

# *The 2nd National Essay Writing Competition*

**Organized by The Literary and Debating Society, MNLU  
Mumbai**

**In Collaboration with  
Association for Democratic Reforms &  
Public Concern Governance Trust**

## About MNLU Mumbai

Established in 2014, Maharashtra National Law University Mumbai (MNLU Mumbai) is a leading institution for legal education and research in India. Located in one of the country's major cities, it is committed to promoting social justice, as reflected in its motto, *Dharme Tatparta*.

MNLU Mumbai aims to uphold the Indian Constitution's spirit by imparting advanced legal knowledge and training in advocacy, legal services, and reforms. The university follows a multidisciplinary approach to law and justice.

Its academic offerings include a five-year BA LL.B. (Hons.), one-year LL.M. programs in Corporate and Commercial Laws, Maritime Law, and Constitutional Law, an LL.M. (Professional), an LL.M. in Investment and Security Laws (in collaboration with NISM and SEBI), an M.A. in Mediation and Conflict Resolution, along with diploma and specialized courses.

## About the LDS

At the heart of Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai, the Literary and Debating Society (LDS) is more than just a student body. It is a thriving community of passionate thinkers, curious readers, and fearless speakers. For us, literature is not just words on a page, and debate is not just argument. It is about listening, feeling, questioning, and understanding the world and each other more deeply.

India has always been a land of discourse, where stories, ideas, and philosophies have flourished for centuries. At LDS, we carry that legacy forward with pride and purpose. Whether it is the quiet companionship of our book clubs, the electric energy of our debate chambers, or the thoughtful silence before an essay's final paragraph, every moment here is driven by the desire to express and to connect.

We create spaces where voices are empowered, not silenced. Through events like the Intra Asian Parliamentary Debate, Intra British Parliamentary Debate, and the legally immersive Veritas in Judicium: Verdict Deliberation Competition, we challenge each other to grow, not just as speakers or writers, but as individuals who care about what they say and why they say it. Our National Essay Writing Competitions provide students with the freedom to pour their ideas onto paper.

LDS is not just where debates happen. It is where minds meet, friendships are forged over midnight preparation, and confidence is born from vulnerability. It is a space where your voice matters, your thoughts find shape, and your passion has purpose.

## About ADR

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) is a pioneering non-partisan, non-profit organization in India, established in 1999 by professors from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad. ADR's mission is to improve governance and strengthen democracy through electoral and political reforms, focusing on transparency, accountability, and decriminalization of politics. Its landmark achievement was a Supreme Court ruling in 2002-03, which made it mandatory for all election candidates to disclose their criminal, financial, and educational backgrounds, empowering voters with critical information. ADR's flagship programs, such as Election Watch and Political Party Watch, analyze candidate affidavits and party finances. Since the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in 2003, ADR along with the National Election Watch, has conducted Election Watches for the 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, Rajya Sabha Elections and almost all State Assembly Elections post 2003 in the country. Election Watch comprises background reports based on Criminal, Financial, Educational and Income Tax details of Candidates and Winners (MPs, MLAs and Ministers) who have contested Elections to State Assemblies, the Parliament and a few local bodies. Political Party Watch comprises analysis of Donations above Rs 20,000 that are received by Political Parties (National & Regional) and the Income Tax Returns filed by them. The organization also advocates for inner-party democracy and regularly files Public Interest Litigations (PILs) to drive systemic reform, making it a key watchdog for Indian democracy.

## About PCGT

PCGT was founded by Padma Bhushan Shri J. F. Ribeiro (IPS Retd.), Dr. R. K. Anand, an eminent paediatrician and former Medical Director of Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai, and the late Shri B. G. Deshmukh (IAS Retd.), in 2000. The Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT) is a non-profit organization committed to promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in governance. Under the leadership of Mr. D. Sivanandhan, former Mumbai Police Commissioner, PCGT plays a pivotal role in policy advocacy, civic engagement, and anti-corruption initiatives.

