



INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA: OCTOBER 2018 DOSSIER

The October dossier devotes the entire Part I to the upcoming assembly elections in five states of India. The results of the four big states will determine the outcome for the rival parties – the BJP and Congress with their allies - for the 2019 General Elections.

The foreign developments include the visit by President Putin to India in the background of CAATSA sanctions by the USA. Indo-Japanese relations give boost to the development in north eastern region of India in terms of infrastructural development and connectivity.

In South Asia, the analysis focuses on the two rounds of Bhutan elections to the lower house of Gyelyong Tshokhang.

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Part I India - Domestic developments

Dr. Klaus Julian Voll gives analyses of the two rival parties — the right-wing BJP and the centrist Congress party in run-up to the 2018 November-December assembly elections in five states of India. Dr. Joyce Lobo builds the scenarios on these five states along with their respective 2013 performances.

The Domestic Political Scene: Strengths and weaknesses of BJP and Congress

Since the month of October 2018, the major political parties are focusing on the upcoming state elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram. (See the previews about these elections)

Besides, all eyes are also getting directed towards the *Lok Sabha* elections in 2019, which will decide, as many are believing, the future fundamental course of Indian politics and society.

In talks with politicians and members of civil society, most of them expect the BJP/NDA government to return to power, although with a reduced majority. They believe, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also head the next government, possibly in a coalition and without an own absolute majority for the BJP.

One of the reasons given is the failure of a united opposition front (*'Mahabathgandhan'* or grand alliance), e. g., there will be not one opposition candidate against one BJP or NDA candidate. Also, the lack of alternative visions for India's governance and development by the opposition are cited.

Especially, between the BJP and the Congress, the contents and tones of the 'debates' are becoming more and more aggressive, mixed even with hate.

Strengths and weaknesses of the BJP

The BJP claims more than one hundred million party members and therefore to be numerically in the pole position amongst all the political parties of the world. It possesses a modern and country-wide organization, is financially well endowed and ahead of all the other parties, one of the reasons being a massive support by India's big companies (*'crony capitalism'*).

- Currently, the BJP is dominated by the Narendra Modi- and Amit Shah-duo, in consultation with the RSS-chief Mohan Bhagwat. They succeeded de facto, to eliminate any inner-party opposition and democracy.
- With Narendra Modi, the BJP possesses a rhetorically superior political leadership figure, who can single-handedly decide elections. Besides, the Hindu-nationalist cadre organization RSS (*'Rashtiya Swayansevak Sangh'* – social welfare organization of Hindus) supports the BJP in elections at the ground.
- The BJP carries out a decisive ideological campaign, irrespective of its known pragmatism through its erstwhile influential economic liberal wing, which de facto ceased to exist.
- RSS and BJP subvert systematically all existing institutions.
- The BJP spreads successfully the image, to be a party without corruption. Is this the case?
- The BJP attacks political adversaries and people, who think differently and is labelling them in the name of a *'hyper-nationalism'* as *'anti-national'*. The BJP polarizes in terms of *'friend-enemy'*-categories.

- The so-called '*lunatic fringe*' of the BJP threatens to become the new '*mainstream*', how it is becoming evident in campaigns for the '*protection of the cow*' and '*love jihad*' etc.
- Through these campaigns, the religious minorities are intimidated, seemingly in tacit connivance by the Prime Minister and the RSS, as critics are claiming.
- The various secret services are also used, to intimidate and isolate political opponents. Critics of the BJP argue, that through the centralization of power, the way to an authoritarian surveillance state is opened and that democratic structures are getting threatened.
- The growing discrepancy between announcements and promises with the existing realities could turn in the medium and short run into an '*Achilles heel*' for the BJP.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Congress

The upcoming elections in five states in November and December 2018 will determine the direction the Congress is heading to, also with regard to the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. They will determine, if the Congress, which got nearly knocked out in 2014, followed by successive defeats in various states, will have the capacity to bounce back, not to speak about a return to power, or if the party will even go further down.

Compared with former times, the Congress does not command anymore a pan-Indian presence.

- The party maintains only relatively weak organizational structures in a number of states. There, the Congress exists only in the shadow of other parties and is politically more or less irrelevant.
- Till now, there is no ideological and programmatic renewal, besides the '*soft Hindutva*' approach by its President Rahul Gandhi and the references to overall 'unemployment' and 'rural distress' in agriculture.
- The leadership weakness of Congress-President Rahul Gandhi, his lack of charisma – quite in contrast to his sister Priyanka Vadra-Gandhi - as well his rhetoric limitations, especially in Hindi, weaken the party.
- In spite of a s generational change at the top, Rahul Gandhi till now did not succeed, to bring many young politicians into leading positions in the party, besides a few exceptions, who are most of the time so-called '*princelings*' (S. Pilot, M. Scindia).
- The demand for a leading role of the Congress, although less vigorous than in earlier time, in the campaign 2019 leads to resistance and skepticism with various regional parties and endangers the pursued opposition unity in its anti-BJP battle, demonstrated in the failed attempts of unity between the Congress and other parties in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the upcoming state elections.
- After nearly five years, the remembering of various scams and corruption during the UPA 2-regime between 2009 und 2014 with large sections of the electorate still continues and dampens the chances of the Congress to come back to power. Mani Shankar Aiyar, readmitted to the party after his suspension last year, expects at best a doubling of *Lok Sabha* seats for the Congress in 2019.
- The Congress is, especially compared to the BJP, financially not well endowed and split into various factions in several states. Quite a few Congress politicians succumb to financial offers from the BJP, like recently in Goa, to switch over to the BJP.

