

Never Forget

Never Forget that the attacks on Mumbai on 26/11/2008 happened,

Never Forget that the reality would have been much different if our systems were functioning properly,

Never Forget that it is us, the people, who have to demand performance from our elected representatives,

Therefore, *Never Forget* what they promised, and hold them up to it!

The Vision:

After the heinous terror attacks in Mumbai on Nov. 26, 2008, everyone in India has been wanting to “do something about it”. However, there is much to be said about what exactly *can be done* by the Indian masses. The idea described below is an attempt to provide an avenue for the energies of the masses today.

At the heart of our effort is the idea of *evaluable promises*. Just as a research grant proposal must contain language to the effect of “we will improve the performance of algorithm A by x%” which can be used at the end of the project’s term to evaluate whether the researcher achieved the promised goals, we want to find out whether our elected leaders are doing what they promised to do, and decide their reward or punishment by way of our ballots accordingly.

The other core principle that we intend to espouse is that of *verifiable analysis*. Each and every claim made in the course of our effort, without fail, will have to essentially be accompanied by a citation to a reference on which said claim has been based, much like research papers do. We believe that this will give our work the rigor that is seen lacking in current editorials and articles about the state of the nation.

The System:

The system this effort visions to create will be one where anyone will have access to, and will be able to contribute to, the following information:

- For each elected representative¹ currently serving
 - The list of promises made by above elected representative, and
 - For each promise made
 - The critique that the promise is un-evaluatable², OR
 - The current status of delivery of said promise³
 - AND
 - The response of the elected representative on our claims of performance

Note that each piece of information provided above has to have citations clearly stating where the information was obtained from, whether an RTI application to the Election Commission or the PWD, a newspaper report, or even a youtube video that a citizen reporter has shot.

¹ This can be an MP, MLA, or anyone who was “voted into power” at any level. This also extends to “entities” such as coalitions that are appointed to positions of power and make promises. E.g., state and central govts.

² E.g. “I will improve the condition of the girl child”, as opposed to “I will make a school for 30 girls where they will be given free education upto higher secondary level”. The latter promise is evaluatable, the former is not.

³ E.g., “Currently the school building has been created and can seat 20 students. Enrolment has still not begun”

Additionally, the system will also be accompanied by a website which will host articles based on the data in the system. This will make for the “easily palatable” capsules for those who are short on time but are still interested in the state of affairs in their constituency. Continuing our high-standards, each claim made by our authors in these analytical articles will have to be accompanied by a reference to the exact piece of data in our system that readers can go through if they are interested.

What we will NOT do:

There are some things that we have deliberately chosen to NOT engage in during the course of our efforts. Specifically, we will:

- **NOT provide a summary score of an elected representative’s performance.** We believe that it is not for us to decide whether you care more about education of the girl child or better parks for our kids to play in. Therefore, we will provide you all the data about all the aspects of the elected representative’s performance, but will not aim to provide an overall grade.
- **NOT comment on the potential of the opponent of the elected representative at election time.** Our belief is that only verifiable claims should be made, and if we do not have performance data on the opponent of the current elected representative, we will choose to not make any claims about his/her potential as the next elected representative. This should not be assumed to mean that we are endorsing the incumbent, simply that we do not have enough data. If we do have data on the performance on the opponent, we will provide a link to his/her performance report page.
- **NOT focus on the crimes committed (alleged or proven) by the elected representative.** While we believe that the complete personality of the candidate should be taken into account while making your voting decision, we choose to keep this specific effort only about promises made by elected representatives, and their performance of the same. We expect the voters to refer to other source of information to get data on the candidates’ past acts unrelated to campaign promises.

What YOU can do:

The system, of course, will need **you** to work for it to be viable and successful. In case you are wondering, you can help out in the following capacities

- for each constituency [one per elected representative]
 - People who will get the information [perhaps through RTI]
 - People who will upload the data on the web
 - People who will write easily understandable [and thoroughly cited] articles based on the data for the constituency
- Web designers [the art work is a big part of getting the message across]
- Backend designers [the idea is to build this system using freely available resources, so we depend on noone for funds. If you know what the google app engine and the google mashup editor/yahoo pipes are, you are in the right place :-)]

The elections in Delhi and other states held immediately after the terror attacks on Mumbai, the voter turnout was 70% [cite-needed], a high turnout by any standards. Many analysts have claimed that the focus of the electorate in deciding the outcome of these elections was on *development* [cite-needed]. This indeed marks a change in Indian politics that has so far been focused on communal issues such as religion, caste, or region. This gives one hope that a system such as the one described above can really be used by people. One constituency, one elected represented at a time.

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