## About Manupatra- Our Knowledge Partner

Manupatra is one of India's leading legal research databases, widely used by legal professionals, academics, and students. It provides comprehensive access to Indian case law, statutes, notifications, circulars, and legal articles across various jurisdictions. With advanced search tools, editorial notes, and citation analysis, Manupatra helps users efficiently navigate complex legal materials. It is particularly known for its extensive coverage of judgments from the Supreme Court, High Courts, tribunals, and commissions, making it an essential resource for legal research and practice in India.

## About LiveLaw- Our Media partner

LiveLaw is a prominent Indian legal news platform that provides comprehensive coverage of court judgments, legal developments, and policy updates. It serves as a crucial resource for lawyers, law students, academics, and the general public by offering real-time updates from the Supreme Court, High Courts, tribunals, and legal institutions across the country.

Known for its insightful legal analysis, LiveLaw also publishes expert opinions, interviews, and editorials, making complex legal matters accessible and engaging to a wider audience.



## About the Competition

To provide everyone with an opportunity to showcase their intellect and creativity on a pertinent subject, the LDS is organizing an All-India Essay Writing Competition with the themes being diverse and inclusive of various topics of discourse that have arisen in contemporary times. This competition aims to foster dialogue, innovation, and collaboration in themes and also encourage the authors to voice their perspectives and refine their writing skills.



## Theme

# Citizens First: Depolitisation of Development & Political Accountability

## Topic 1 : DECRIMINALIZATION OF INDIAN POLITICS

The criminalization of Indian politics represents an existential challenge to democratic integrity. An analysis conducted by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) shed light on the alarming statistics surrounding the criminal charges and financial status of sitting Members of Parliament (MPs) in India. Out of the 514 sitting Lok Sabha MPs examined, a staggering 44 percent, amounting to 225 MPs, have declared criminal cases against themselves in self-sworn affidavits, with nearly 29% dealing with serious cases including murder, attempted murder, and crimes against women. This pervasive infiltration of alleged criminals into legislative bodies undermines public trust in democratic institutions and distorts governance priorities. Addressing this crisis demands a multi-faceted approach beginning with comprehensive voter education initiatives that extend beyond urban centers to reach rural and marginalized communities, equipping citizens with accessible information about candidates' backgrounds, voting rights, and the long-term implications of their electoral choices.

The constitutional debate has intensified around whether candidates should be disqualified immediately upon charges being framed for serious offenses, balancing the presumption of innocence against the integrity of public office. Despite various judicial interventions over the past decade, implementation of electoral reforms remains inconsistent and often ineffective. The introduction of NOTA (None Of The Above) option in 2013, while symbolically important, requires substantive strengthening—perhaps with provisions that trigger re-elections or candidate disqualifications if NOTA receives the highest votes—to translate voter dissatisfaction into meaningful electoral consequences.

## Topic 2 : EXPENDITURE ON ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The financial burden of contesting elections in India has reached prohibitive levels, with estimates suggesting that candidates often spend 20-30 times the official expenditure limits, creating insurmountable barriers to entry for candidates without substantial resources or wealthy backers. This economic exclusion effectively transforms electoral democracy into a playground for the affluent, undermining the constitutional principle of equal opportunity in political participation. The expensive electoral landscape has created a self-perpetuating cycle where astronomical campaign costs necessitate resource accumulation through potentially corrupt means, facilitating the infiltration of black money into campaign financing and establishing dangerous quid pro quo relationships between elected representatives and their financial supporters.

The opacity in political party funding remains a major concern. The introduction of Electoral Bonds which had formalized donations, significantly reduced transparency by allowing anonymous corporate contributions. This system had faced criticism for potentially legalizing corruption and creating an uneven playing field, and was eventually declared to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The persistent resistance to bringing political parties under the Right to Information Act, despite their functioning as public authorities, continues to hinder public scrutiny of financial operations and decision-making processes, allowing parties to operate with minimal accountability despite handling enormous sums of public interest money.

