

STEALING A MANDATE: ON MADHYA PRADESH CRISIS

BJP played by the book, but a new govt. will lack moral legitimacy without winning bypolls

The impending change of guard in Madhya Pradesh is on the back of a disgraceful betrayal of the popular mandate of 2018 when the Congress defeated the BJP that was in power for three consecutive terms. Jyotiraditya Scindia's vault from the Congress to its antithesis, the BJP, set the ball rolling for the unravelling of Chief Minister Kamal Nath's government earlier in March. With the resignation of 22 of its MLAs from the Assembly, the Congress was reduced to a minority, with 92 members. The resignations brought down the halfway mark to 104 and now, the BJP, with 106, can claim a majority as it is doing right now. The BJP legislature party is expected to elect former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan as its leader who is likely to form the new government this week. Mr. Nath tried to salvage his government by buying time to woo back the defectors but the Supreme Court ordered that a floor test be held on Friday. His decision to submit the resignation before forcing a vote in the Assembly was appropriate. Luring back the defectors by dubious means would have been no less dishonourable than the defections. The total strength of the MP Assembly is 230 in which 24 seats are now vacant. Although the BJP is within its rights to stake claim, in the interest of moral and political legitimacy, it could have waited until after by-elections are held to these seats and either of the parties establishes a clear majority.

But a disturbing new mechanism of usurping power that is not won through an election, perfected by the BJP in recent years, has no such restraint. The party engineered the resignations of Congress and JD(S) MLAs and returned to power in Karnataka last year. The BJP took power on the claim of majority in a truncated legislature, and had the advantage of being the ruling party when the by-elections were held. It had used the same strategy earlier and there are indications that it might be tried in some other States too in the coming weeks. This route by-passes the Anti-Defection law but the financial and moral corruption involved in this is only far too evident. While the top court did the right thing by asking for an early floor test in M.P., the larger question the power tussle in the State has thrown up, which is the claim of majority in a legislature that has a considerably large number of seats vacant, remains unresolved. The recurrence of this model across States makes this an unhealthy pattern and a fresh challenge to clean politics. The legal and moral implications of mass resignations of MLAs to upend an electoral verdict need to be examined at the political and judicial levels.

- ❖ **by the book** (phrase) - in accordance with the rules, abiding by the law, lawfully.
- ❖ **lack** (verb) - be without, be short of, be low on.
- ❖ **moral legitimacy** (noun) – something in accordance with the rules of an ethic.
- ❖ **impending** (adjective) – imminent, about to happen; approaching, forthcoming.
- ❖ **change of guard** (phrase) - it used to refer to a situation in which there is a dramatic change in which new people are replacing people (existing) in positions of importance.
- ❖ **on the back of** (phrase) – as a result of, after/subsequent; in support of.
- ❖ **disgraceful** (adjective) - shameful, shocking, dishonourable, unacceptable
- ❖ **betrayal** (noun) – disloyalty, breach faith/trust, double-dealing.
- ❖ **vault** (noun) – jump, leap, leapfrog
- ❖ **antithesis** (noun) – the direct opposite of something; antipode, contrary, opposite, reverse
- ❖ **set/keep the ball rolling** (phrase) – to cause something (an activity) to continue; maintain a level of activity; keep something (the activity/conversation) going.

