

Course correction- **Tamed victors: On Assembly poll results**

As the BJP found out, hyper nationalism has its limits in Assembly polls

The alliance of the BJP and the Shiv Sena retained power in Maharashtra and the BJP emerged as the single largest party in Haryana, substantially beating anti-incumbency in both States, but also falling short of their claims and rhetoric. In Haryana, the BJP will require the support of at least six MLAs outside its fold for a majority. The Opposition, despite their sluggish campaign and scattered thinking, exceeded expectation in both States. Results of by-elections in 51 Assembly seats and two Lok Sabha constituencies across 18 States were also announced on Thursday. Drawing any political trend lines based on these outcomes would be premature, but certain pointers are noteworthy. The BJP had front-loaded its campaign with nationalist topics such as the status of Kashmir and the National Register of Citizens, deliberately avoiding any serious discussion on the economy and livelihood issues. It is possible that the BJP and allies got what they got because of this campaign, but these issues did not evidently overwhelm other voter concerns such as unemployment and farm crisis. The BJP and the Sena are winners, but tamed and curtailed compared to the Assembly results of 2014 and the Lok Sabha election earlier this year. The rout of many turncoats from other parties that the BJP had recruited recently is an evident expression of public disapproval of such tactics. The results also indicate that the BJP's current arsenal is more effective in national elections. The results from Tamil Nadu where the AIADMK did well and Kerala where the Left appeared to regain some lost ground are also indicative of the differentiation that the voters tend to make between Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The Haryana Governor must now ensure that the formation of a new coalition government is transparent as there could be attempts to influence legislators and parties.

The Congress-NCP alliance in Maharashtra improved its tally considerably and in Haryana, the Congress doubled its 2014 tally. In Haryana, the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) emerged as a formidable regional outfit. These are indicators of a yearning among the electorate for an alternative to the BJP that has amassed political power but also alienated many social groups. That this growth of the Opposition has happened despite the absence of any coherence or coordination at the top is remarkable. Faced with brazen harassment by state agencies, and dispirited by serial electoral setbacks, the Opposition had become lifeless but these results indicate that prospects of an alternative are not entirely dark, particularly when it comes to State polls. The BJP might be tempted to intensify its hyper-nationalist agenda to boost its performance, while the Opposition might slip back into a comatose state, counting inaction itself as a strategy. Both would be disastrous, for the respective camps and the country.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **tame** (verb) – control, make less powerful, suppress.
- **hyper nationalism** (noun) – extreme nationalism, ultra-nationalism.

- **substantially** (adverb) – considerably, significantly, largely.
- **anti-incumbency** (noun) – a situation which is against elected officials currently in power; discontent against ruling government/ party in power.
- **fall short of** (phrase) – be deficient/inadequate/insufficient; fail to meet/reach.
- **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- **fold** (noun) – group, community.
- **sluggish** (adjective) – inactive, dull, slow.
- **scattered** (adjective) – distracted, disorganized.
- **premature** (noun) – untimely, early, too soon/too early.
- **pointer** (noun) – indication, hint, signal.
- **noteworthy** (adjective) – significant, notable, important.
- **front-load** (verb) – allocate major portion of (costs, effort, expenditures etc.) at the beginning of the enterprise.
- **deliberately** (adverb) – intentionally, purposely, knowingly/wittingly.
- **livelihood** (noun) – source of income, means of support, living, subsistence.
- **ally** (noun) – partner, supporter, accomplice/confederate.
- **evidently** (adverb) – seemingly, apparently, on the face of it.
- **overwhelm** (verb) – defeat easily, rout, beat completely.
- **curtail** (verb) – reduce, diminish, decrease.
- **turncoat** (noun) – betrayer, traitor, defector.
- **overwhelm** (verb) – gain mastery over, master, overpower.
- **curtail** (verb) – reduce, diminish, decrease.
- **rout** (noun) – downfall, collapse/defeat; fiasco.
- **arsenal** (noun) – range/line-up/collection of (particularly in military weapons & equipment) are made and stored in a place.
- **lose ground** (phrase) – lose one's advantage during a competition.
- **formidable** (adjective) – intimidating, daunting, alarming/frightening.
- **outfit** (noun) – organization, group, party.
- **indicator** (noun) – measure, index, gauge.
- **yearning** (noun) – longing, need/urge, craving, desire.
- **electorate** (noun) – all the people who entitled to vote in an election.
- **amass** (verb) – gather, collect, group.
- **alienate** (verb) – set apart, drive apart, isolate.
- **coherence** (noun) – consistency, orderliness, unity.
- **brazen** (adjective) – bold and shameless; unashamed, unabashed.
- **harassment** (noun) – persecution, persistent annoyance, coercion/intimidation.
- **dispirit** (verb) – dishearten, discourage, demoralize, disappoint.
- **setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue.
- **hyper-nationalist** (adjective) – a person with extreme/excessive nationalism.
- **comatose** (adjective) – inactive, lethargic, sluggish.
- **inaction** (noun) – inactivity, negligence, disregard.
- **disastrous** (adjective) – devastating, ravaging, ruinous.

