



INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA: JUNE 2018 DOSSIER

The June dossier explores the patterns of by-poll results in India and possible alliance formations against the ruling National Democratic Alliance, the Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir, the Catholic Church and the Dalai Lama.

The economic section analyses the last quarter of the 2017-18 financial year, the continuing agitation by farmers over the Minimum Support Price in the north and the formation of Cauvery Authority on water.

India's relations with other countries include the visit by Modi to Southeast Asia and his keynote at Shangri-la, the failure of the Assumption pact, and the political instability in the Maldives.

Dr. Uttam Sinha appears as a guest commentator on issues regarding China-India Transboundary Rivers.

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With Dr. Joyce Lobo

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Part I India - Domestic developments

Dr Klaus J. Voll analyses the political situation in Jammu and Kashmir post alliance break up and the assassination of Sujaat Bhukari; the victories of opposition parties against the ruling NDA at by polls and the possible alliance making by the same; Catholic Church questioning of BJP-RSS with regard to growing religious intolerance; and the speculations on the Dalai Lama's health.

Governor's Rule in Jammu & Kashmir

The BJP withdrew on the 19th of June 2018 its support for the *People's Democratic Party* (PDP)-led coalition government under Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti in Jammu & Kashmir.

This opened the way for *Governor's Rule* by the highly respected Governor N. N. Vohra.

Driving forces for this step

This step by the BJP to leave the coalition with the PDP –“*a coming together of North and South Pole*” - is seen in the context of the evolving agenda of the BJP with regard to the general elections in 2019.

After the brutal murder of Sujaat Bhukari, editor of the Srinagar based daily '*Rising Kashmir*', the BJP took this step, which is seen as a big blow for the PDP. According to this assessment, Kashmir can now be used as a laboratory by the BJP. It can be expected, that more killings will take place, after about a thousand people lost their lives during the last three years, be it security forces, militants and stone-pelting youths.

It can be expected, that the BJP will now pursue a hard policy in the Kashmir-Valley and other parts of the country. Vineet Goenka, BJP: "*Terrorists have to be killed.*"

The gap between Jammu and the Kashmir-Valley is increasing. Dr. Radha Kumar, together with the late journalist Dillip Padgaonkar, was years ago the author of an extensive report on J & K, ordered by the UPA-government. She speaks "*of depressing actions and speeches*" and expects an increase in violence. "*Elections or no elections, more young people will join the militant organisations,*" writes Dr. Kumar.

Shekar Gupta, former editor-in-chief of the *Indian Express* and now of the online-journal *The Print*, responded to the question, if the recent developments will lead to a change, "*that nothing will change. Vajpayee would have spoken. The last election in J&K was a vote for the division of J & K. The demonisation of a whole population is taking place. Not a single Indian government, besides the one led by V. P. Singh in 1989/90, acted ever soft vis-à-vis Kashmir. It cannot become any harder.*"

Mihir Sharma, an economic journalist and currently with the *Observer Research Foundation* (ORF), opines "*that the exit of the BJP from the government in J&K marks the first step of a political strategy for 2019. Instead, J&K should be treated with utmost care. Hundreds of thousands of security forces are chasing a few hundred militants. The situation will become worse. The communalisation will increase, as also documented in the 49 page report by the UN Human Rights Council.*"

Aga Ruhullah, spokesperson of the *National Conference* (NC), hopes, "*that the Governor N. N. Vohra, who enjoys a good reputation Kashmir, will bring peace to the Kashmir-Valley. Instead, Kashmiris are treated as second-class citizens. There is a tremendous alienation, its resolution is a mammoth task.*"

Congress-spokesperson Pawan Khera distanced himself from the recent statement by the former Union

Minister Saifuddin Soz, earlier NC and now Congress, *“that the highest priority for Kashmiris is independence.”* Khera emphasized, *“that J & K is an integral part of India. Instead, the BJP makes it into a laboratory for polarisation. Participation in elections has reduced tremendously. Don't polarise the Indian mainland and J&K.”*

On the other hand, the BJP-spokesperson Goenka enumerated the developmental achievements – amongst them infrastructure, new universities and medical colleges as well as the distribution of gas cylinders – of the erstwhile PDP/BJP-government in J&K.