Perspectives

It would be a wrong impression, that the upcoming state and *Lok Sabha* elections will be only a bilateral affair between the BJP and the Congress. The opposition, also consisting of various regional respectively state parties, will try, like the Congress, to avoid a '*presidential*' campaign and to localize these elections.

It is still too early, to speculate about the major topics in 2019. But it seems to be clear, that the ruling dispensation wants to add the emotional dimension of a temple in honor of the Hindu-god Ram to it, also to over-write critical questions with regard to job-creation and other issues.

2019 can be expected to be perhaps the most bitter and polarizing election campaign in the history of independent India, with the use of tremendous funds, way above the permissible limits, declared by the *Chief Election Commission*.

Preview: 2018 Assembly elections in big states of India

As the year comes to an end, India will observe assembly elections in five states and by-polls in the southern state of Karnataka. While elections are to be held in *Madhya Pradesh* (MP) and Mizoram (See Preview on Mizoram) on November 28, Rajasthan and Telangana will hold on December 7. Only Chhattisgarh elections will be held on November 12 and 20. The final counting will be on December 11. These assembly results hold key for parties to realise their positions in the upcoming general elections to the Lok Sabha (lower house) of the Indian parliament in early 2019.

Madhya Pradesh (MP)

In MP the following table shows, that those who won the 2013 assembly elections were from the national parties alone along with three independent candidates. The *Indian National Congress* (INC), or popularly called as Congress, lost by a relatively small margin, if one adds the vote-share of the BSP. Given the 15 years of *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) rule, there is the anti-incumbency factor that the opposition parties can benefit from.

Madhya Pradesh Assembly Election Results: 2013 & 2018 awaiting

Party	2013		2018	
	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
BJP	165	44.88		
INC	58	36.38		
BSP	04	6.29		
IND	03	5.38		
Total	230	--		

Note: *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP); *Indian National Congress* (INC); *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP); and *Independent* (IND).

In the 2014 general elections, the BJP won 27 seats with vote share of 54.76%, INC won 2 seats with vote share of 35.35%, while the BSP and the left parties failing to win a single seat to the Lok Sabha. The BJP under Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is beset with problems—farmer problems (Mandsur shooting of farmers), corruption (Vyapam scam, the multi-crore jobs and professional exams scam), unemployment, inflation, especially with food, upper caste anger over amendments to the SC-ST (Atrocities) Act etc.

The INC attacks these problems in its campaigns and questions the development agenda of the BJP, which it has termed “eye wash”. However, Singh has remained popular. The BJP has attempted to highlight the rule of Chouhan and berate the opposition parties for failing to form any strong alliance. Through his ‘*Jan Ashirwad Yatra*’, Chouhan has tried to cover 180 out of 230 constituencies. His efforts will be doubled when Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigns in the November, before the election. Modi can turn the tides in favour of BJP in MP, with the INC facing problems of forming formidable alliance with the opposition parties, which has formally failed.

Congress strategy includes ‘*soft Hindutva*’. This means, in other words that the party president Rahul Gandhi is projected as a Shiv devotee, *gaushalas* or cow shelters have been promised in every *gram panchayat* (local government in village) etc.

The BJP intends to give tickets to contest for those MLAs and candidates, who can win, while INC has decided to repeat its 2013 winners. So far, both parties are yet to finalise their candidates.

Congress rivalry and Mayawati’s gamble with other parties are something interesting to watch in these elections. In the first week of October the *ABP News-CVoter* opinion poll had predicted that INC would get atleast 122 seats out of 230 seats. INC could win, if it had ties with other parties. The Dalit party led by Mayawathi, the *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP), has decided to form an alliance with state political parties, like it did in Karnataka. Mayawathi, who is comfortable with the central leaders like Rahul and Sonia Gandhi, is at loggerheads with regional heads like Digvijaya Singh. In MP, the INC has leaders like Digvijaya Singh, Kamal Nath etc. Like the BSP, the *Samajwadi Party* (SP) has followed in the footsteps of BSP of not forming any alliance with INC in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Again the INC failed to form an alliance with the *Gondwana Gantantra Party* (GGP), which has tribals as its voter base in MP.