- ❖ **unravel** (verb) – fall apart, come apart; separate out, disengage.
- ❖ **bring down** (phrasal verb) – oust, remove, dismiss (from a position/power).
- ❖ **salvage** (verb) – rescue, save, get back, reinstate/restore.
- ❖ **buy time** (phrase) – delay, linger, waste time.
- ❖ **woo** (verb) - seek the support of, try to win, try to attract, pursue, persuade, coax.
- ❖ **defector** (noun) – betrayer, turncoat, traitor.
- ❖ **lure** (verb) – tempt, persuade, attract, coax, win over (someone by giving some reward).
- ❖ **dubious** (adjective) – suspicious, questionable, doubtful.
- ❖ **defection** (noun) – desertion, absconding, decamping.
- ❖ **means** (noun) – method, way, procedure.
- ❖ **no less** (phrase) – not to mention, furthermore, even.
- ❖ **dishonourable** (adjective) - disgraceful, shameful, blameworthy.
- ❖ **stake a claim** (phrase) – assert, declare, proclaim; to say that you have a right to own or do something.
- ❖ **in the interest of** (phrase) – for the benefit of, for the sake of considering.
- ❖ **mechanism** (noun) – procedure, process, method/technique.
- ❖ **usurp** (verb) – take over, appropriate, seize.
- ❖ **perfect** (verb) – improve, make perfect, polish, hone consummate; achieve/accomplish.
- ❖ **restraint** (noun) – control, restriction, limitation
- ❖ **engineer** (verb) – bring about, cause/arrange (something skillfully); orchestrate, choreograph, mastermind.
- ❖ **truncated** (adjective) – reduced, decreased diminished; shortened, trimmed, curtailed.
- ❖ **by-pass** (verb) – circumvent, avoid, dodge.
- ❖ **Anti-defection law** (noun) – The 10th Schedule to the Constitution, popularly referred to as the Anti-Defection Law, was inserted by the 52nd Amendment in 1985. The grounds of disqualification are specified in Paragraph 2 the 10th Schedule. A member would incur a disqualification under paragraph 2 (1) (a) when he “voluntarily gives up his membership of a party” and under 2 (1) (b) when he/she votes (or abstains from voting) contrary to the directive issued by the party.
- ❖ **far too** (phrase) - much too.
- ❖ **tussle** (noun) – scuffle, fight, clash.
- ❖ **throw up** (phrasal verb) – produce something.
- ❖ **considerably** (adverb) – greatly, significantly, substantially.
- ❖ **recurrence** (noun) – reappearance, repetition, return.
- ❖ **implications** (noun) – consequence/outcome, ramification, repercussion.
- ❖ **upend** (verb) – overturn, reverse/bottom up, upset, flip, turn upside down.

CHINA'S ZERO: ON CHINA'S LEAD IN CONTAINING CORONAVIRUS

The rest of the world might have to follow China's lead in containing the virus

In a remarkable turnaround, China had zero cases of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) on March 18-20, including in Wuhan, the epicentre of the epidemic. This comes three months after the first case emerged in Wuhan. But on March 21, Guangdong province had one instance of local transmission from an imported case. As on March 22, China reported 314 imported cases. As the

instance on Saturday shows, more number of fresh cases from local transmission can show up, turning the zero cases reported on three consecutive days into nothing but a blip. At the peak of the epidemic, mainland China reported thousands of fresh cases and hundreds of deaths each day before the total number reached 81,054 which is nearly 26% of the global case load of 3,16,659 as on March 22. The total mortality from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in mainland China stands at 3,237, which is less than the deaths reported from Italy (4,825). The initial signs of the epidemic beginning to wane were visible when the first makeshift hospital in Wuhan was closed in early March after all patients had recovered and there were no new admissions. The turnaround in China comes at a time when the virus is galloping in Europe and is spreading in the U.S. Shutting down Wuhan and a few other cities on January 23 and many more in the following days placed nearly 60 million in China in lockdown. In retrospect, the drastic measure sharply reduced the chances of a rapid spread of the virus within China and onward to the rest of the world. It gave Europe and the U.S. the much needed time to take measures in preventing the virus from gaining a foothold. Unfortunately, both Europe and the U.S. seem to have squandered that opportunity. What was once considered undoable outside China is now being played out in Italy — the entire country is locked down. Putting the rights of the community ahead of the individual, many countries have been adopting tough measures akin to China's — restricting travel, banning mass gatherings, cancelling important events and shutting down educational institutions and entertainment in a bid to cut the transmission chain.

Even as China's success in containing the epidemic is in the spotlight, its cover-up of the outbreak until mid-January, nearly a month after the first few cases showed up, will remain a stain hard to erase. Worse, its refusal to inform its people even after notifying a cluster of cases to the World Health Organization on December 31, 2019 and gagging doctors for raising an alarm show that not much has changed since the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2002. The only solace is that China did not unduly delay informing WHO about the novel virus unlike in the case of the 2002 SARS outbreak. Also, it quickly sequenced the whole genome of the virus and made the data public just days after informing WHO; it has since shared 126 sequence data. Scientific papers published by Chinese researchers have given their peers across the world a head start in understanding the virus and the disease.