Dr. Radha Kumar demanded, *“to allow space for protests and to act strict vis-à-vis threats against journalists. It is necessary to protect human rights. The Governor N. N. Vohra supports dialogues and it is important to think about the role of Pakistan in J&K.”*

Shekar Gupta is of the opinion, *„that the supporters of ‘Azadi’ (‘Independence’) are today more numerous than in the 1990's. Even a muscular policy should not be brainless.”* (All the quotations are from 'The Big Fight', NDTV, 23th June, 2018)

Conclusions

The contours of the BJP's Kashmir policy are not at all only focussed on this state, but are part of an election strategy at the national level, in order to satisfy its core support basis and to cement its image of a decisive and muscular Prime Minister.

It cannot be expected, that there will be a true dialogue within J&K or vis-à-vis Pakistan in the near future. There is even the danger, that there will be an intensification of the enemy-picture *“Muslims”*.

The extension of the mandate for the 82 years old N. N. Vohra beyond the end of the *Amarnath Yatra*, which ends at the 26th of August 2018, signals, that the Modi-government does want avoid any spectacular attack, like it happened in earlier years, since this could lead to an erosion of its image. Shortly after taking over his new role, Vohra called an all all-parties meeting in this respect.

The developments in J&K will possibly escalate and exclusive military measures will not solve the complex problems, especially the historical alienation of a large part of the population.

By-polls: Victories of the opposition parties continue

The series of defeats for the BJP in by-elections is continuing. The party could only win one of four by-elections to the *Lok Sabha* and only one out of eleven seats in State Assembly by-polls.

By-polls to the Lok Sabha

The BJP tried its very best, in order to win the *Lok Sabha* seat in Kairana in Western Uttar Pradesh. Kairana was one of the epicentres during the so-called *'Muzzaffarnagar riots'* in 2013, when the traditionally peaceful living together between the economically influential farmer-caste of *Jats* and Muslims broke down.

This time also, the BJP tried to *'communalise'* the elections through a consolidation of Hindu castes in

favour of its candidate Mriganka Singh, daughter of the deceased Gujjar-leader and LS-MP Hukum Singh. Yet, this attempt failed this time.

In 2016, Hukum Singh asserted, that Hindus would be forced to leave the area in and around Kairana. Narendra Modi spoke a day before voting at a mass rally in the nearby Bhagpat, in order to influence the poll result.

The united opposition of Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Congress supported the candidate of the *Rashtriya Lok Dal* (RLD), Tabassum Hassan Begum, whose deceased husband represented Kairana as an MLA and *Lok Sabha* MP. In Kairan, about 30% of the voters are Muslims, 10% Jats and there are also quite a number of Dalits, whereas upper castes are underrepresented. Kairana is therefore not a typical BJP-bastion.

As a result of the high *Index of Opposition Unity* (IOU), the chances for a victory by the BJP got reduced. The RLD won 51.5% of the votes, which is an increase of 4% compared to the united vote-share of the opposition parties in 2014. The BJP, winning this seat with 50.6% in 2014, achieved this time only 46.3% and lost thereby 4.3% of the votes.

Kairana (Uttar Pradesh)

Rahstriya Lok Dal (RLD) won the previously held seat by the BJP. Total number of valid votes polled: 9,34,353

2018 Kairana		2014 Kairana	
Name & Party	Votes polled	Name & Party	Votes polled
RLD (Tabassum Begum)	4,81,182 (51.50%)	BJP (Hukum Singh)	5,65,909 (36.95%)
BJP (Mriganka Singh)	4,36,564 (46.72%)	SP (Nahid Hasan)	2,26,344 (21.48%)
IND (Ravinder Kumar)	3553 (0.38%)	BSP (Kanwar Hasan)	1,60,414 (10.47%)

According to the journalist Sunita Aron, a new grouping of castes happened during this by-poll, because the non-payment for sugarcane by the factories led to the voting of *Jat*-farmers, together with Dalits, for a Muslim candidate. The opposition spread the slogan, “*that this election is not about Jinnah but 'ganna'* (sugar-cane)”. There was no confrontation between Hindus and Muslims.

