inaudible) from 1967. He is
casting his vote.

And (inaudible) he is actually a pioneer for
all the cinema actors who entered politics and, you
know, made it big. He became Chief Minister of
(inaudible) way back in 1972 or '74 -- that period.

Most of the other leaders, included in U.S., they came

around much later.

(inaudible) Indira Gandhi casting her vote in Presidential election.

This is (inaudible) Patil -- so one of the Presidents -- you know, Mr. (inaudible) he is also one of the non-Congressional Prime Ministers of India. He is casting his vote (inaudible).

These are all some other pictures, like, you know, the physically-challenged persons, how they are going and casting their votes. You can see some of these pictures.

You can see the person coming out of the polling station, and this lady being carried.

And some of the reporting of, you know, election from 1947, and 1950, 1962. (inaudible) from those newspapers.

That's it. Thank you.

MR. SOMERS: Well, thank you very much. And we're short on time, so I'm going to try to make this interactive as possible.

First of all, I want to acknowledge our

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friends from the Indian Embassy, Mr. Govind Mohan, who is here and with his colleagues, (inaudible) from the Minister of Commerce and (inaudible) from the Minister of Economics. We really appreciate the support of the embassy.

Sir, when Sandhya Satwadi of CII and I were imagining this event today, the headline was "the Largest Democratic Undertaking in Human History." This is the largest democratic undertaking in human history about to unfold -- 800 million people going to the polls in May 2014, to freely and fairly elect their next leadership of the country -- the largest free-market democracy on this earth.

It is an extraordinary event, and we wanted to bring this to Washington, D.C., and create an awareness, because we believe that, here in the United States, that, as a democracy, we should be celebrating what's happening in India as we speak, in the five Assembly polls that just took place, and then this largest democratic undertaking in human history that will take place before the end of May 2014.

So, congratulations to India. We celebrate Indian democracy, and we join in solidarity in that democracy.

Sir, I have just a few questions, and then I'd like to open it up, because we're short on time.

But question number one is, if there was one takeaway that I have perceived in the recent five Assembly polls -- Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, new capital territories, Delhi, Mizoram -- of the takeaways, it was the massive voter turnout and the enthusiasm that we saw.

I have never in my life seen such an excitement in New Delhi. Every young person was proud to show the indelible ink mark on their finger. The polls were kept open on a special accommodation to allow the large pews of young voters to reach to the polls. So, that was one takeaway.

And then the other extraordinary takeaway was this rise of this new political party, the Aam Aadmi Party -- AAP. And everybody was talking about, of course, this new excitement, and the fact that this

party had come out of nowhere -- out of the blue, literally -- in the last one year's timeframe.

And it is obviously an offshoot of the Anna Hazare movement -- you know, frustration about wanting to get progress rolling along at a fast trajectory.

Could you comment both on the voter turnout, and this extraordinary enthusiasm of the youth, and the rise of this party? Is it recognized? Is it registered? Obviously, it must be registered, but will it be nationally recognized? And do you see that politics as usual is no longer the case in India? In other words, a whole new level of democracy, given India's extraordinary youth.

Thank you.

MR. SAMPATH: Actually, the youth enrollment is actually a much-neglected segment for long. We took note of it about three years back, as commission. And based on census data, we know what should be the percentage of youth in the electoral vote. It so happened in that, you know, normative, you know, proportion of youth to be in the room when we started

this for the first time. We found only about 20 percent of them were getting enrolled in the normal course.

Is it mainly because that is the period when they migrate -- that 16-year, 17-years, 18-years -- they goes to college for pre-university, for university, engineering colleges, or those who have to seek some jobs early in their life to support their family, they move. When they go like that, they really were not able to concentrate on (inaudible).

So, noticing this, we gave special emphasis, and we tried to identify, which are all the places apart from those who continue to be in their place of domicile?

This has went gradually -- from the 20 percent, it came to 40 percent (inaudible) in a place like Delhi, you've already observed it -- youth enthusiastic participation. Almost 80 percent of the youth got enrolled in Delhi. In other places, about, you know, 60, 70 percent in that age group.

Still, we are not reaching 100 percent.

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Even with this, that is the kind of (inaudible) you saw.

Secondly, what we have done during these five straight elections was go -- normally, enrollment takes place during October, November, December. In all these states, since the election was held there, in the last quarter of the year, in November, as you all know, after the usual enrollment as of January 1, in the course of a year, we organized one more special summary revision.