There are 47 reserved seats for Scheduled Tribes. In the 2013 assembly election, BJP had won 31 seats, INC won 15 and one by an independent candidate. INC is now holding talks with a fledgling tribal political outfit called *Jai Adivasi Yuva Shakti* (JAYS). JAYS attempts to field candidates from tribal areas of Alirajpur, Ratlam, Jhabua, Dhar, Khargone, Burhanpur, Khandwa, Dewas and Barwani districts in western Madhya Pradesh. GGP's influence is largely in the Eastern and Southern districts of Madhya Pradesh like Seoni, Mandla, Shahdol and Satna.

INC needs more than 8% of the electorate to swing in its favour and that could be possible with alliances that cater to specific interests.

In the meanwhile, the leaders of the SP, the left parties, *Bahujan Sangharsh Dal*, GPP, *Rashtriya Samanta Dal*, *Prajaatantrik Samadhan Party* and *Loktantrik Janata Dal* have tried to form a separate alliance, but with no success.

Rajasthan

The BJP has ruled Rajasthan for five years under the chief ministership of Vasundhara Raje. In Rajasthan, the INC needs an 8% swing in its favour, says expert Sanjay Kumar, the director of the *Centre for the Study of Developing Societies*, in order to defeat the BJP, as the gap in the vote share of the two parties is about 12 per cent (see Table).

Rajasthan Assembly Election Results: 2013 & 2018 awaiting

Party	2013		2018	
	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
BJP	163	45.17		
INC	21	33.07		
IND	07	8.21		
Others	09	8.63		
Total	200			

Note *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP); *Indian National Congress* (INC); and *Independent* (IND)

Others include: *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP) with 3 seats, *National People's Party* with 4 seats and *National Unionist Zamindara Party* with 2 seats

In the 2014 general elections, the BJP won 25 seats with a vote share of 55.61%, while the INC, BSP, *Nationalist Congress Party* (NCP) and the left parties failed to win a single seat.

In the first week of October this year, surveys carried out by *ABP News-CVoter* and *C fore* had concluded that the INC would win 142 and 124-138 seats respectively in the 200-member Rajasthan Assembly. The INC state president Sachin Pilot was leading the opinion polls over Raje as the most preferred candidate for becoming the CM.

Raje embarked on a "*Gaurav Yatra*" of two months to campaign, along with BJP president Amit Shah (to some), to about 165 constituencies. The party election management committee has proposed a schedule of rallies in seven districts by PM Modi.

Rajasthan has witnessed the long rule of INC from 1951 to 1977, 1981 to 1990, 1998-2003, and 2008-13. The Janata Party has ruled from 1977-1980, while the BJP has ruled the state only from 1990-92, 1993-98, 2003-08, 2013-18. Since 1990, power in the state has shifted between BJP and the INC. Given the fact that people prefer to change the party at power every five years, the predictions are in favour of the INC.

However the INC faces frictions within the party seniors. The stalwarts in Rajasthan are largely the former CM Ashok Gehlot and party president Sachin Pilot. Hence, it has decided to use its seniors to focus on campaign and not on contesting.

People focus on issues like development, good governance, jobs, etc. The BJP highlighted the 116 schemes initiated for the public in Rajasthan covering toilets, gas, electricity and homes for people. The INC has questioned the work done by the Raje government. Raje faces this time the ire of the influential Rajputs for not aiding them a withdrawal of police cases against them. The Gujjars are angry, as reservations are not granted yet. Jats will not vote in her favour, given the rivalry between them and the Rajputs, wherein the latter have more political representation. These three communities make up for 1/5th of the population. What remains is people will decide on the basis of work done.

Chhattisgarh

The BJP is facing 15 years of anti-incumbency in Chhattisgarh. The state, since its creation in 2000, has been ruled by two national parties—the INC and BJP. The INC had a brief stint from 2000 to 2003 under CM Ajit Jodi. Since 2003 CM Raman Singh has ruled the state (2003-08, 2008-13 and 2013-18). Both the parties have won a vote share with a thin margin (see Table). Hence, it is possible, that either one of the parties would win the elections. If the INC and BSP had formed an alliance, they could have eaten into the share of BJP, thus fracturing its mandate.

Chhattisgarh Assembly Election Results: 2013 & 2018 awaiting

Party	2013		2018	
	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
BJP	49	41.04		
INC	39	40.29		
BSP	01	4.27		
IND	01	5.33		
Total	90			

Note: *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP); *Indian National Congress* (INC); *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP); and *Independent* (IND)

In the 2014 general elections, the BJP won 10 seats (24.83% percentage of valid votes polled by the party) while the INC managed to win only one seat (19.55%). BSP and left parties failed to win any.

The *ABP News-CVoter* opinion poll has predicted that the INC would win 47 seats while BJP would win 40 seats in the 90-member Chhattisgarh Assembly. When it comes to leaders, Raman Singh leads as the first choice of the voters, due to his populist policies (e.g. 1 kg of rice for Rupee 1 to poor families and free distribution of milch cows to *Adivasi* (indigenous people/tribals) families).

He is an upper caste Thakur leader, despite the state having significant population of low castes/classes and tribals. The state has 32% tribals, 12% scheduled castes and 49 % other backward classes (OBCs).

