

Poll results throw up challenge of governance

Written by Administrator

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At the end of the counting day, it's the electorate in both the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand, which came out in large numbers to vote, which must have gone home laughing, argues **Sidharth Mishra**. Having given a mandate which has a message for all the stakeholders, it has left the political parties with a headache of first forming and then running the government.

Government formation for both the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Jammu and Kashmir and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Jharkhand would be equally challenging. While the advocates for the BJP would point towards a clear majority in Jharkhand with 42 seats, the point not to be missed is that of these six belong to Sudesh Mahto's All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), which in past has been part of several political combinations in the state.

In a state, which has been enmeshed in corruption, maladministration, political blackmail and Maoist violence ever since its creation in 2000, for the BJP the real challenge would be to provide good governance in coalition with a not a very dependable ally. Another point for the BJP leadership to mull over is the fall in the number of vote percentage in the state since the Lok Sabha polls last summer. In May, BJP had led in 57 assembly segments, which is now down to 36, certainly not a case for raising a toast.

Similarly in Jammu and Kashmir, despite putting up its best ever performance in the state, the party has ended-up with a message from the electorate that they are not trusted by the minorities. In a state which has three clear geographic divisions – Jammu (37 seats), Kashmir (46 seats) and Ladakh (four seats), the party candidates ended-up losing deposit across the Valley, it failed to open account in Ladakh and did not exactly win everything in Jammu region either.

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On the other hand despite being written off by the opinion and the exit polls, the ruling National Conference and the Congress survived with bruises to fight another day. The challenge of government formation is greater in J&K as PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti has already pointed out claiming that "it would take time." Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has indicated his party's support to PDP despite the bitter divorce the two parties went through six years ago.

Taking Congress's support could mean a stable government in Srinagar but inviting ire of New Delhi. On the other hand, if the PDP decides to go with the BJP, it could end up annoying its voters, who have clearly indicated their aversion for the saffron party. The Sayeed dynasty finds itself in a true Catch-22 situation.

At the national level, the poll results are definitely going to add to the belligerence of the Opposition parties inside the Parliament, which would now reassemble next year for the Budget session. The government found it difficult to get through with its agenda during the just concluded winter session and could find it harder in the Budget session.

Whosoever forms the government, the polls would be remembered for the courage of the electorate, which stood-up to the call of poll boycott by the anti-nationals in the Valley and Maoists in Jharkhand giving a message that they want solutions to their demands within the ambit of the Constitution.

(The writer is President, Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice)