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EDITORIAL 01

Restoring a verdict: On the Assembly by-poll results

Opportunistic defections will likely be punished by the voters

INDIA bloc parties won 10 of the 13 Assembly seats across seven States where by-polls were held on July 10 and the results were announced on July 13. The popular verdict broadly echoes the recent Lok Sabha election results that signalled a **fatigue** with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The by-poll results indicate that the BJP's politics is encountering some **resistance** on the ground. Of particular note is Himachal Pradesh where the Congress won two of the three Assembly seats which fell vacant after three independent legislators joined the BJP after resigning their seats. The government of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had **teetered** on the brink in February after six Congress MLAs, along with these three independents, had voted in favour of a BJP candidate in a Rajya Sabha contest. They were later disqualified from the Assembly after Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi lost the Rajya Sabha poll. This had brought down the party's tally to 34 in the 68-member House. With its victories in Dehra and Nalagarh, the Congress has returned to its original strength of 40 MLAs. The Sukhu government had won a majority on June 4 when the Congress won four of the six seats that had by-polls alongwith the 2024 Lok Sabha election. By restoring the



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numbers of the Congress, the electorate of Himachal Pradesh has rejected the **opportunism** of the defectors and the overreach of the BJP.

Something similar happened in Uttarakhand too, as the Congress retained the Badrinath seat. The sitting MLA from the seat, Rajendra Singh Bhandari, who had defected to the ruling BJP, was defeated by Congress's Lakhapat Singh Butola. It is not that all defectors are being rejected by the people. The Congress continued to suffer losses in Madhya Pradesh where Kamlesh Pratap Shah, who had switched sides to the BJP, won a tough contest against his former party. The continuing decline of the Congress in the State is a clear message to the party that it needs to look beyond the current local leadership. While the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's win in Tamil Nadu's Vikravandi seat further **reinforced** its position, in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) continued to reign supreme by **wresting** three seats from the BJP, in Raiganj, Ranaghat Dakshin and Bagda. In all the three seats, MLAs of the saffron party had switched sides to the TMC, which is the ruling party in the State. The TMC also retained the Maniktala seat. In Punjab, the Aam Aadmi party got its pound of flesh from the BJP as it **trounced** the sitting MLA in Jalandhar West who had defected to the BJP and sought a re-election. All the parties should **heed** the voice of the people, seek consensus and reduce conflict, and **eschew** opportunistic defections.

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SUMMARY

INDIA bloc parties won 10 of the 13 Assembly seats across seven states in by-polls held on July 10. The results echoed the recent Lok Sabha election results, signalling a fatigue with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress won two of the three vacant seats in Himachal Pradesh, which had fallen vacant after three independent legislators joined the BJP after resigning. The Congress has returned to its original strength of 40 MLAs in Dehra and Nalagarh, rejecting the opportunism of defectors and the overreach of the BJP. The Congress also retained the Badrinath seat in Uttarakhand. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) continued to reign supreme in West Bengal, wresting three seats from the BJP. The Aam Aadmi party gained a pound of flesh from the BJP in Punjab.