The problem that INC faces in the state is the alliance between the BSP and Ajit Jogi's *Janata Congress Chhattisgarh* (JCC). In 2016 Jogi quit INC to form the JCC. Their alliance may dent the chances of INC to win the essential margin of votes, while BJP may comfortably win the elections for a fourth time. BJP too is cautious, as the INC has bettered its record in the bye-polls.

Telangana

Telangana got its first assembly in 2014 and its first CM K. Chandrashekar Rao from the *Telangana Rashtra Samiti* (TRS). The TRS led the campaign for a separate State for more than a decade from the state of Andhra Pradesh. Telangana became India's 29th state in June 2014. With this, Rao ended up being the political face,

TRS won 63 of the 119 Assembly seats (see Table), and emerged as the party with the largest vote share. However these elections were clubbed with the state of Andhra Pradesh. The 2018 elections will be the very first for the state.

TRS also won 11 (34.9%) of the 17 Lok Sabha seats, while the INC won 2 seats (24.7%) and parties like BJP (10.5%), TDP (12.3%), AIMIM and YSRCP winning single seats. AIMIM and YSRCP got 8% of the vote share together. The BSP, Left parties and NCP did not win any seats. All in all the TRS has polled more than a third of the votes in both elections.

Telangana Assembly Election Results: 2013 & 2018 awaiting

Party	2014		2018	
	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
TRS	63	34.3*		
INC	21	25.2		
TDP	15	14.7		
AIMIM	07	3.8		
BJP	05	7.1		
Others	07	14.9		
IND	01	NA		
Total	119			

Note: *Telangana Rashtra Samiti* (TRS); *Indian National Congress* (INC); *Telugu Desam Party* (TDP); *All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen* (AIMIM); *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP); and *Independent* (IND). Others comprise of *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP) 2 seats; *Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party* (YSRCP) 03 seats; *Communist Party of India* (CPI) and *Communist Party of India-Marxist* (CPI-M) with one seat each.

*Data taken from IndiaVotes.com cited by The Economic Times, June 30, 2018

While the Congress is trying to form an alliance with TDP, Telangana will see a direct contest between the Congress and the TRS, as the BJP and TDP have a nominal presence with seven and 14 per cent votes during the 2014 Assembly elections.

TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu left the BJP led alliance *National Democratic Alliance* (NDA) at the centre, as the latter failed to grant *Special Category Status* to Andhra Pradesh. Naidu faces challenges with cases from the Enforcement Directorate against his party members, the challenges from YSRCP etc. His party rules Andhra Pradesh, which has an anti-BJP mood. Therefore Naidu is attempting an alliance with INC, CPI and the *Telangana Jana Samithi* (TJS). The TJS was formed in early 2018 as the political arm of the *Telangana Joint Action Committee*, which spearheaded the separate statehood agitation from the end of 2009 to 2014. However, at this juncture there are problems between INC and TJS in terms of seat sharing.

CM Rao called for early polls citing “*political fragility*” in the state. While TDP-INC and other parties in the alliance will focus on berating TRS rule in Telangana and BJP rule at the centre, TRS will campaign against a non-BJP and non-INC front.

TRS may attempt an alliance with BJP after the elections, as speculations are rife in the media. However experts point out, that the Muslims comprise nearly 13% of the population and are affecting the outcome in 48 of 119 assembly seats. TRS is still popular amongst the people.

Moreover the INC MLAs numbering seven have defected to the TRS. TDP has lost 12 out of 15 MLAs to TRS and one MLA to YSRCP. The opposition terms the TRS as a “*defectionist party*” and is campaigning on issues such as rural distress and unemployment. Rao intends to campaign by highlighting the populist schemes and projects that he has implemented during his tenure.

Conclusion

Experts like Sanjay Kumar, senior journalist Rasheed Kidwai etc have pointed out, that winning a few states for Congress is more crucial than for the BJP, as it needs to retain its salience while portraying to be the alternative to the formidable BJP and its alliance, the NDA. These elections will decide to a large degree the fate of Congress for the 2019 general elections.

The INC with opposition parties like the BSP, the SP etc have similar intentions of not fragmenting the votes in favour of the BJP. The lack of unity within the opposition parties is actually becoming the strength of the saffron party.

Experts have pointed that the alliance with Mayawati might have enabled the INC to bring a strong swing towards ruling the states in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and MP. However in absence of any alliance, INC may not be close to a victory in all three states.

The other aspect that experts in India point out to is the aggressive campaigning by PM Narendra Modi, who can swing the fence sitters in the last days of campaigning.

Preview: Mizoram Assembly Elections, Nov. 28, 2018

The Indian state of Mizoram goes for polls on November 28 this year. The assembly has 40 seats and the grand old party, the *Indian National Congress* (INC) has been in power since December 2008 under the Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla. He has ruled Mizoram five times—1984-86, 1989-1998, 2008-2013, and 2013-18.