Course correction – War within war: On Saudi's intervention in Yemen

As the Saudi-led coalition crumbles, Yemen needs a nationwide ceasefire

The Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen is proof of how things can go wrong with an ill-conceived, poorly strategised and geopolitics-driven military interference that cares little about human lives. After four years of war, the Saudis have not met their declared goal — pushing back the Shia Houthi rebels from the capital Sana'a and restoring the ousted government which is now temporarily headquartered in the southern city of Aden. On the contrary, the war has pushed Yemen into what the UN calls the worst humanitarian crisis. Thousands have been killed, tens of thousands displaced and about two thirds of the country's 28 million people do not have enough to eat. And now, there is a rebellion within the coalition. Last week, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a militia group that was fighting the Houthis as part of the Saudi-led coalition, turned against their masters and captured the presidential palace in Aden as well as the city's main port. In return, Saudi jets targeted STC fighters before a tenuous ceasefire set in. It now looks like a three-way conflict. The Shia Houthis, who the Saudis claim are backed by **Iran**, are controlling much of the country's north including Sana'a. Yemen's internationally-backed government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, the Saudi ally, is controlling the south, though Mr. Hadi is running the purported administration from Saudi Arabia. The STC wants the south to be an independent entity, like it was till the Yemeni unification in 1990.

The STC's rebellion also signals the growing friction in the multi-national coalition Saudi Arabia has stitched together to fight the Houthis. The STC is backed by the UAE, a crucial partner of Saudi Arabia in its foreign policy adventures. They stayed together in propping up the military dictatorship of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, in countering the spread and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world, in opposing the Iran nuclear deal and on blockading Qatar. But when it comes to **Yemen**, the Saudis see the Hadi government and Sunni Islamic parties, including the Islah, as allies who could stabilise and rebuild the whole country after the Houthis are defeated, while the UAE, already frustrated by the coalition's failure to defeat the rebels, counts on the STC and is staunchly opposed to the Islah party, which has ties to the Brotherhood. The UAE has already pulled out of the Yemen war leaving it to Saudi Arabia to defeat the Houthis. And with their continued backing to the STC, the Emiratis appear less concerned about defeating the Houthis than maintaining their influence in southern Yemen. This should be a moment of reckoning for Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince and the main architect of the Yemen intervention. He has lost the war and his coalition is crumbling, while Yemen is left with unimaginable human suffering. It is time for a nationwide ceasefire and talks with all stakeholders under the mediation of a willing UN to find a political settlement to the crisis.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **crumble** (verb) – disintegrate/collapse, fall to pieces, fall apart.
- **ceasefire** (noun) – a temporary stoppage of a war, truce, armistice.

