First Past the Post and Proportional Representation System are the two electoral systems to elect the member of legislature in general.

**PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR)**

- The country is divided into small geographical units called constituencies or districts. India has 543 constituencies.
- Each constituency elects one representative. More than one representative may be elected from one constituency.
- A candidate who gets majority of votes wins the elections.
- The winning candidate may not get majority (50%+1) votes, he secures the highest number of votes in that constituency.
- If a party gets more seats than votes, every party gets seats in the legislature in proportion to the percentage of votes it gets.
- Sometimes, it leads to the multi-party coalition government.
- Ex. Indirect Elections to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council, President & Vice President in India.

**FPTP vs. PR**

- Why did India adopt the FPTP system?
  - **FPTP** ensures accountability as voter elects a specific candidate who is available and accessible to fulfil his promises, to address his grievances, while in PR system, it is the party not a specific person.
  - FPTP system is relatively simple to understand even for common voters unlike PR system which may work in a small country, but not in a sub-continental country like India.
  - India being a parliamentary democracy requires that the executive has majority in the legislature for stable government. Through FPTP the winning candidate secures the highest number of votes in that constituency.
  - FPTP system represents diversity of India with candidates appearing from different backgrounds irrespective of gender, caste, community or status.

- Critical Analyses
  - It is believed that First past the post caused the Brexit disaster, therefore it's the time for India to learn & move towards at least partial proportional representation.
  - FPTP has raised various concerns with respect to voter’s preferences. Perhaps most damagingly, the distribution of votes is very poorly reflected in the distribution of seats.
  - In the Lok Sabha Elections 1984, the Congress party won four-fifths of the Lok Sabha seats – more than 80% of the seats (415 of the 543). But it doesn't mean that four out of five Indian voters voted for the Congress party, it got 48% of the votes i.e. only 48% of those who voted. How can such electorate claim to represent the constituency, or even those voters who voted?
  - Another issue as noticed by the 170th Report of the Law Commission of India chaired by Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy that majority of the votes approx 70% (votes cast in favour of the defeated candidates including independents) are not counted once the outcome has been declared and are going without representation.

- PR system represents a number of seats in proportion to the percentage of votes that the political parties or candidates get. This system ensures equitable representation of the people. The PR system ensures reflection of the party’s popular vote for a balanced cabinet formation. The PR system reduces the wastage of votes and provides a strong check on hyper-competition and hyper-radicalism as there are other political parties to support the winning candidate.

- Another issue as noted by the FPTP Report of Law Commission of India that FPTP implies to a single candidate or party to win the entire seat, resulting in the absence of representation of other candidates, groups, minorities and women. 

*VISION IAS*