In long discussions, *Jat*-farmers complained, “*that the BJP lied to us. 13 000 crores for sugarcane have not been paid to us. We have taught the BJP a lesson.*”

Dr. Chandan Mitra, a former BJP-MP and editor of the daily *The Pioneer*, conceded, that in Kairana a clear 'anti-incumbency' and a division in the voting between the animals possessing *Gujar-caste* – amongst them there are Hindus and Muslims – and other Hindu castes took place.

The experienced journalist Saba Naqvi opined that “also others withdrew support from the BJP.” The SP-spokesperson Ganshyam Tiwri stated, “that the BJP lost its narrative”.

Maharashtra

In Phalgar/Maharashtra, the BJP won against the Shiv Sena, but with a substantially reduced majority.

The BJP has retained its seat. Total number of valid votes polled: 8,69,985.

2018 Palghar		2014 Palghar	
Name & Party	Votes polled	Name & Party	Votes polled
BJP (Gavit Rajendra Dhedya)	2,72,782 (31.35%)	BJP (Adv. Chintaman Navasha Wanga)	533201 (33.79 %)
SS (Shrinivas Chintaman Vanaga)	2,43,210 (27.96%)	BVA (Baliram Sukur Jadhav)	293681 (18.61 %)
BVA (Baliram Sukur Jadhav)	2,22,838 (25.61%)	CPM (Kharapade Ladakya Rupa)	76890 (4.87 %)

But the BJP showed its strength in this “Adivasi-belt”. But it could only win with a last-minute defector from the Congress and due to a lack of opposition unity, otherwise the local BVA could have won, supported by the SS or the SS supported by the BVA, according to the NCP-leader and former Union Minister Praful Patel.

The *Nationalist Congress Party* (NCP), supported by the Congress, won against the BJP in Bhandara-Gondiya. Thereafter, Sharad Pawar, NCP, offered the Shiv Sena cooperation in the *Lok Sabha* elections in 2019.

NCP won the previously held seat by the BJP Total number of valid votes polled: 9,42,048

2018 Bhandara- Gondiya		2014 Bhandara- Gondiya	
Name & Party	Votes polled	Name & Party	Votes polled
NCP (Kukade Madhukrao Yashwantrao)	4,42,213 (46.94%)	BJP (Nanabhau Falgunrao Patole)	6,06,129 (36.61 %)
BJP	3,94,116	NCP	4,56,875

(Hemant Patle)	(41.84%)	(Patel Praful Manoharbhai)	(27.59 %)
BBM (L. K. Madavi)	40,326 (4.28%)	BSP (Eng. Sanjay raghunath nasare)	50,958 (3.08 %)

Nagaland

In Nagaland, the BJP-ally *Nagaland Democratic Progressive Party* (NDPP) won the seat, which had been vacated by the now Chief Minister Neiphu Rio.

The NDPP won the previously held seat by the NPF, represented by Rio. Total number of valid votes polled: 10,14,664

2018 Nagaland		2014 Nagaland	
Name & Party	Votes polled	Name & Party	Votes polled
NDPP (Tokheho)	5,94,205 (58.56%)	NPF (Neiphiu Rio)	7,13,372 (60.30%)
NPF (C. Apok Jamir)	4,20,459 (41.44%)	INC (K. V. Pusa)	3,13,147 (26.47%)
NA	NA (%)	SP(I) (Akhei Achum)	9695 (0.82%)

Parties that contested the Lok Sabha bypolls:

BBM, Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangha

BVA, Bahujan Vikas Aaghadi

SS, Shiv Sena

RLD, Rashtriya Lok Dal

BJP, Bharatiya Janata Party

IND, Independent

SP, Samajwadi Party

BSP, Bahujan Samaj Party

NCP, Nationalist Congress Party

CPM, Communist Party of India (Marxist)

NDPP, Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party

NPF, Naga People's Front

SP(I), Socialist Party (India)

Results of 11 Assembly constituencies

The Congress won 4 of altogether 11 seats in various states. The remaining opposition won six seats and the BJP one seat with a majority of 1 800 votes in Tharali /Uttarakhand.