Party dissensions

Thanhawla's rule has been set with troubles that emanate within the party. On September 14, Home Minister R Lalzirliana resigned from the cabinet. This was followed by MLA Lalrinliana Sailo's (former minister and a party veteran) resignation in October after the party/government failed to turn his constituency (Tuichang) to a separate Khawzawl district. Similarly, Lalzirliana wants Saitual in his Tawi constituency to be a district. He is popular and powerful within Mizoram. Both have shifted their loyalty to the *Mizo National Front* (MNF) — the largest regional party and the principal opposition in Mizoram. At the moment the INC has not been able to control dissension within the party, while meeting the aspirations of its leaders within Mizoram.

So far two parties have been able to be in power since the state of Mizoram was formed in 1987—INC for most of the period followed by the MNF. The MNF has played an important role in the creation of the state where it operated as a terrorist organisation and later converted to a political party. For its role it won the first assembly elections in 1987. So far it has held power in 1998 and 2003.

Mizoram Assembly Election Results: 2013 & 2018 awaiting

Party	2013		2018	
	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
INC	34	44.63		
MNF	05	28.65		
MPC	01	6.15		

Note: Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF) and Mizoram People's Conference (MPC)

INC has so far always won with a vote share crossing more than 30%. It has improved its record every cyclical year for the assembly polls. INC also won the only Lok Sabha seat for Meghalaya in 2014 with a vote share of 49.33%. MNF has managed around 30% and less. The third party to win seats is the *Mizoram People's Conference* (MPC). MPC has won the assembly polls when Mizoram became the Union Territory of India in 1972. It ruled in 1978 and 1984. However, after Mizoram became a state, the MPC remained as the principal opposition. Since 2003 it is reduced as the third largest party winning seats as less as three.

MNF has already decided on its lists of contestants, while the INC has delayed in deciding its contenders. Many in the INC cadre are leaving and shifting their loyalties to the MNF. These reasons can enable the MNF to win the required majority with the help of the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) at the centre, which has better funds and resources at its disposal.

The INC is relying on its leader Thanhawla to reproduce the magic figures while blaming the leaders who have exited the party for being 'corrupt'.

BJP gains?

Since 2016, the BJP is ruling Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura directly, while in Meghalaya and Nagaland it is a coalition partner. The only remaining state in the North East, that BJP needs to make inroads, is Mizoram.

BJP has blamed the INC government of not utilising the central grants for developing the state. It intends to campaign on issues of lack of development in the state, inefficient and corrupt government. Ram Madhav, BJP general secretary in-charge for the North-East, promised, that if BJP was voted to power it would "*construct a four-lane highway across the state, linking both Myanmar and Bangladesh*" and establish engineering colleges at Lunglei and Champhai districts.

Also the BJP downplayed the ban on beef in India and countered by saying, that the party respected the food habits, distinct cultural and customs of the Mizos and their religion that is Christianity.

The BJP is planning to contest alone without aligning with any political party. But it has not ruled out the possibilities of having a post poll alliance, as it did in Meghalaya in March this year. This is inevitable, as BJP has formed the *North-East Democratic Alliance* (NEDA) with some of the North Eastern parties. Within Mizoram, the MNF and the *National People's Party* are NEDA constituents. Ram Madhav confirmed, "*We are willing to forge an alliance with like like-minded non-Congress parties after the election.*" Naturally the alliance will be after the polls with MNF.

The BJP has never won any assembly or Lok Sabha seats in Mizoram. However, it could rule in an alliance with the MNF, provided the latter wins the elections. INC faces the anti-incumbency factor. It faces all political parties in the state as its opponents.

In the local elections to the 20 member *Chakma Autonomous District Council* held in April this year, the INC won only 6 seats. The BJP won 5 seats while the MNF won 8 seats.

The *Maraland Democratic Front* (MDF), a former ally of the MNF, joined the BJP in October 2017. The MDF has been active in the *Mara Autonomous District Council*. These instances further strengthen the BJP.

Mizo alliances

In 2017, the *Zoram Nationalist Party* (ZN), *Mizoram Peoples Conference* (MPC) and *Zoram Exodus Movement* (ZEM) came together to form the *Zoram Peoples Movement* (ZPM). The ZEM was a new group comprising of retired priests, retired government officials and senior journalists. ZPM plans to

contest 38 seats and has decided not to join the BJP. They want the Mizo government to check illegal migrants coming from Assam, following the publication of the complete draft of the *National Register of Citizens* (NRC).

On September 08, 2018 three minor parties in Mizoram, *Peoples' Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram* (PRISM), *Mizoram Chhantu Pawl* (MCP) or *Save Mizoram Front and Operation Mizoram* forged a pre-poll alliance with the aim of contesting the assembly polls due later this year. PRISM earlier acted as the anti-corruption watchdog under the name of *People's Right to Information and Development Implementation Society of Mizoram* and converted itself into a political party. The alliance goals are to bring the entire state under the *Sixth Schedule* to protect the tribal nature of Mizoram, end border disputes with Assam and drive out illegal immigrants.

