



All Presidents of India List for UPSC

Description

India, as a democratic republic, places immense constitutional significance on the Office of the President. This position serves as the Head of State, embodying the unity and integrity of the nation. For aspirants preparing for the [Union Public Service Commission \(UPSC\)](#) examinations, a thorough understanding of the President's role, powers, and the historical lineage of individuals who have held this esteemed office is fundamental. The Indian political system, being parliamentary in nature, delineates distinct roles for the President as the nominal executive and the Prime Minister as the real executive.

Studying the list of all Presidents since the inception of the Republic in 1950, along with their tenures and specific constitutional provisions, provides critical insights into India's democratic journey. This includes grasping the nuances of the President's constitutional standing, their varied functions, and the historical context of their terms. Such knowledge is indispensable for both the Prelims and Mains stages of the UPSC [Civil Services Examination](#).

The Office of President in India

The President of India occupies the highest constitutional office in the country, serving as the Head of State and the first citizen. This office symbolizes the nation's sovereignty, unity, and integrity. While the President holds immense prestige and authority on paper, India's parliamentary system ensures that the real executive power rests with the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister.

Qualifications and Election

To qualify for the office of President, a person must be a citizen of India, have completed 35 years of age, be qualified for election as a member of the Lok Sabha, and must not hold any office of profit under the Union or any State government or any local or other authority. The President is not directly elected by the people. Instead, an Electoral College elects the President. This Electoral College comprises:

- The elected members of both Houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha).
- The elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- The elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the Union Territories of Delhi and Puducherry.

The election is conducted in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote, ensuring representativeness and uniformity among states. This method reflects the federal character of India.

Term of Office and Impeachment

The President holds office for a term of five years from the date they assume office. They are eligible for re-election for any number of terms. The President can resign from office by addressing their resignation to the Vice-President. The Constitution also provides for the removal of the President through an impeachment process, outlined in Article 61. This process is initiated for "violation of the Constitution." The impeachment motion can be initiated by either House of Parliament, requiring a two-thirds majority of the total membership of that House after a 14-day notice. If the other House investigates the charges and passes the resolution by a two-thirds majority of its total membership, the President stands removed from office from the date such a resolution is passed. This stringent procedure underscores the sanctity and stability of the presidential office.

Constitutional Role of the President

The President's constitutional role is often described as that of a "nominal" or "titular" executive, contrasting with the Prime Minister's position as the "real" executive. This distinction arises from India's adoption of the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy.

According to Article 74(1), the President acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. The 42nd and 44th Constitutional Amendment Acts clarified that the President "shall act in accordance with" such advice, making it generally binding. However, the President can ask the Council of Ministers to reconsider their advice. If the Council of Ministers sends the same advice again, the President must act according to it. This provision introduces a limited, but important, check by the President.

Discretionary Powers

While largely bound by ministerial advice, the President possesses certain discretionary powers that become crucial in specific political scenarios:

- **Appointment of Prime Minister:** In a situation where no single party or pre-election coalition secures a clear majority in the Lok Sabha (a hung Parliament), the President exercises discretion in inviting the leader of a party or coalition to form the government. This requires careful judgment to ensure a stable government.
- **Dismissal of Council of Ministers:** If the Council of Ministers loses the confidence of the Lok Sabha and refuses to resign, the President can dismiss it. This is a rare but constitutionally significant power.

- **Dissolution of Lok Sabha:** If a Council of Ministers has lost the confidence of the House and recommends dissolution, or if a Prime Minister resigns after losing majority, the President can choose to dissolve the Lok Sabha or explore the possibility of an alternative government.
- **Withholding Assent to Bills:** The President can withhold assent to an ordinary bill (absolute veto) or return it for reconsideration (suspensive veto). This power, while not absolute, allows for a check on legislative haste.
- **Information regarding administration:** The President can seek information from the Prime Minister regarding the administration of the Union and proposals for legislation (Article 78).

The exercise of these discretionary powers reflects the President's role as a guardian of the Constitution, particularly when political instability or constitutional impropriety arises.