The Congress won Shahkot in Punjab, which was previously held by the Akali Dal. In Karnataka, the Congress won the Rajarajeshwari Nagar-seat in Bengaluru and increased its tally to 79 in the State Parliament of Karnataka. In Meghalaya, the victory in Ampati, a traditional stronghold of the former Congress-CM Mukul Sangma, made the Congress the strongest parliamentary party, so that observers ask, "*if the Congress will aspire for a 'Karnataka' in Meghalaya with the help of smaller regional parties.*" The Congress won also in Palus Kadegaon in Maharashtra.

The SP won in Noorpur in Uttar Pradesh against the BJP.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), "*not at all a cash-rich party*" (Saba Naqvi), won in Jokihat/Bihar against its erstwhile coalition partner Janata Dal (United) and made CM Nitish Kumar with a loss of 2% again a big loser.

Kumar criticised its alliance partner BJP because of the steadily rising Petrol and Diesel prices during a period of 16 days before the polls. On the other side, the Muslim voters don't trust anymore Nitish Kumar. The RJD profited from a "*sympathy wave for the imprisoned Lalu Prasad Yadav*", so Congress spokesperson Manish Tewary.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) expanded in Maheshtala in West Bengal its lead from twelve to sixty thousand, but the BJP again established itself, although not in a striking distance, as the second largest force, ahead of the CPI/M. Dr. Chandan Mitra conceded, that it would be still a long way, till the BJP would be in a position to really challenge the TMC.

In Chengannur in Kerala, the ruling CPI/M won against the Congress and the BJP.

The *Jharkhand Mukti Morcha* (JMM) won in Gomia and Silli two seats in this mineral rich state.

Perspectives

Since 2014, the BJP won only five of sixteen by-polls to the *Lok Sabha*. Compared to the erstwhile 282 seats, therefore its numbers reduced to 271, after Yeddyurappa and another MP from Karnataka resigned from their seats.

For CM Yogi Adithyanath, together with the defeat in Kairana and Noorpur, this was the fourth defeat in a row, amongst them three defeats in LS-bypolls.

The very articulated Jayant Choudhary, son of the former Union Minister Ajit Singh and grandson the former Prime Minister Charan Singh, is *National Vice-President* of the RLD. Jayant Choudhary, a part of the “*generation next*”, like Tejeshwary Yadav from the RJD, opined: “*The Congress will in future play a role. Why can't the Congress not support regional parties in Rajasthan, for instance in parts the RLD, or in Madhya Pradesh the BSP?*”

Manish Tewary conceded, that his party is in about 200 *Lok Sabha* constituencies organisationally weak and that there is therefore room for cooperation and adjustment with regional and smaller parties. “*The Congress is in this regard flexible.*”

The BJP intends in 2019 to project the opposition as a “*negative coalition*”, whereas the election analyst Dr. Sanjay Kumar maintains, that the opposition parties must therefore form own alliances in the states

The anger and distress amongst the farmers have decisively contributed to this negative performance of the BJP. From the first to the tenth of June 2018, about two hundred farmers association organised country-wide protests, by not selling milk and food items to the public, culminating on the 10th of June in a country-wide strike.

The BJP has to worry as a result of its electoral performance with regard to the *Lok Sabha* elections in 2019. It has to react adequately to the demands of the farmers.

In the meantime, the Congress pursues the strategy, to confront the BJP in each constituency in 2019 only with a single opposition candidate. Manish Tewary assumes that the opposition will also formulate a common minimum programme.