- **ill-conceived** (adjective) – absurd, ridiculous, not carefully planned.
- **push (someone) back** (phrasal verb) – remove someone by exerting force.
- **oust** (verb) – remove, expel, dismiss from power/office.
- **on the contrary** (phrase) – in contrast, just the opposite, conversely.
- **humanitarian crisis** (noun) – humanitarian disaster; it is defined as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area.
- **rebellion** (noun) – dissent, nonconformity, defiance.
- **militia** (noun) – armed forces, military unit, soldiery (from the civil population to support main forces).
- **in return** (phrase) – in exchange for, against.
- **tenuous** (adjective) – fragile, doubtful, questionable.
- **set in** (phrasal verb) – develop, get underway, established (of something unpleasant/unwelcome).
- **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.
- **ally** (noun) – partner, supporter, accomplice/confederate.
- **purported** (adjective) – alleged, claimed, professed.
- **friction** (noun) – conflict, dispute, argument.
- **stitch** (verb) – join, combine.
- **prop up** (phrasal verb) – support, assist, help.
- **dictatorship** (noun) – despotism, autocracy, absolute rule.
- **counter** (verb) – tackle, confront, stand up to.
- **blockade** (verb) – barricade, bar, block off.
- **count on** (phrasal verb) – rely on, depend on, have confidence in.
- **staunchly** (adverb) – loyally/faithfully, devotedly, firmly/resolutely.
- **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, get out.
- **reckoning** (noun) – opinion, judgement, consideration/evaluation.
- **stakeholder** (noun) – a person with an interest in something.

Course correction – **A fresh warning: what GEO-6 means for India** **India must recognise the human cost of poorly enforced environment laws**

The sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook from the UN Environment Programme has come as another stark warning: the world is unsustainably extracting resources and producing unmanageable quantities of waste. The linear model of economic growth depends on the extraction of ever-higher quantities of materials, leading to chemicals flowing into air, water and land. This causes ill-health and premature mortality, and affects the quality of life, particularly for those unable to insulate themselves from these effects. The UN report, GEO-6, on the theme "Healthy Planet, Healthy People," has some sharp pointers for India. It notes that East and South Asia have the highest number of deaths due to air pollution; by one estimate, it killed about 1.24 million in India in 2017. As India's population grows, it must worry that agricultural yields are coming under stress due to increase in average temperature and erratic monsoons. The implications of these forecasts for food security and health are all too evident, more so for the 148 million people living in severe weather 'hotspots'. Evidently, the task before India is to recognise the human cost of poorly enforced environment laws and demonstrate the political will necessary to end business-as-

usual policies. That would mean curbing the use of fossil fuels and toxic chemicals across the spectrum of economic activity.

There are some targeted interventions that only require the resolve to reduce air and water pollution, and which in turn promise early population-level benefits. Aggressive monitoring of air quality in cities through scaled-up facilities would bring about a consensus on cutting emissions of greenhouse gases, and provide the impetus to shift to cleaner sources of energy. It is significant that GEO-6 estimates that the top 10% of populations globally, in terms of wealth, are responsible for 45% of GHG emissions, and the bottom 50% for only 13%. Pollution impacts are, however, borne more by the poorer citizens. Combating air pollution would, therefore, require all older coal-based power plants in India to conform to emission norms at the earliest, or to be shut down in favour of renewable energy sources. Transport emissions are a growing source of urban pollution, and a quick transition to green mobility is needed. In the case of water, the imperative is to stop the contamination of surface supplies by chemicals, sewage and municipal waste. As the leading extractor of groundwater, India needs to make water part of a circular economy in which it is treated as a resource that is recovered, treated and reused. But water protection gets low priority, and State governments show no urgency in augmenting rainwater harvesting. New storage areas act as a supply source when monsoons fail, and help manage floods when there is excess rainfall.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Enforce** - to make sure that a law or rule is obeyed by people
- **Outlook** - an idea about what a situation will be like in the future
- **Stark** - used for describing an unpleasant fact or situation that is very obvious or impossible to avoid
- **Unsustainable** - not capable of continuing at the same rate or level
- **Extract** - to remove something from a particular place
- **Unmanageable** - extremely difficult to control or organize
- **Linear** - involving ideas or events that are directly connected and follow one after the other
- **Premature** - happening too soon or before the usual time
- **Mortality** - death
- **Insulate** - to protect someone or something from harmful experiences or influences
- **Pointer** - a piece of advice or information
- **Erratic** - changing often or not following a regular pattern, so that it is difficult to know what will happen next
- **Monsoon** - a period of heavy rain in India and Southeast Asia
- **Implication** - a possible effect or result
- **Forecast** - a statement about what is likely to happen, based on available information and usually relating to the weather, business, or the economy
- **Evident** - easy to see, notice, or understand
- **Hotspot** - a place where there is often a lot of violence or fighting
- **Evidently** - used for saying that something is obvious
- **Business-as-usual** - used for describing a situation in which everything happens normally, especially after a period of time when things happen in a different way
- **Fossil fuel** - a fuel such as coal or oil, made from decayed material from animals or plants that lived many thousands of years ago
- **Toxic** - poisonous and harmful to people, animals, or the environment
- **Interventions** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Aggressive** - behaving in an angry or rude way that shows you want to fight, attack, or argue with someone