So, the usual thing is called a summary revision. This is special summary revision (inaudible).

We sent our functionaries (inaudible) officers door to door, going door to door -- so verifying whether a person is already there, where there are any missing voters (inaudible) all these things.

And in a state like Madhya Pradesh, (inaudible) millions and millions of such people were enrolled during one year. That is, those were

apathetic about the enrollment before.

Our experience has always been, the voter who enrolls in an election year, he invariably votes. (inaudible) because they're enthusiastic, they enroll. This is one.

In Delhi, particularly, we found that, again, this is a problem in big cities (inaudible) where people will be shifting from locality to locality, because of some tenancy laws. So, no house owner allows his tenant to continue for more than 11 months in a place in India -- because if a person stays for more than 11 months, he make clear problem for him later (inaudible). So, like this, people will be moving from house to house, locality to locality, constituency to constituency.

As I told you, our electoral roll is locality-specific. Each place is called an electoral part, which can be almost like (inaudible) area. And, of course, it moves from one place to another place. Every time you will have to ensure his name is removed from the previous place. His name has to be enrolled

in the new place, which people generally don't do. They (inaudible) only during an election year.

So, we concentrated on that, also, in (inaudible), in Delhi. There was (inaudible). If it had not been done, all this mess would have continued in (inaudible) got deleted, they would not have been able to vote.

These are all some of the reasons (inaudible).

Lastly, what they were telling about the special accommodation -- in fact, it is not special accommodation; it is the rule -- that any person who is in the queue at the close of the poll at 5:00 p.m. -- if there is a queue of 100 people at 5:00 p.m., all that 100 must be allowed to vote, though polling officially closes at 5:00.

So, what we ensure -- that other people don't join -- presiding officer -- there is a person in charge of taking the poll in the polling station -- will come over at 5:00. He will go to the far end of the queue. From there, he will give a signed slip to

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each voter. But after that, nobody can join the queue.

To whatever extent he has given the slips, if it takes 7:00, he will be allowed to vote until 7:00. If it is in Delhi, in some localities, it went up to 8:00. But then if you are in Delhi and watching the television channels, they were actually reporting as if Election Commission has extended time for voting up to 7:00, up to 8:00, up to 9:00.

We do not extend the time for voting like that when the polling has already started, except for in that very exceptional circumstances, like supposing there is thunderstorms in the area. Poll (inaudible) for three hours; we extend time like that (inaudible). Ordinarily, we don't (inaudible) in the queue. They were alone, and this is something which happened not only in Delhi -- in all places. Because it was happening in Delhi, media was giving a lot of hype about that in Delhi (inaudible) but everywhere (inaudible).

MR. SOMERS: Sir, let me just interject on

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the question about media, because -- and this is my last question, because I want to open it up to the audience.

But here we are in 2013, and the media is playing such an active role. It's extraordinary. You see Rajdeep Sardesai and others on CNN, IBM, and they're having the exit polling, and they're predicting the outcome even before the queue is empty.

And now we're dealing with another new phenomenon, which is the projection of Prime Ministerial candidates, where it isn't just the election of the members of (inaudible) and then the formation of the government on the Westminster style of government. It's about projecting the leaders in advance.

It's really becoming a really extraordinary mix of technology, of media. How, over a phase of seven different phases, where the polls are registered in different parts of the country, how do you prevent the media from influencing the outcome in the subsequent phases so you get a complete, honest

turnout, and the true election of the people?

MR. SAMPATH: It is not only a good question, it is (inaudible).

It is not only a good question, it is an impossible question. In fact, this is the greatest dilemma facing the Election Commission.

In fact, during 2004, the Election Commission -- and I was not on the commission -- they held a meeting with all political parties. They all said that during the elections, we should predict, actually, some of the things I am telling.

In every free society like U.S. or in Europe, you may think it's a very (inaudible) but, still, I have to tell you -- all political parties say that you should ban both opinion polls during this period and, also, exit polls. These are the opinion of all the political parties.

The Election Commission duly recorded their views, sent -- because, again, this had to be done by law -- by making changes in the law -- they were sent to the Law Ministry. Then they examined. They had

some opinion from the then-Attorney General, who said banning opinion polls may affect the fundamental rights of citizens' right to information, right to, you know, free expression, et cetera. So, they did not do that banning of the opinion polls. And they banned only the exit poll.

