

Vikalp Sangam: A Manifesto for Justice

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Why in News?

- This article discusses India's various crises, like unemployment and ecological issues. It highlights a manifesto titled 'People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable, and Sustainable India,' prepared by Vikalp Sangam.
- The manifesto, backed by practical examples, is aimed at influencing the 2024 general election and various institutional processes. Past attempts at similar initiatives have seen partial adoption by political parties. The manifesto emphasizes citizen vigilance and proactive demands for implementation.

What are the current challenges faced by India?

- **Unemployment Crisis:** Severe joblessness, highlighted by protests at Parliament by unemployed individuals.
- **Ecological Disasters:** Incidents like the sinking of Joshimath and a dam burst in Sikkim illustrate environmental challenges.
- **Social and Cultural Conflict:** The conflict in Manipur is an example of wider social unrest.
- **Democratic Rights Erosion:** Examples of eroding democratic rights include false cases against activists and suspending opposition MPs.
- **Economic Inequality:** There are significant disparities in wealth and income, with a need for more equitable distribution.

What is Vikalp Sangam?

- Vikalp Sangam acts as a collective platform for 85 different people's movements and civil society organizations.
- **Aim:** search for grounded alternatives to the current model of 'development' that is built on ecological destruction and rising inequalities.
- The VS process includes documentation of alternative initiatives across India.
- The group has not only crafted a collective vision for a sustainable and equitable India but also actively advocates for policy changes to realize this vision, aiming to influence decision-making at multiple levels.

What are the solutions suggested by the 'People's Manifesto'?

Governance:

- **Power to Local Bodies:** The manifesto calls for real devolution of financial and legal powers to village and urban assemblies.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** It demands comprehensive laws ensuring state agency accountability, including public audits.
- **Independent Institutions:** Emphasizes reviving the independence of the Election Commission

and media.

Environmental Issues:

- Sustainable Policies: Urges a national land and water policy emphasizing conservation and community-led efforts.
- Organic Farming: Proposes conversion to organic farming by 2040.
- Renewable Energy: Advocates for decentralized renewable energy and phasing out fossil fuels by 2030.

Others:

- Economic Reforms: Focuses on job creation in small manufacturing and crafts, extending employment guarantees to urban areas.
- Social Justice: Addresses inter-faith conflicts, prioritizes marginalized groups' rights, and suggests increased spending on education and health.
- Decentralization: Seeks fuller implementation of panchayat laws and a National Environment Commissioner role.

Way forward:

Political parties should incorporate these points in their policies, ensuring a comprehensive approach to addressing India's challenges and fostering a more balanced and equitable society.



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