- **Monitor** - to regularly check something or watch someone in order to find out what is happening
- **Scale-up** - to make something larger in size, amount etc than it used to be
- **Consensus** - agreement among all the people involved
- **Emission** - a substance, especially a gas, that goes into the air
- **Impetus** - a force that helps something to happen or develop more quickly
- **Significant** - very important
- **Impact** - an effect, or an influence
- **Renewable** - renewable energy and natural materials replace themselves by natural processes, so that they are never completely used up
- **Transition** - the process of changing from one situation, form, or state to another
- **Imperative** - extremely important and urgent
- **Contamination** - the process of making something dirty, polluted, or poisonous by adding a chemical, waste, or infection
- **Sewage** - waste substances, especially waste from people's bodies, removed from houses and other buildings by a system of large underground pipes called sewers
- **Extractor** - a piece of equipment or system that can remove something from another thing
- **Augment** - to increase the size, amount, or value of something
- **Harvest** - to collect or obtain something

Course correction – **Course correction – Transit Gambit**

The Centre needs to do more to ease the shift to e-way bills for transport of good

Already **grappling** with the Goods and Services Tax **transition**, businesses are now **anxious** about how the roll out of e-way bills will **pan out**. Stating February 1, all inter-State movement of goods worth over Rs.50,000 will be **tracked** with the introduction of the e-way bill system under the GST **regime**. All **consignments** moving more than 10km from their origin will require prior registration and generation of an e-way bill through the GST Network, which will be valid for varying durations depending on the distance travelled. While a few States have already **imposed** their own requirements for such bills since the GST roll-out in July, all States must **implement** the bill system for **capturing** intra-State trade by June 1. Therefore, a fully integrated tracking system for all taxable goods can be expected only then. This **poses an interim** headache for firms operating across States, as they will now face differing **compliance** requirements for inter-State trade and intra-State trade, depending on when individual States **launch** their own e-way bill systems. To be fair, inter-State movement of goods was also tracked under the VAT (value added tax) regime, but intra-State transactions were not. Over 150 items of common use, including LPG cylinders, vegetables, food grain and jewellery will be exempt from such transport permits, which can be checked by **designated** tax officials by intercepting a transporting vehicle. Goods moved on non-motorised conveyance, such as carts, have been left out.