These alliances further can dent the votes of the INC and also bring in new challenges for the key political parties in the state.

Issues and challenges

Mizoram faces electoral challenges in the form of gender. Women enjoy a better social state, given the balance in sex ratio, better literacy rates etc. However, women are not welcome in politics.

The second challenge is posed by the illegal migrants and the Mizos expect a deal similar to that of Assam in identifying and repatriating these to their respective nations. Migrants have come to this state from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal. The parties, that are giving importance to this issue, are the regional ones along with the BJP. The Mizos have problems with the Chakmas. Most of the Chakmas today live as refugees in Arunachal Pradesh. Members of civil society had urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deport these migrants.

The INC also faces the refugee problems. There is pressure on the government to take 32,857 Bru refugees living in Tripura state. The Supreme Court has stopped the Mizoram government from beginning physical repatriation.

The BJP at the centre along with the governments of Mizoram and Tripura has been trying to repatriate the Brus. So far only around 50 of 54,007 families shifted to Mizoram between August and September. The Brus are not happy with the repatriation package. Their main demand is allotment of land of about 5 hectares. The communal tensions in 1997 led to their exodus and again in 2009. The Brus will vote from the polling stations in Tripura on November 28.

Other issues that are important to the elections are lack of infrastructural development, unemployment, poverty, etc. Last year PM Narendra Modi promised Mizoram to develop the Rih-Tiddim road, establish various rural '*haat*' (flee markets) along the Mizoram-Myanmar border. The Modi government also launched the *North East Special Infrastructure Scheme* (NESIS) to facilitate the use of basic facilities.

Mizoram statistics

Mizoram has a population that crosses one million people. Population is almost proportionately divided in rural and urban areas. The sex ratio stands at 976 to 1000 males and literacy rate stands at 91.33% as per 2011 census.

The state has about 95% of the tribal population, called in India as *Scheduled Tribes*. Mizoram is dominated by the Christians (87.16%). Buddhists are the largest minority (8.51%) followed by various Hindus (2.75%), Muslims, Jains etc.

Part II India - Foreign Policy Developments

Dr. Joyce Lobo analyses the recent visit by President Putin given the pressures that India faces due to USA's CAATSA secondary sanctions and also writes that PM Modi's visit to Japan boosts India's *Act East Policy*.

19th Annual India-Russia Summit

The visit by President Vladimir Putin, for the 19th Annual Summit in India, followed the informal meeting at Sochi with his counterpart Narendra Modi. This informal summit was the result of the two global events concerning the USA and its policies towards Russia and Iran—USA pull out from the *Iran Deal* in May and the *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* (CAATSA, Aug 2017).

India has good ties with Russia and Iran. Secondly CAATSA affects the sovereignty of India in terms of arms buying from Russia, due to its clause of secondary sanctions. In Sochi, both leaders affirmed their strong commitment to a multi-polar world and strategic independence. In fact, the Sochi Summit found its relevance, where both sides have decided to continue with such informal meets. During Putin's visit, the *Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations for the period 2017-18* was extended to five more years (2019-2023).

The partnership between India and Russia is based on the 1971 *Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation*. This has now evolved into a *Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership*. However, given the present state of global affairs especially concerning trade and the Middle East and the Far East, the relations between India and Russia show strains. To assuage these, Putin invited Modi to an informal meeting at Sochi in May this year. The discussion was largely on finding positions on global matters, while ensuring that the partnership remained true to its name.

The current Summit saw the signing of about 8 agreements in the fields of development, foreign consultations, space, nuclear, railways, transport, etc. The last Annual Summit was held on June 1, 2017.

Economic cooperation

In 2017-18, India's trade with Russia has grown by 20 percent. Bilateral trade in 2016 was US \$ 7.71 bn and in 2017 about US \$ 10.17 bn. The trade is in favour of Russia and therefore India has requested the former to buy imports like polished diamonds etc. There are efforts on both sides to diversify trade and strengthen economic cooperation. Currently, the *Joint Working Group* on economic cooperation has identified 23 projects. Both countries aim to cross US\$ 30 bn by 2025.

Two-way investments have already crossed the US \$ 30 bn 2025 target. The new target is set at US\$ 50 bn by 2025. The telecommunications sector attracts the highest FDI from Russia with a 68% share.

India has created "*Invest India*", a non-profit venture under the *Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion* to facilitate Russian investors in India, while Russia has launched the "*Single Window Service*" under the Ministry of Economic Development, to facilitate operations of Indian companies in Russia. Again, India has created the '*Russia Plus*', which works within the sphere of *Invest India* as a

one-stop solution for investors, that provides handholding support through business advisory, policy guidance, location assessment, assistance with regulatory approvals, issue redressal and expansion support. Through this, India seeks to draw Russian investments in non-traditional sectors.