## Topic 3 : FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Internal democracy within political parties has deteriorated significantly, with centralized leadership often making decisions without meaningful consultation of party members. This disconnect extends to manifestos, which frequently fail to reflect voters' priorities in favor of leadership agendas. The absence of specific legislation governing the functioning of political parties has allowed organizational practices that would be unacceptable in other democratic institutions. The Election Commission of India lacks the authority to deregister non-compliant parties, limiting its regulatory effectiveness. Political parties' resistance to RTI oversight prevents public scrutiny of their decision-making and resource allocation. The growing trend of offering unrealistic freebies in election manifestos raises concerns about fiscal responsibility, with ongoing debate about whether the Election Commission should play a stronger role in regulating such promises.

## *Guidelines*

### REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

- The Registration for the competition shall be done only via this link. Once participants have registered for the event, the submission link will be shared with the registered email IDs.
- After the registration, the submission link shall be active till the 15th of July, 2025 [11:59 PM] For submissions by the participants.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer review to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the evaluation process.
- The composition of the peer review panel and the policies governing its functioning shall be determined solely at the discretion of the L&DS, MNLU Mumbai.
- Author shall not disclose any information regarding the identity, including, but not limited to name, institutional assistance, professional details, etc., within the body of the manuscript. Non-adherence of this rule will lead to immediate disqualification.
- All rules & penalties are subject to final discretion of the organising committee. In case of any conflicts, the L&DS (MNLU Mumbai) shall be the final authority on the guidelines.

## *Guidelines*

### FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- All the entries must be formatted in Times New Roman, Font Size 12, and Line spacing 1.5. Footnotes must follow the citation system specified in Harvard Blue Book, 20th Edition.
- All entries should contain footnote citations formatted in Times New Roman, Font Size 10 and Single Line spacing.
- The word limit, inclusive of footnotes, shall be 4000 words. There is no minimum word limit.

### Eligibility

- All Indian National above the age of eighteen irrespective of institutional affiliation are eligible to participate. Co-authorship is permitted up to two authors.
- The Competition is open also open to professionals & academicians.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- The paper must be the original and unpublished work of the author and should not be in consideration for publication or in a contest elsewhere and must be related to one/ more theme(s) / sub-theme(s). All manuscripts must be submitted only via the form sent on their registered email.
- The name of the file shall be the team code allotted. Manuscripts sent via email will not be accepted. All submissions are to be made in English language and in .docx format only.
- All essays would be checked for similarity and those with similarity index more than 10% would be liable for rejection/ penalty as determined by the organising committee.
- Use of AI of any form is strictly prohibited.
- As a condition of publication, the author(s) agree that the submitted manuscripts will be the property of L&S (MNU Mumbai). The author(s) also grant L&S (MNU Mumbai) an irrevocable, transferable, non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to reproduce, publish and distribute their submissions in all media. In case of any conflicts, the L&S (MNU Mumbai) shall be the final authority on the guidelines.
- Author shall not disclose any information regarding the identity, including, but not limited to name, institutional assistance, professional details, etc., within the body of the manuscript. Nonadherence of this rule will lead to immediate disqualification.



## ***Dates to remember***

**Registration begins: 5<sup>th</sup> June**

**Last date for registration: 30<sup>th</sup> June**

**Last date for Submission: 15<sup>th</sup> July**

**Results: First week of August tentatively**

## ***Prizes***

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: 5,000 and a free Manupatra Academy course of choice.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: 3,000 and a 75% discount on any one Manupatra Academy Course.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: 2,000 and a 50% discount on any one Manupatra Academy Course.

Top performers shall be eligible for an internship opportunity at PCGT.

Top 10 essays shall receive an Online Certificate of Merit.

Top 5 essays shall be considered for publication by ADR subject to approval after editorial review.

All Participants who submit their essay before 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2025, will also receive an online certificate of participation. Additionally, all participants can avail a 15% discount on any one course from Manupatra Academy.



## *Registration & Payment Links*

Registration Link      <https://forms.gle/nW29vTUWZCuZ7fWbA>

Payment Link      <https://payments.cashfree.com/forms/2ndNationalEssayWritingCompetitionLDS>



Scan now to register!



For any further queries, Contact us -

[mnlumlds.events@mnlumumbai.edu.in](mailto:mnlumlds.events@mnlumumbai.edu.in)