In October, the GST Council had decided to introduce e-way bills in a **staggered** manner from January 1, with a nationwide roll-out on April 1, 2018. After easing the GST burden on small businesses and exporters in its recent meetings, the GST Council's decision on Saturday to advance the **implementation** of e-way bills just two days after polling closed in Gujarat signals that there are serious concerns on the

tax collection front. After a monthly Rs.90,000 crore plus inflow in the GST's first three months, revenue in October **plummeted** to just over Rs. 83,000 crore. And this was even before substantive tax rate cuts made by the Council kicked in. with States claiming a revenue shortfall of about Rs. 40,000 crore so far under the GST, the Centre, which has to fill that gap, is also feeling the **pinch**. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who faces a serious **fiscal dilemma** even before he presents the Union Budget in less than two months, has said the next set of GST features, such as e-way bills and matching of **invoices**, will make tax evasion difficult and bump up collections. **Plugging** revenue leakages is essential, and encouragingly, Karnataka's e-way bill experience in the first month saw very few glitches. Given industry's nervousness, the government must simplify the onerous rules proposed for e-way bills (a one day validity for distances up to 100 km, for instance), ensure that the IT backbone is robust, and make inspections the exception, not the norm.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Grapple** : (grab, wrestle)
Synonym : confront, contend, cope, deal with, clash, clasp, clutch, combat.
- **Transition** : (change, often major)
Synonym : Changeover, conversion, development, evolution, growth, passage, progress, shift, transformation, upheaval
- **Anxious** : (worried, tense)
Synonym : afraid, apprehensive, careful, concerned, distressed, fearful, fidgety, jittery, nervous, restless, scared, uneasy, uptight
- **Pan out** (phrasal verb of Pan) : (end up; conclude)
Synonym : result, develop, evolve, eventuate
- **Tracked** : (traced)
Synonym : followed, chased, hunted, pursued, trailed
- **Regime** : (leadership of organisation)
Synonym : administration, establishment, government, management, reign, rule, system.
- **Consignment** : (entrusting, handing over)
Synonym : distribution, assignment, committal, dispatch, relegation, transmittal
- **Impose** : (set, dictate)
Synonym : appoint, charge, demand, enforce, establish, foist, force, inflict, introduce, laydown, levy, order, promulgate.
- **Implement** : (start, put into action)
Synonym : enforce, begin
- **Capture** : (catch and forcefully hold)
Synonym : apprehend, arrest, conquer, grab, occupy, secure, snatch, trap
- **Pose** : (artificial position)
Synonym : mannerism, mien, posture, affectation, attitudinizing, pretention, masquerade.
- **Interim** : (temporary, interval)
Synonym : provisional, makeshift, stopgap
- **Compliance** : (agreement)
Synonym : conformity, consent, acquiescence, amenability, assent, docility, submission.
- **Launch** : (send off, begin, initiate)

Synonym : fire, barrage, bombard, bung, cast, catapult, discharge, dispatch, eject, fling, hurl, lance

- **Designate** : (name, entitle)
Synonym : label, nominate, baptize, call, christen, denominate, dub, nickname
- **Stagger** : (walk falteringly)
Synonym : Career, falter, lurch, reel, shake, teeter, wobble
- **Implementation** : (exercise)
Synonym : application, discharge, employment, exertion, operation, practice, pursuit.
- **Plummet** : (fall hard and fast)
Synonym : collapse, crash, decline, decrease, descent, dip, dive, drop down, fall, plunge, skid, tumble.
- **Pinch** : (tight pressing)
Synonym : compression, confinement, contraction, cramp, grasp, hurt, limitation, pressure, squeeze.
- **Fiscal** : (monetary)
Synonym : budgetary, economic, financial
- **dilemma** : (crisis)
Synonym : difficulty, embarrassment, impasse, mess, plight, predicament, problem, puzzle, quandary
- **Invoice** : (itemized bill)
Synonym : account, check, note, statement
- **Plug** : (stop up, publicize)
Synonym : clog, fill pack, seal, block, bung, close, congest, cork, obstruct, occlude, secure
- **Glitch** : (error)
Synonym : bug, deflect, flaw, hitch, malfunction, mishap, problem set back, snafu, snag
- **Robust** : (healthy, strong)
Synonym : booming, hearty, hefty, potent, powerful, prosperous, sturdy, tough, vigorous
- **Norm** : (average, standard)
Synonym : pattern, benchmark, rule, criterion, measure, model

☞ “AN OUNCE OF PRACTICE IS WORTH MORE THAN TONS OF PREACHING” ☞