Both countries during this Summit held the first *Annual Business Summit*. Modi invited Russian business groups to invest in the *Sagarmala* program, metro rail, modernisation and building of ports and airports. He sought opportunities for Indian IT and pharma companies in Russia through joint ventures. Russia has identified four areas of sharing expertise with India—Energy, Digital Economy, Startups and Infrastructure. India and Russia have already signed the Joint Declaration – "*India-Russia Economic Cooperation: The Way Forward*". From this, the first ever *India-Russia Start-Up Summit* will take place in December 2018.

New areas of cooperation in which both sides have shown their interest are in agriculture, infrastructure, transport and Science and Technology. Institutional cooperation between regions of India and Russia got a boost through the signing of agreements between Assam and Sakhalin, Haryana and Bashkortostan, Goa and Kaliningrad, Odisha and Irkutsk, Visakhapatnam and Vladivostok.

Defence cooperation

The key highlight of Putin's visit was the signing of the defence deal. The *Indian Air Force* (IAF) suffers from declining squadron strength. It has considered the acquisition of the 36 Rafale fighter jets from France and the S-400 air defence system from Russia as the need of the hour. Putin's visit resulted in the signing of the deal for five regiments of the S-400 Triumf air defence system, amounting to US\$6 bn. India has bought five regiments/units or 40 launchers and about 1,000 missiles. However prior to the signing of the deal, the USA had attempted to dissuade India from the deal with possibilities of sanctions under CAATSA. The USA is worried about the '*interoperability*' of its systems in India with Russian buys, though the real reasons lie in the capturing of parts of the defence market by major arms producers, like Russia. Other defence deals did not take place.

Nuclear Energy

Energy has emerged as a key sector. Indian investments in Russia's oil and gas sector have exceeded the US\$ 10 bn mark. However, no major deals were signed in the energy sector, other than the *Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field*. Russia is constructing the remaining six power units at Kudankulam *Nuclear Power Plant* (NPP). Both countries have welcomed consultations on the new Russian designed NPP in India. Both are involved in the NPP equipment manufacturing and its cooperation in third countries. Both are involved with Bangladesh in the implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Project.

Both sides hold common views on the Iran Deal, on Syria, Afghanistan, Korean Peninsula, arms race in outer space, terrorism, etc. However, the last minute delay in signing of the defence agreement may have made a dent in the relations between both countries, given India's last minute consultation with the USA by NSA Ajit Doval, who seems to be in the driver's seat, when it comes to foreign policy

(see Pravin Sawhney's "*How India walked a tightrope to ink the S-400 missiles deal with Russia*", [The Wire](#)).

Modi-Abe Meet

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited (27-29 October, 2018) Japan for the *13th India-Japan Annual Summit*.

India shares a special strategic and global partnership with Japan. The personal chemistry between Modi and Abe is well understood with the five summits and 12 meetings in total. Abe led Modi on a tour to the Yamanashi prefecture, which has a sizeable industrial base. Modi visited the leading manufacturer of factory automation systems, called the FANUC Corporation. It is one of the largest makers of industrial robots in the world.

Japan is an important partner in India's *Act East Policy* and both countries share a common Indo-Pacific vision, around which the talks revolved. This was highlighted in the September 2017 joint statement titled as '*Towards a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific*'.

The 2017 summit resulted in the establishment of the *Act East Forum*. It held its first meeting on December 05, 2017. This acts as a common platform to align policies of India's "*Act East Policy*" with Japan's "*Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*". The forum focuses on specific projects for economic modernization of India's North-East region, including those pertaining to connectivity, developmental infrastructure, industrial linkages as well as people-to-people contacts through tourism, culture and sports-related activities.

October 08, 2018 witnessed the second meeting of the forum. This led to identifying infrastructure in the North East— National Highway 40 between Shillong and Dawki, National Highway 51 between Tura and Dalu (in Meghalaya) and National Highway 54 between Aizawl and Tuipang in Mizoram. The forum has looked into the possibility of a corridor linking Assam and Bhutan, and Dalu, the border town between Bangladesh and Meghalaya, in collaboration with the *Asian Development Bank* (ADB).

Both have agreed on the centrality of the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Asean) in the Indo-Pacific region that stretches from the east coast of Japan to the east coast of Africa.

On October 29, the annual summit witnessed Modi and Abe review the progress made in various forums, while exchanging views on regional and global affairs. Modi met Japanese venture capital companies and attended the *Business Leaders Forum*. Japan has been part of India's developmental history, especially for latter's financial assistance through lines of credit at concessional rates. India seeks to leverage Japan's expertise in economic modernisation and in its flagship initiatives of *Skill India*, *Make in India*, *Digital India* etc. Both countries have decided to cooperate in research and development, unmanned ground vehicles, robotics etc.

Japan is very much part of the ongoing projects in India viz., Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, Dedicated Freight Corridor, Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, building of metros etc.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail project is to be completed by 2022 when India celebrates 75 years of its independence. Similarly, the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is to be completed by March 2020. The issues involved on the corridor were discussed, along with projects such as Chennai Metro, the Delhi Mass Rapid Transit System, hydro-electrics, roads etc.