Vocabulary

1. Fatigue

Synonyms: Exhaustion, weariness, and tiredness

Antonyms: Energy, vigor, and vitality

2. Resistance

Synonyms: Opposition, defiance, endurance, resilience, reluctance

Antonyms: Acceptance, surrender, submission, compliance, capitulation

3. Teetered

Synonyms: tottered, wavered, and swayed

Antonyms: stabilized, steadied, and balanced

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4. Opportunism

Synonyms: self-interest, expediency, pragmatism, exploitation

Antonyms: altruism, idealism, selflessness

5. Reinforced

Synonyms: strengthened, fortified, and bolstered

Antonyms: weakened, undermined, and diminished

6. Wresting

Synonyms: Seizing, grabbing, and snatching

Antonyms: Surrendering, yielding, and relinquishing

7. Trounced

Synonyms: Defeated, crushed, overwhelmed

Antonyms: Aided, supported, helped

8. Heed

Synonyms: Listen to, pay attention to, consider

Antonyms: Ignore, disregard, neglect

9. Eschew

Synonyms: Avoid, shun, and abstain

Antonyms: Embrace, accept, and pursue



EDITORIAL 02

Unprincipled alliances: On politics in Nepal

There seems to be no end to the instability of coalitions in Nepal

The **adage** that there are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends, only permanent interests in politics could explain many a twist in shifting political alliances across the democratic world. But it would only be an understatement in Nepali politics, where the art of coalition making has for long been a **farce**. On Saturday, incumbent Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) predictably lost a trust vote, after only 63 of the 275-member House of Representatives backed him, while 194 lawmakers voted against the motion of confidence. The loss was a **foregone** conclusion after the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) led by Khadka Prasad Oli — he has been made the Prime Minister again — withdrew support from the CPN(MC)-led government and joined hands with the opposition Nepali Congress, led by Sher Bahadur Deuba. Mr. Dahal had managed to hold his post for close to two years, and after surviving three trust votes — all necessitated by his decision to change partners. The CPN(MC) had formed the government after the November 2022 elections, despite finishing a distant third and Mr. Dahal had managed to do so by exploiting the differences between the Deuba-led NC and the Oli-led CPN(UML). These two parties won 89 and 78 seats, respectively, in 2022, and



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have now formed a coalition government with the arrangement that Mr. Oli and Mr. Deuba will share the post of Prime Minister, each for half of the remaining term.

Ever since Nepal transitioned from an absolute **monarchy** to a constitutional one in 1990, and then to a full-fledged republic in 2008, its democratic polity has been marked by instability and constant changes in power, leading to poor governance. Despite the institution of constitutional reforms related to **federalism** and guaranteed representation for marginalized forces following a civil war and the overthrow of the monarchy, the outcomes have been a **perpetuation** of the country's status as a "least developed country". It is quite evident that the leadership of the three major parties have shown more interest in sticking to power by any means irrespective of whether they are driven by pre-poll coalitions or not. Besides, the **inherent** instability in a parliamentary system that reflects social **fissures** in the country has led to a form of coalition politics that is driven less by ideological or principled considerations and more by a **hankering** towards power. Such instability and an unprincipled pursuit of power will only result in more **disillusionment** among the Nepali people with the democratic process. Nepal can perhaps be better off with a presidential system that allows for a directly elected head of state.



SUMMARY

Nepal's political landscape has been marked by instability and constant power changes since transitioning from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one in 1990 and a full-fledged republic in 2008. The country's democratic polity has been marked by poor governance and instability, with the leadership of major parties showing more interest in sticking to power than in forming coalitions. The inherent instability in the parliamentary system has led to a form of coalition politics driven less by ideological or principled considerations and more by a hankering towards power. This instability and unprincipled pursuit of power may result in more disillusionment among the Nepali people with the democratic process. Nepal could benefit from a presidential system that allows for a directly elected head of state.

Vocabulary

1. Adage

Synonyms: Proverb, aphorism, maxim

Antonyms: Non-sense, gibberish

2. Farce

Synonyms: Mockery, parody, spoof, charade

Antonyms: Seriousness, drama

3. Foregone

Synonyms: Preordained, predetermined, inevitable

Antonyms: Uncertain, undecided

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4. Monarchy

Synonyms: Sovereignty, reign, kingdom

Antonyms: Democracy, republic

5. Federalism

Meaning: Federalism refers to a political system where power is shared between a central government and various regional or local governments. It involves the division of power and authority between these different levels of government, often with a constitution outlining their respective powers and responsibilities.

6. Perpetuation

Synonyms: Continuation, preservation, prolongation

Antonyms: Termination, cessation, discontinuation

7. Inherent

Synonyms: Intrinsic, innate, natural

Antonyms: Acquired, external

8. Fissures

Synonyms: Cracks, crevices, rifts

Antonyms: Closure, unity

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9. Hankering

Synonyms: Craving, longing, desire

Antonyms: Aversion, indifference

10. Disillusionment

Synonyms: Disappointment, disenchantment, letdown

Antonyms: Satisfaction, contentment