List of All Presidents of India (1950 to Present)

Understanding the succession of India's Presidents is essential for grasping the nation's political evolution and for factual recall in UPSC examinations. Each President has contributed to the constitutional journey of the Republic. The following list presents all individuals who have held the esteemed office of President of India since the adoption of the Constitution:

1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad

- Term: January 26, 1950 – May 13, 1962
- He was India's first President and the only President to serve two full terms.

2. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

- Term: May 13, 1962 – May 13, 1967
- A distinguished philosopher and academic, his birthday is celebrated as Teachers' Day in India.

3. Dr. Zakir Husain

- Term: May 13, 1967 – May 03, 1969
- He was the first Muslim President of India and the first to die in office.

4. V.V. Giri

- Term: August 24, 1969 – August 24, 1974
- He served as acting President from May 03, 1969 to July 20, 1969, before being elected President. He was the only President elected as an independent candidate.

5. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed

- Term: August 24, 1974 – February 11, 1977
- He was the second President to die in office. The Emergency (1975-77) was proclaimed during his term.

6. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy

- Term: July 25, 1977 – July 25, 1982
- He was the only President to be elected unopposed.

7. Giani Zail Singh

- Term: July 25, 1982 – July 25, 1987
- He was the first Sikh President of India. He famously used the pocket veto for the Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill.

8. R. Venkataraman

- Term: July 25, 1987 – July 25, 1992
- He served as Vice-President before becoming President.

9. Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma

- Term: July 25, 1992 – July 25, 1997
- He also previously served as Vice-President.

10. K.R. Narayanan

- Term: July 25, 1997 – July 25, 2002
- He was the first Dalit President of India and the first President from Kerala.

11. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

- Term: July 25, 2002 – July 25, 2007
- Known as the “Missile Man of India”, he was the first scientist President.

12. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil

- Term: July 25, 2007 – July 25, 2012
- She was the first woman President of India.

13. Pranab Mukherjee

- Term: July 25, 2012 – July 25, 2017
- A veteran politician, he held various key ministerial portfolios before becoming President.

14. Ram Nath Kovind

- Term: July 25, 2017 – July 25, 2022
- He was the second Dalit President of India.

15. Smt. Droupadi Murmu

- Term: July 25, 2022 – Present

- She is the first tribal President of India and the second woman President.

Key Facts About Indian Presidents and Their Terms

Beyond the chronological list, certain facts about India's Presidents and their terms hold particular significance for UPSC examination:

- **Longest and Shortest Terms:** Dr. Rajendra Prasad holds the distinction of being the longest-serving President, serving for over 12 years. Dr. Zakir Husain and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed had the shortest full terms, as both died in office.
- **Presidents Who Died in Office:** Dr. Zakir Husain and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed are the two Presidents who passed away during their term. Their deaths necessitated the Vice-President to assume the role of acting President.
- **Acting Presidents:** Upon the death of a President, the Vice-President acts as President. If the Vice-President is unavailable, the Chief Justice of India, and in their absence, the seniormost judge of the Supreme Court, discharges the functions of the President. V.V. Giri, M. Hidayatullah (Chief Justice), and B.D. Jatti (Vice-President) have served as acting Presidents.
- **Unopposed Election:** Neelam Sanjiva Reddy is the only President in India's history to have been elected unopposed. This occurred after the initial electoral process faced complications.
- **Diverse Backgrounds:** The office has been held by individuals from various professional backgrounds – lawyers (Rajendra Prasad), philosophers (S. Radhakrishnan), educationists (Zakir Husain), trade unionists (V.V. Giri), scientists (A.P.J. Abdul Kalam), and politicians with long parliamentary careers (Pranab Mukherjee). This reflects the diverse talent pool that has contributed to India's leadership.
- **Firsts:** India has seen its first Dalit President (K.R. Narayanan), first woman President (Pratibha Patil), first Muslim President (Zakir Husain), first Sikh President (Giani Zail Singh), and first tribal President (Droupadi Murmu). These milestones reflect the evolving social and political landscape of India.
- **Key Constitutional Events:** The term of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed is notably associated with the Proclamation of National Emergency in 1975. Giani Zail Singh's term saw the use of the pocket veto, a rare constitutional maneuver.

Important Powers and Functions of the President

The President of India is vested with a wide array of powers and functions, categorized under different heads, which are crucial for the functioning of the Indian state. While many are exercised on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, their constitutional existence makes them significant.