They also said the Election Commission will issue the notification for every election regarding banning the exit poll, and (inaudible) exit poll results can be published.

So, that is how whenever there are these kind of first elections -- now for (inaudible) held in four phases. National election may be held in six, or it may be seven, or five. So, what do you do when it is a first election, we've given notification half an hour after the completion of the poll, in the last phase?

Last phase election in this was Delhi. That was over at 5:00. According to the notification -- again, we can't give that notification in the hearing at 5:00 on that day. It has to be, you know,

published (inaudible). Naturally, it is done, you know, much earlier.

In fact, some of the people were even debating, even in the television debates, asking, when the queues are still there, why is the Election Commission permitting the publication of exit polls? Will it not affect it? You know, thinking of these people.

Now, first of all, outside the polling station -- because this is, you know, extension of time to vote there -- is only for the people who are in the queue at 5:00. And, in fact, in Indian elections, we don't allow the voters to carry even a cellphone to the polling station. There are no television sets outside the polling stations. There is no way all these things are going to influence the voter who is in the queue. That's because people do not really know the state of affairs on the ground.

But they were also saying, Election Commission, they should have, you know, prohibited -- they should have delayed -- which is all not possible.

We cannot anticipate that poll will go on in this place until 9:00, give a notification you can come and poll after 9:30. These things are just not possible.

And regarding opinion poll -- yes, actually, it's a very good point you raised. In fact, the people -- again, just like paid news -- the exit poll can masquerade as opinion poll.

When you are having different phases, there is no way in which you can stop people from gathering opinion from the voters who come out of the polling station in (inaudible) election that they can always give as opinion poll. Opinion poll, there is no ban on that -- except 48 hours before (inaudible) conclusion in the poll when any election matter is not prohibited.

So, that way -- these are all some of the gray areas in law, which people take advantage of. Legally, they're on safe grounds -- though it may be, you know, questionable. But unless we have very clear, well-set law on these things, it will not be possible to change these things.

MR. SOMERS: Well, to me, it's the most extraordinary thing. We have the largest democratic undertaking in human history about to unfold. 54 percent of the country and 1.24 billion people are under the age of 25.

And, sir, your job is daunting, because this is going to be, really, a time of year upcoming when the entire earth axis is going to likely tip when that many people go to the polls, and exercise their free and fair right to vote.

So, an exciting time in the history of democracy, and something that, here in America, we should celebrate.

Let me open it up. Rick, I know that you're a close follower. I've got a hand in the back. Who wants to just throw out a couple of questions in the remaining minutes of the session?

We have Lalit Jha from Press Trust of India.

MR. JHA: Thank you. Thank you for doing this.

Since you are in the U.S., one of the

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largest democrat of the world, can you tell us, what are the best practices India can adopt from the U.S. democratic system?

Two things that comes to my mind is -- one is early voting. Whenever people here go to vote, actual date of votes, more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of people have already voted.

And second would be reducing the time of campaigning.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) reducing?

MR. JHA: In India, you ban campaigning 36 hours before the actual polling starts. Here, I think it's much less than that.

MR. SOMERS: You know, ironically, Lalit, I'd have to say that our chips and chads -- and the lack of uniformity in our voting machines is something that we could learn from India.

MR. JHA: Yes. No, the early voting is something which can be thought of.

MR. SAMPATH: No, early voting -- we also

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tried. We explored the possibilities of doing, but then -- no, right now -- the window for campaigning in any election phase is after the last day for withdrawal, and the scrutiny from that date, we allow only 14 days.

So, these 14 days, under law, is the time that has to be given to a candidate for campaigning. If you increase that 14 days, correspondingly, campaign expenditure will increase, because whatever, you know, expenditure lumps which are given -- keeping 14 campaign days in mind.

So, usually, under extraordinary circumstances, we exceed that by a day or so, not beyond that. That way -- and if you alter the early voting, by the time of the early voting, campaigning must stop. But otherwise, you can't have the campaigning and also have the early voting. That is not something which is, you know, contemplated in our law. (inaudible) after that, there has to be some period for the voter to think -- actually, last 48 hours before the conclusion of the poll is the time

which is given for contemplation for the voters.

(inaudible) he has gone through all the material. He has to think (inaudible).