- ❖ **lead** (noun) - guide, pointer, initiative (for others to follow & solve a problem).
- ❖ **coronavirus** (CoV)(noun) – a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.
- ❖ **turnaround** (noun) – an unexpected change.
- ❖ **novel coronavirus** (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2) (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.
- ❖ **epicentre** (noun) – hub, central, ground zero, focal point; the main point of unpleasant/problematic situation.
- ❖ **epidemic** (noun) – widespread disease/illness outbreak, plague, scourge.
- ❖ **local transmission** (noun) – local spread/transmission means spread of an illness/disease for which the source of infection is known. An infected person has travel history to an affected area. We could able to identify and trace individual cases and ring-fence a cluster (of them) to prevent the spread of infection
- ❖ **community transmission** (noun) – community spread/transmission means spread of an illness/disease for which the source of infection is unknown. An infected person has no travel

history to an affected area and no known contact with a person previously diagnosed with a particular disease. It is possible the patient is exposed to a returning traveller who is infected.

- ❖ **show up** (phrasal verb) - appear, come out, turn up.
- ❖ **blip** (noun) – a small/very short & temporary deviation.
- ❖ **case load** (noun) – the number of cases to be handled by a doctor at one time
- ❖ **mortality** (noun) – (in a particular time/for a cause) the rate of death.
- ❖ **wane** (verb) – decrease, decline, diminish/dwindle.
- ❖ **makeshift** (adjective) – temporary, provisional, standby.
- ❖ **gallop** (verb) – proceed/rise at great speed.
- ❖ **in retrospect** (phrase) – looking back, on re-examination, in/with hindsight.
- ❖ **drastic** (adjective) – extreme, serious, forceful.
- ❖ **onward** (adjective) – ahead forwards on further
- ❖ **foothold** (noun) – grip, anchorage, purchase, support, firm contact.
- ❖ **squander** (verb) – waste, misuse, throw away.
- ❖ **undoable** (adjective) - not possible, out of the question, not worth considering.
- ❖ **play out** (phrasal verb) – happen, occur, take place.
- ❖ **lock down** (phrasal verb) – confine, restraint, enclose, encircle/hem in
- ❖ **put ahead** (phrasal verb) – to consider/treat something as most important/urgent; prioritise, highlight.
- ❖ **akin** (adjective) – similar, related, equivalent.
- ❖ **bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, endeavour/try.
- ❖ **transmission chain** (noun) – the act or process by which something is spread or passed from one person or thing to another
- ❖ **the spotlight** (noun) – the public attention, the focus of public/media; the public eye.
- ❖ **cover-up** (noun) – whitewash, deception, suppression/concealment.
- ❖ **outbreak** (noun) – sudden appearance/occurrence (of a disease); outburst, epidemic.
- ❖ **stain** (noun) - blemish, taint, blot.
- ❖ **cluster** (noun) – group, bunch, collection.
- ❖ **gag** (verb) - prevent, silence, muzzle (someone from spreading news/information).
- ❖ **raise the alarm** (phrase) - warn (about a danger).
- ❖ **severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)** (noun) – SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) is thought to be an animal virus from an as-yet-uncertain animal reservoir, perhaps bats, that spread to other animals (civet cats). It is a viral (human-human transmission) that can cause severe respiratory illness of death.
- ❖ **solace** (noun) – comfort, consolation, relief, support.
- ❖ **unduly** (adverb) – excessively, inordinately, immoderately.
- ❖ **novel** (adjective) – new, different, unfamiliar.
- ❖ **sequence** (verb) - determine the complete order of compounds/building blocks/nucleotides of nucleic acids, such as RNA or DNA).
- ❖ **genome** (noun) – the genetic material (a complete set of DNA, including all of its genes) of an organism.
- ❖ **genome sequencing** (noun) – a process that determines the order, or sequence, of the nucleotides (i.e., A, C, G and U) in each of the genes present in the virus's genome.
- ❖ **peer** (noun) – equal, fellow, co-worker.
- ❖ **head start** (noun) – an initial advantage.