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- ❖ **SCO Conclave at Goa**
- ❖ **EI and Academic Resilience**
- ❖ **Delimitation J & K Assembly Constituencies**
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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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Upcoming State Elections: Semi-final 2024

Impending Legislative Assembly elections in five states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram between late 2023 to early 2024 are going to be the strong determinant for the 18th Lok Sabha elections to be held in April-May 2024. Both the rivals, BJP and Congress would be eying in collaboration with alliances of other smaller regional and local political elements on 83 Lok Sabha seats in these states. Brainstorming for strategy has begun.

Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) understands its Achilles Heel and has started working on it. Morale and motivations of Congress is sky high with *Bharat Jodo Yatra* that delivered Karnataka to its keel. Congress now seems to have learnt a lot from the BJP's ways of electoral calculations, election management and campaign strategy. Since 2014 BJP is being branded as 'New Congress' and now the way Congress is marching forward it may be branded as 'Disciplined and filtered BJP' as it has learnt the relevant arts from its rival in the arena of political power. BJP thus, faces strong challenges from Congress in particular and Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA—recently framed alliance of opposition parties) in general.

Presently BJP has considerable edge in Rajasthan with 24 out of 25 seats of Lok Sabha in its bag. BJP also received 59.1% of the total votes polled in 2019 in the state. However, Congress is in the seat of authority in the state. Rajasthan Congress is now a disciplined dispensation with reconciliation between Gahlot and Sachin Pilot and is comfortably placed. BJP has failed to project any face for Chief Minister in the state. Vasundhara Raje is at loggerheads with the high command and would turn out to be a divisive force as that happens to be the ugly face of power struggle in India.

Chhattisgarh too is in the hands of Congress but BJP bagged 9 out of 11 seats of Lok Sabha in 2019 that too with voting percent of 50.7%. Here again BJP has thus far failed to project any strong face against Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel of Congress, who is quite comfortably placed within the state as well as the Party. Congress is buoyed with recent spate of successes, whereas BJP is facing anti-incumbency wave across the country.

Madhya Pradesh too presents a gloomy picture for BJP even though it bagged 28 of the 29 Lok Sabha seats in 2019 elections. BJP in spite of being there in power is facing strong anti-incumbency factor against Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Chief Minister for last couple of decades. Internal conflict and power struggle on account of disgruntled elements within is obvious challenge before BJP. With 96 MLAs Congress is a force to be reckoned with. Jyotiraditya's realignment with BJP, bringing down the Congress Government ceases to be any bottleneck.

BJP has 4 out of 17 seats of Lok Sabha in Telangana at present. Ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), continues to be stronger. Congress has gained considerable ground to push BJP at the third place in the ensuing elections, unless BJP pulls itself up with control over internal power struggle or enters into alliance with BRS.

Mizoram though has only one Lok Sabha seat and that too is into the hands of Mizo National Front (MNF) since 2019. Though, MNF an ally of NDA, since 2014, has considerable stakes in view of the recent uprisings in Manipur. This may force MNF leaders to recalculate their stakes and rearrange their position on the eve of 2024 general elections. Moreover, MNF has opposed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019. Hence, probabilities of MNF recalibrating its alliance are ripe.

All is not hunky dory for BJP. Major issues include: anti-incumbency factor; internal conflict on different issues of national and regional importance; power struggle within; leaders ever-escalating ambitions; floating-leaders calculating winning probabilities to change sides; unresolved social, economic and cultural issues are to name a few. Congress has been working hard on its mistakes and focusing on the changing circumstances and shaping its narratives accordingly. Print, electronic and social media is getting replete with narratives and counter-narratives; claims and counter-claims; arguments and counter-arguments, memes and reels. It is high time the voters need to learn and educate themselves as 2024 is all set to decide their fate and future of young India.

— BK



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