Executive Powers

- All executive actions of the Government of India are formally taken in the President's name (Article 77).
- The President appoints the Prime Minister and other ministers, who hold office during the President's pleasure.

- **Important appointments:** The President appoints the Attorney General of India, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners, the Chairman and members of the Union Public Service Commission, Governors of States, Ambassadors, and High Commissioners.
- The President directly administers the Union Territories through administrators appointed by them.
- They can seek any information relating to the administration of the Union from the Prime Minister (Article 78).
- The President has the power to make rules for more convenient transaction of business of the Government of India.

Legislative Powers

- **Summoning and Proroguing Parliament:** The President can summon and prorogue the sessions of Parliament and dissolve the Lok Sabha (Article 85).
- **Addressing Parliament:** The President addresses both Houses of Parliament assembled together at the commencement of the first session after each general election and at the commencement of the first session of each year (Article 87).
- **Sending Messages:** The President can send messages to either House of Parliament regarding a bill or otherwise (Article 86).
- **Nomination of Members:** The President nominates 12 members to the Rajya Sabha from persons having special knowledge or practical experience in literature, science, art, and social service. The President also used to nominate two members to the Lok Sabha from the Anglo-Indian community, a provision which has now been discontinued.
- **Assent to Bills (Article 111):** A bill passed by both Houses of Parliament becomes an Act only after the President gives assent. The President can:
 - Give assent to the bill.
 - Withhold assent to the bill (Absolute Veto).
 - Return the bill for reconsideration of Parliament (Suspensive Veto). However, if Parliament passes the bill again with or without amendments, the President must give assent. This power does not apply to Money Bills or Constitutional Amendment Bills.
- **Ordinance Making Power (Article 123):** The President can promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session. These ordinances have the same force as an Act of Parliament but must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of its reassembly.

Financial Powers

- **Money Bills:** A Money Bill can be introduced in Parliament only with the prior recommendation of the President (Article 117).
- **Budget Presentation:** The Annual Financial Statement (Union Budget) is laid before Parliament on behalf of the President (Article 112).
- **Contingency Fund:** The President can make advances out of the Contingency Fund of India to meet unforeseen expenditures.
- **Finance Commission:** The President constitutes a Finance Commission every five years to recommend the distribution of revenues between the Union and the States.

Judicial Powers

- **Pardoning Power (Article 72):** The President can grant pardons, reprieves, respites, remissions, suspend or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence in all cases:
 - Where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against a Union law.
 - Where the punishment or sentence is by a court martial.
 - Where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- **Appointment of Judges:** The President appoints the Chief Justice and other judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Diplomatic Powers

- International treaties and agreements are negotiated and concluded in the name of the President.
- The President represents India in international forums and sends and receives diplomats.

Military Powers

- The President is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of India.
- They appoint the chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- The President can declare war or conclude peace, subject to the approval of Parliament.

Emergency Powers

The Constitution vests the President with extraordinary powers to deal with emergency situations:

- **National Emergency (Article 352):** Proclaimed on grounds of war, external aggression, or armed rebellion.
- **President's Rule (State Emergency) (Article 356):** Imposed in a state if the President is satisfied that the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.
- **Financial Emergency (Article 360):** Proclaimed if the President is satisfied that a situation has arisen whereby the financial stability or credit of India is threatened.

UPSC Perspective

Prelims Focus

For the Prelims examination, factual accuracy and quick recall are paramount regarding the President's office.

- **Constitutional Articles:** Articles 52-78, 123, 72, 352, 356, 360 are frequently tested. Understanding the specific provisions of each article is key.
- **List and Chronology:** Memorizing the chronological order of Presidents, their terms, and significant 'firsts' (e.g., first woman, first Dalit, first scientist President) is crucial.
- **Key Facts:** Questions often focus on Presidents who died in office, those elected unopposed, or particular constitutional actions (e.g., pocket veto).

- **Powers and Functions:** Be clear on the specific types of powers (executive, legislative, judicial, etc.) and what each entails, especially the ordinance-making power, pardoning power, and veto powers.
- **Electoral College:** Composition and method of election are important.

Mains Focus

For the Mains examination, a deeper, analytical understanding of the President's role and its implications is required.