India and Japan have decided to institute a *Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue (2+2)*. Both countries are working out the modalities of the *Acquisition Cross Service Agreement (ACSA)* or mutual logistics support agreement, on the lines signed with the USA. Also the *Implementing Arrangement for deeper cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF)* was signed for regional peace and stability.

Part III South Asia

Dr. Joyce Lobo analyses the two rounds of Bhutan elections to the lower house of *Gyelyong Tshokhang* which speaks of Bhutanese penchant for change of not only leaders but also parties.

Bhutan National Assembly elections

Bhutan held its primary round of elections to the National Assembly (*Gyelyong Tshogdu*) the lower house of the Parliament (*Gyelyong Tshokhang*) on September 15, 2018. Former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's *People's Democratic Party* (PDP) was surprisingly defeated in the election (See table). Given the fact that his party has come third, the second round of elections were fought between the *Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa* (DNT), headed by Dr. Lotay Tshering and the *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* (DPT), headed by Pema Gyamtsho, as per the constitutional provisions.

Third National Assembly Elections: Primary Round of Sept. 15, 2018

Party	Votes Won	Vote Share %
Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT)	92,722	31.85
Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT)	90,020	30.92
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	79,883	27.44
Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party (BKP)	28,473	9.78

Source: Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB), 2018

The voter turnout for the primary round in 2018 had increased from 55.3% in 2013 to 66% presently. The verdict given by the people has been surprising towards PDP and this defeat is attributed to the large voter turnout especially from the postal ballots. Also Bhutan by now has accumulated a large external debt with trade imbalances. Its currency the *Ngultrum* is pegged to the down sliding Indian Rupee. These compounded problems will be faced by the new government.

Dr. Lotay Tshering of DNT campaigned on issues of bridging the wealth gap between the rich and the poor and generating employment. Populist policies and development goals may have brought victory to Tshering's party in the general round too.

DNT wins general elections

DNT emerged as the winner of second round held on October 18, 2018 against the DPT. DNT won the elections with 30 seats while DPT was reduced to an opposition party with the remaining 17 seats.

Out of the total, seven women (14.89%) won against the four each won in 2008 and 2013. Interestingly all the 47 parliamentarians are graduates, with one holding a PhD and 26 with having Master's degree. In terms of age, all candidates fall within the range of 20s to 60s, with higher numbers falling between 30s and 50s.

The voter turnout was 71.46%. Of the total votes cast, 199,553 votes were cast on the Electronic Voting Machines and 113,920 votes through Postal Ballots.

DNT largely won the votes from the Western and Southern constituencies. Westerners had voted in the primary round for PDP and the *Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party* (BKP), which may have shifted to DNT.

DNT and PDP had come together in 2013 to fight the general round. And this election shows the close understanding between the parties. Also the DNT had support of the Nepali speakers in the Southern constituencies.

The Parliament of Bhutan comprises of the Dragon King (*Druk Gyalpo*), National Assembly and *Gyelyong Tshogde* or National Council (upper house). The National Council, consisting of 25 seats, is subordinate to the Assembly. Its membership is based on educational qualification and on the principle of non-partisanship. The National Assembly is the powerful house which comprises of 47 seats. Its members are elected in two rounds of elections. In the primary round, voters select the parties who become eligible for the second round. In the general round, the winning parties field their candidates for the Assembly constituencies. People elect their representative through the first-past-the-post system.

The two elections (2008 & 2013) to the National Assembly have shown people do not elect the same political party to power. In the first elections held in 2008, the DPT won. In 2013, the PDP won.

Bhutan's journey to democracy

Bhutan lies in the Himalayas with India and China as its neighbours. It has a population of 0.81 million which is much smaller compared to an average district of India. Ruled by the Wanchuck dynasty since 1907, the state under King Jigme Singye Wangchuck began the process of transferring powers to the people— first to the Council of Ministers, next brought in communication into the country via television and internet, followed by a series of progressive steps. Finally in 2005, he abdicated the throne in favour of his son Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, while creating the necessary conditions to write a new constitution. This led to a political transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy in March 2008. The sagacity shown by Jigme Singye Wangchuck stretches in not only diluting the powers of the King, but also subjecting the same to a constitutional mandated retirement at the age of 65 and removal through parliamentary impeachment.

Bhutan has so far seen a nascent yet serene democracy. The *Druk Gyalpos* have ensured, that the transition from monarchy to democracy is there to stay. This enlightened monarchy has built a certain amount of trust between the Crown and the people, as the latter was not forthcoming towards this transition. Therefore it still holds sway over domestic and foreign policy of Thimphu.

Dr. Lotay Tshering— a profile

Dr. Lotay Tshering, the leader of the DNT party was appointed by the King as the Prime Minister. Prior to his political role, he served as a medical consultant at the *Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital* and the *Mongar Regional Referral Hospital*. He joined politics in 2013 and became the leader of the DNT from May 2018 to October 2018.

Tshering has done his medicine and General Surgery from the *Dhaka University*. He also has a MBA degree from the *Canberra University*.