Alliance building efforts of the opposition

With regard to the *Lok Sabha* elections in 2019, there will be in the months to come numerous attempts to forge at the national and state levels alliances within the opposition camp.

A major reason, besides the hope for better winning chances, is the fact, that quite a number of parties are literally '*broke*', according to the experienced journalist Saba Naqvi.

Yet, still unclear is the role, which the Congress will play in these efforts. After decades of “*anti-Congressism*”, some parties are still feeling quite uncomfortable to enter into alliances with the Congress, including the difficult question, to accept a possible leadership role of Rahul Gandhi.

Samajvadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party

After decades of a bitter enmity as well as clear defeats in 2014 and 2017 for both parties, which erstwhile pursued political hegemony in Uttar Pradesh, the understanding between Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati came as a surprise, to put up only one candidate against the BJP respectively, like recently in the *Lok Sabha* by-election, to jointly support a candidate of the *Rashtriya Lok Dal* (RLD).

SP and BSP obviously plan, together with the RLD in Western U.P., to jointly enter into the *Lok Sabha* campaign. Most probably, the Congress will join as the fourth wheel. Much will depend upon the allocation of seats.

Karnataka: Three party alliance

After the bitter election campaign between the Congress and the *Janata Dal (Secular)* with the surprising turn-around by the Congress, to leave in a coalition agreement the office of the CM to the JD/S, both parties seem to be willing to form in 2019 an alliance against the BJP.

Earlier the JD/S formed already an alliance with the BSP, in order to harness it's marginal support amongst Dalits in Karnataka.

Yet, the long-standing process of government formation between the Congress and the JD/S gave already a taste of possible difficulties between the main alliance partners. The BJP will leave no stone unturned, to bring this government down before 2019.

Maharashtra: Congress and NCP, also Shiv Sena?

The Congress and the *Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)*, the latter under the leadership of the resource-rich former defence and agricultural minister Sharad Pawar, will with a high degree of probability enter into a pre-poll alliance.

A stumbling stone for this plan could be, if the *Shiv Sena* would withdraw the support for the BJP, since in this case, the NCP could possibly support from outside the BJP, because of court cases against its leadership.

On the other hand, Sharad Pawar offered after its Party's win in the *Lok Sabha* by-poll over the BJP to enter into talks with the Shiv Sena over seat adjustments, which could bring the Congress into a difficult situation.

Bihar: Potential for expansion?

The Congress in Bihar does only play a subordinate role and is, after the end of '*Mahagatandhan*'-government, e. g. the return of the *Janata Dal United (JDU)* to a coalition with the BJP, of even less importance.

Irrespective of a certain discontent within the JDU with regard to the behaviour of the BJP within the *National Alliance (NDA)* – this holds also true for the *Lok Janshakti Party of Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan* and the *Rashtriya Lok Smata Party (RLSP)*, led by Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha – basic changes are not to be expected.

Aam Aadmi Party and Congress

Press speculations with regard to seat adjustments between the *Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)* and the Congress in Delhi in 2019 seem to become true. According to reliable information, the AAP seems to be ready to concede only two parliamentary seats, while the Congress allegedly claims three seats.

But it is questionable, how the AAP-basis would react to such a scenario, because the main reason for the

formation of AAP was the alleged and/or factual corruption of the Congress.

The Catholic Church in a controversy

It seems that the Catholic Church in India is entering into a confrontational approach with the Modi government. The recent letter by the Archbishop of Goa, addressed to his community, led again to anger and rejection in government circles and the RSS.

The archbishop addresses, from his point of view, the growing intolerance and sees the constitution in danger. The BJP-spokesperson Amit Malviya insinuates, *“that the Christian institutions, financed from abroad, use this money for conversions and that these letters are a reaction to the blocking of such funds by the Modi-government.”*

Valson Thampu, a former Principal of the renowned *St. Stephen's College*, states, that contrary to the allegation of conversion the percentage of Christians from earlier more than 3% is nowadays only 2.18% of the population. But he explicitly criticised the political character of these letters. Instead, he observed a conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism.