- **Constitutional Position:** Analyze the President's role as a nominal head in a parliamentary democracy, contrasting it with the real executive power of the Prime Minister. Discuss the implications of the 42nd and 44th Amendments.
- **Discretionary Powers:** Discuss the scope and limitations of the President's discretionary powers, particularly in scenarios like hung parliaments, and their role in upholding constitutional values.
- **Checks and Balances:** Examine how the President acts as a check on the executive and legislative branches, while also being subject to checks from Parliament (impeachment) and the Judiciary.
- **Role in Federalism:** Discuss the President's role in Centre-State relations, particularly through the Governor and the imposition of President's Rule (Article 356). Analyze the controversies surrounding its use.
- **Evolution of the Office:** Trace how the President's role has evolved over time, influenced by political dynamics, judicial pronouncements, and constitutional amendments.

Common Student Confusion

Aspirants often grapple with certain misconceptions regarding the President's office. Addressing these helps clarify the constitutional position.

Misunderstanding 1: The President is the real executive head, similar to the US President.

- **Correction:** India follows a parliamentary system of government, where the President is the *constitutional or nominal* head, while the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers constitute the *real* executive. All executive actions are taken in the President's name, but the President largely acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. The US President is directly elected and exercises real executive power, representing a presidential system.

Misunderstanding 2: The President's assent is always a mere formality for any bill passed by Parliament.

- **Correction:** While the President generally gives assent to bills, they have the power to withhold assent (absolute veto) or return a non-money bill for reconsideration (suspensive veto). However, if Parliament passes the bill again, the President must give assent. For Constitutional Amendment

Bills, the President has no veto power and must give assent. For Money Bills, the President cannot return them for reconsideration but can either give or withhold assent.

Misunderstanding 3: The President can act entirely on their own discretion in all matters without ministerial advice.

- **Correction:** The President's discretion is very limited. Generally, they are bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. Discretionary powers are primarily confined to situations where constitutional conventions are unclear or where the Council of Ministers itself has lost confidence, such as in a hung parliament scenario for appointing a Prime Minister, or dissolving the Lok Sabha when the government has lost its majority. These are situations where there is no clear advice from a stable Council of Ministers.

Short Revision Points

- **Head of State:** President is the nominal executive, first citizen, and symbol of national unity.
- **Electoral College:** Indirectly elected by elected members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies.
- **Term & Re-election:** Five-year term, eligible for re-election multiple times.
- **Impeachment:** For "violation of the Constitution" by a special parliamentary procedure.
- **Powers:** Executive, Legislative, Financial, Judicial, Diplomatic, Military, and Emergency.
- **Council of Ministers:** President typically acts on their aid and advice, with limited reconsideration and specific discretionary powers.
- **Ordinance Power:** Can promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session.
- **Pardoning Power:** Can grant pardons, reprieves, etc., in specific cases.
- **Emergency Powers:** National, State, and Financial Emergencies.

FAQs

1. **Q:** What is the term of office for the President of India?
A: The President holds office for a term of five years from the date they assume office.
2. **Q:** Can the President be re-elected?
A: Yes, there is no constitutional limit on the number of terms a person can serve as President of India.
3. **Q:** How is the President of India elected?
A: The President is elected by an Electoral College comprising elected members of both Houses of Parliament and elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States and Union Territories (Delhi and Puducherry), through proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.

4. **Q:** What is the procedure for impeachment of the President?

A: The President can be impeached for “violation of the Constitution”. The process can be initiated by either House of Parliament with a two-thirds majority of its total membership, after which the other House investigates and, if it also passes the resolution by a two-thirds majority, the President is removed.

A comprehensive understanding of the President’s office is crucial for any [UPSC aspirant](#), encompassing not just the list of individuals who have held the post, but also the constitutional provisions, powers, and the nuances of their role in India’s parliamentary democracy. This knowledge forms a core part of the Indian Polity syllabus, providing essential insights into the working of the world’s largest democracy. For aspirants seeking detailed guidance and expert insights on such critical topics, [SHRI RAM IAS](#) is regarded as the best [ias coaching in delhi](#), offering structured preparation and comprehensive study material to navigate the complexities of the examination.

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