So, in the early voting, we aware this kind of a problem -- both the legal and practical. We even, you know, thought of it. I don't know whether we'll be able to find a solution, and we know that it is one of the good practices which is done in different countries -- particularly people who cannot be there on the poll day. For them, it is a boon, but -- no, but we have to think of, you know, some way -- or whether (inaudible) we can seek changes in the law. But we should be, you know, short of that. This is one.

And reducing the 36 hours -- that, ideally, we would like it. you know, reducing that can be that. But then -- almost it is like, you know, the period when we sanitize the area. Reducing that, we don't know whether there'll be any problems (inaudible) something which has to be looked at.

But at least now, people go -- we at least

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ask all campaigners who come from outside that area to leave that place. And reducing that can be advantageous in one way -- that now this period is given for the people to go to vote. And in the process, they may be establishing some (inaudible). That can be checked.

But then (inaudible) looked at more carefully.

SPEAKER: Good morning. I have two short questions.

The first is about (inaudible) Indians all over the world. So, how do Indians living in other countries participate during the election? So, how do they cast their vote?

And number two is, to what extent is the foreign media and the electoral observers participate in the election?

Thank you.

MR. SAMPATH: You know, what you are asking is basically about the nonresident Indians who live outside the country. For long, there was absolutely

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no arrangement for them -- even for the enrollment.

Only a couple of years back, enrollment is (inaudible) for nonresident Indians, and now there is a facility for an Indian who is living abroad -- that is an Indian who has not acquired any foreign citizenship. There is a possibility of their enrollment.

But we have still not made arrangement for them about casting their vote from outside the country. Right now, they can only seek enrollment, but if they want to cast their vote, they will have to come to the country at the time of the election and vote. Only those who can program their vacation, et cetera, come at the time when poll is held there. They will be able to cast their vote.

So, because of this problem, there is no great enthusiasm in nonresident Indians, even in enrollment -- as against millions and millions of nonresident Indians living outside the country. People who have got enrolled is only (inaudible).

The reason is this: There is no possibility

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of coming to (inaudible). Why should they get enrolled if they are not doing?

One of the things -- or two of the things which can be thought of -- one is, (inaudible). Under law, these people are not eligible for postal work. Second, even if they are, as I told you, the period from last day of finalizing the candidate -- date of the poll is only 14 days.

When our people are living in 200 different countries, would it be humanly possible for presiding officer or for the returning officer to send this many ballot papers to the Indians living abroad, to reach them about exercising their franchise and sending it back?

Our own experience in postal ballot -- even for (inaudible) who are not in the country -- number of people who are able to reach back, that is very few. So, this will also lead to further frustration.

The other option is to think of internet voting. So, internet voting -- we are very wary of internet voting as of now, because of possibility of

tampering, possibility of fraud, et cetera -- even on the (inaudible), which we are -- the machine is always (inaudible). Even there, we keep getting, you know, complaints from time to time. How far we will feel comfort in to allow internet voting?

If that is done, perhaps there will be solution for this, and (inaudible).

And regarding the foreign observers -- as I told you, we don't believe in international observation. What we are internally -- observers going from one state to another -- we think it is sufficient (inaudible). However, we are not stopping any international people coming and witnessing our elections, even for the last round of elections. Almost people from 12 to 14 countries had visited. They witnessed the election. They (inaudible). They give their views, et cetera, on all the elections or candidates.

We do welcome it, but not as international observation.

Thanks.

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MR. SOMERS: Well, let's wrap it up. I can say that I was just observing the five state elections, and I felt very welcome.

And, again, in an age where there are Arab Springs breaking out across the world, how extraordinary that we live in democracies where this many young people are coming out to cast their vote? That is something that all of us should celebrate in our democracies.

Sandhya, can you wrap it up with vote of thanks?

MS. SATWADI: Yeah. I just want to use two Es and two Is to wrap up this session: educating, enlightening, intriguing, and incredible.

And I'd like to thank the Chief Election Commissioner for accepting our invitation to address us all here today. Clearly, election management in India is no easy task.

And, Mr. Sampath, as India embarks on yet another journey of what may be termed as a celebration of democracy, we wish you all the very best.

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And, finally, I would like to thank our partners, USIBC and Brookings Institution for their support in organizing this program, the embassy officials, Mr. Mohan, Dr. (inaudible) for all your support, as always, and for all of you, for attending the session today.

Thank you very much.

* * * * *

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