

Safeguarding EMB's in the Age of Global Democratic Recession

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AAEA's Objectives and Mandate:

- Promotion of open and transparent elections.
- Institutionalisation of independent and impartial election authorities.
- Professionalization of Asian election authorities.
- Citizen participation in the electoral and civic process
- Information sharing.
- Development of resources for election-related information and research.

AAEA's Objectives and Mandate:

- Exchange of experiences and information relating to:
 - ❑ Election law and procedure
 - ❑ Technology
 - ❑ Administrative practice
- Voter/Civic education programs.
- Conferences/Meetings.
- Capacity building workshops.

Challenges before EMBs:

- Barriers to inclusion and equal access for universal adult suffrage.
- Voter apathy.
- Regulation of political parties.
- Regulating political finance.
- Controlling misuse of money power.
- Inadequacy of legal and legislative instruments for enforcing codes of conduct.
- Multimedia disinformation campaigns and fake news.

Challenges before EMBs:

- Polarization and populism.
- Globalization.
- Economic inequality.
- Democratic discontent.
- Immigration
- Challenge of sustaining multiethnic democracies.

Covid-19 Challenges:

- Disruption of Electoral cycles in many countries.
- Timely conduct of elections in India.
- Pioneering work in Mongolia, Republic of Korea and Taiwan.
- In house research on COVID-19.
- COVID Safety Protocols after pilot testing.
- Sharing of Country Experiences.
- Enforcement of strict safety protocols.

Covid-19 Challenges:

- Vaccination Drives.
- Strict health safety norms.
- Three important conclusions that define our Covid strategy:
 - ❑ Timely conduct of in house research, study international practices and develop your own response to crisis.
 - ❑ Knowledge sharing in an effective manner.
 - ❑ Resilience and empowerment of the EMBs to respond to the crisis.

International Instruments:

- Declaration of Human Rights, (UDHR) 1948.
- International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966.
- International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (ICERD).
- Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2006.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Harmonisation of International Treaties with Domestic Legislation.**
 - ❑ Harmonisation sets benchmark for legislations as per international principles and standards.
 - ❑ May 2022 meeting of the AAEA which specially focused on gender issues.
- **Independence of EMBs and legal regimes to tackle challenges.**
 - ❑ Independence of EMB is a good determinant of the neutrality of the EMBs.
 - ❑ Sanctity of elections and purity of electoral processes.
 - ❑ Location of EMBs in a legislative and legal frame work that empowers them to perform independently.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Media balance and regulation of disinformation.**
 - ❑ Media reporting needs to be balanced.
 - ❑ ECI has developed a voluntary code of ethics for social media.
 - ❑ Taiwan Government Policy to Counter Election Disinformation.
 - ❑ Release news to clarify the facts.
 - ❑ Cooperation with social media.
 - ❑ Investigation by Police in criminal offence cases.
 - ❑ Misuse of social media platforms for fake disinformation is a real challenge.

Mitigation Measures:

➤ **Technology Integration.**

- ❑ Enhanced efficiency, efficacy, transparency and integrity of electoral processes.
- ❑ Technology integration in voter registration, polling station, voting, counting, electoral logistics.
- ❑ Development of ICT Apps.
- ❑ Technology integration facilitates voter participation.

➤ **Plenary Powers to the EMBs.**

- ❑ To avoid any delay in election processes.
- ❑ To deal with crisis during COVID times.
- ❑ To handle unforeseen situations through provision for 'Plenary Powers'.

Mitigation Measures:

➤ **Challenges of manpower.**

- ❑ ECI with its meagre staff of about 450 commands control of 12 million staff during General Elections.
- ❑ Provision to take manpower on deputation.

➤ **Restricting Misuse of Money Power.**

- ❑ Regulation of election expenditure.
- ❑ Strict norms and stricter enforcement.
- ❑ Expenditure Observers.
- ❑ Display of Assets and Liabilities of contesting candidates.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Capacity Building.**
- **Voter Education especially for Ethical Participation.**
 - ❑ Voter education connects people to elections and electoral processes.
 - ❑ Important tool for addressing social aspects of elections.
 - ❑ Guidance from the United Nations Centre for Human Public Information.
 - ❑ Funding for objective, non-partisan voter education and information campaigns.
- **International/Domestic Observers.**
- **Revisiting Parameters of Democracy Indices.**
- **Leveraging A-WEB for Collective action.**

Thank you.