Thampu criticised the growing tendency towards *“mono-culturalism”* and alleged, *“that human rights are under threat. Most people live in uncertainty. We have to protect the Constitution.”*

The author Rudolp Heredia raised the question, *“why are people saying this? There is a policy of hate.”*

Ganshyam Tiwari, a good spokesperson of the *Samajwadi Party (SP)*, referred to the fact, that the BJP is explicitly favouring the financing of political parties from abroad, with the highest contributions for his party, and therefore its arguments are hypocritical, besides the acceptance of massive political influence of Hindu priests and religious institutions in favour of the BJP.

Contrary to these positions, Dany Pal, a BJP-spokesperson, opined, *“that the religious minorities are protected. The statements of the Archbishops are politically motivated.”*

Julio Ribeiro, a former impeccable Police Commissioner of Bombay and a former Ambassador to Romania, referred to the growing number of crimes against Christians: from 177 in 2014 to 306 in 2015 and 351 in 2016. He rejected the allegations of conversions by the BJP and emphasized, that Christians don't have any real political influence and are not in a position, to truly influence electoral outcomes.

Obviously, the BJP tries to antagonize the religious minorities ahead of the *Lok Sabha* elections in 2019 and attempts to curtail the Christian influence in the educational sector.

Speculations about the Dalai Lama's health

Based on allegedly reliable sources, the state of the Dalai Lama's health is described by journalists, specialised on the Tibetan question, and secret service personnel as not good.

Allegedly, the Dalai Lama is since two years getting treatment in Rochester in Minnesota because of prostate cancer. According to these reports he has allegedly reached the final stage of his disease.

As an indirect proof it is pointed to his alleged reduced travels and the support, given by helpers, during his performances, since the prostate disease would not allow him to bow down too much.

There are also references to a changed dress, which would serve to hide a so-called “Colostomy”-bag, which these sources say, he has to wear after several operations. Allegedly, also his immune system has become weak, so that he would have to wipe his hands during public appearances, in order to avoid infections. (Rajeev Sharma: *The Dalai Lama Is Terminally Ill, Sources Say*. 11. 6. 2018).

In the midst of such speculations, the question of his succession arises. The Dalai Lama himself had suggested approaching this question around his 90th birth anniversary. Allegedly it is now considered earlier. Recently, the United States appealed to China to respect to the Tibetan customs and convictions in this regard.

The question is also raised, why the Tibetans in Exile in India are already celebrating “60 years in exile” in 2018, while they are only due in 2019.

Contrary to this, Dr. Tseten Doorjee, the chief doctor of the Dalai Lama, rejects strongly these mainly by Beijing distributed reports as “fake news”. He said, the support, provided to the Dalai Lama, is caused by “Osteo-Arthritis”, which is common at this age.

Doorjee referred to the 10-days lecture tour by the Dalai Lama in the middle of June 2018 to Lithuania and Latvia as well as a planned visit to Ladakh in July. The Dalai Lama is, according to Dr. Doorjee, in excellent health.

In September 2018, the participation of the Dalai Lama is expected at the 50 years celebrations of the Tibet Institute in Riken and Winterthur in Switzerland. Before, lectures in the Netherlands and a conference on non-violence in Darmstadt are planned.

Part II India - Economic Developments

Mr. Moritz Emlein gives an overview of the Indian economy for the last quarter (2017-18) while observing the farmer strikes in the northern states and the formation of Cauvery Management Authority to solve the never ending crisis down south.

Indian Economy grows 7.7 % in last quarter of the financial year 2017/18

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation has released the growth data for the final quarter of the financial year 2017-18. A GDP growth rate of 7.7 % was recorded for the timeframe of January to March 2018, at 2011-12 prices. This is an increase of 1.5 percentage points compared to the same timeframe last year.

The last quarter of the financial year 2017-18 was also the one with the highest growth rate, compared to 5.6 % in Q1, 6.3 % in Q2, and 7.0 % in Q3. Fast growth in agriculture (4.5 %), manufacturing (9.1 %), and construction (11.5 %) were important factors in allowing the growth rate to rise up to 7.7 %. Overall, the ministry predicts a GDP growth of 6.7 % for the whole financial year of 2017-18.

The ministry also released sectoral growth rates for the Gross Value Added (GVA). At 2011-12 prices, the agriculture & allied sector grew 4.5 %, the industry sector 8.8 %, and the services sector 7.7 % in this last quarter. For the whole year, growth rates of 3.4 %, 5.5 %, and 7.9 were recorded in the sectors respectively.

The report also highlighted the GVA sectors with a growth rate of over 7.0 %, which are 'public administration, defence and other services', 'trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting', and 'electricity, gas, water supply & other utility services, with growth rates of 10.0 %, 8.0 %, and 7.2 % respectively.

The performance of the remaining sectors is as follows: 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' 3.4 %, 'mining & quarrying' 2.9 %, 'manufacturing' 5.7 %, 'construction' 5.7 %, and 'financial, real estate, and professional services' 6.6 %.

The GDP for the financial year 2017-18 is now estimated at INR 130.11 lakh crore, which comes out to \$ 1,937 bn.

(Sources: Press Note on Provisional Estimates of Annual National Income, 2017-18 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Fourth Quarter (Q4) of 2017-18, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation)

Farmer Strike in Northern India

On the 1st of June, a 10-day farmer strike in Northern India has begun. Organised by the *Rashtriya Kisan Mahasang*, uniting 130 organisations, the farmers will not supply vegetables, fruits, and dairy products to cities. However, they will keep selling in their villages. Among their demands are a complete loan waiver, a higher *Minimum Support Price* (MSP), and the implementation of the *Swaminathan Commission's* recommendations.

The Commission implemented by the then Congress government as the *National Commission on Farmers* (NCF) in November 2004 and headed by Professor M.S. Swaminathan, submitted five reports between December 2004 and October 2006, the last of which included recommendations for “faster and more inclusive growth”. Among the recommendations, the Commission suggests land reforms to combat the top-heavy distribution of land, with the bottom half of rural households owning only 3 % of the total land in 1991-92. Additionally, farmers need sustainable and equitable access to water, and better infrastructure to achieve a higher yield. Access to credit and crop insurance is needed as well.

The higher MSP, that is demanded, is also part of the recommendations of Professor M.S. Swaminathan. In the report, the MSP is suggested to be 50 % above production cost.

One of the goals of the protest is to make people living in urban areas aware of the problems, that farmers face. Shiv Kumar Sharma, one of the conveners, said: *“We want people in the cities to understand how vital farmers are to their daily lives. That is why we have decided to stop supplies to cities. If anyone wants to come to the villages to buy, they are welcome. So, it’s an attempt to bridge the divide between urban and rural areas, where we don’t understand each other’s problems.”*

However, not all farmers are happy with how the strike was run. As part of the rules of the strike, dairy farmers were not allowed to sell their produce to government-owned milk plants and dairies that supply cities. As they do not have the storage capacities, they were facing problems of what to do with their produce.

Not all farmer federations have joined the protest. The *All India Kisan Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti*, which includes 193 farmer organisations, stayed away. Yogendra Yadav, president of *Swaraj Abhiyan*, which is part of the *All India Kisan Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti*, stated: *“A new-age farmer movement cannot survive by pitting rural and urban India against each other”.*

Avik Saha, convener of the *Jai Kisan Andolan*, an organization that did not participate in the strike as well, said: *“The rural-urban binary arises today as it is getting increasingly difficult to draw the attention of governments to the problems faced by farmers. Thus, farmers are being forced to take desperate measures such as blocking highways or burning vehicles.”*

The strike, which already has led to rising prices in vegetables, lasted until the 10th of June.

(Sources: thewire.in, timesofindia.com, prsindia.org, indiatoday.in, thequint.com, indianexpress.com, livemint.co)

Cauvery Management Authority formed

Following a Supreme Court order from the 16th of February, the *Cauvery Management Authority* (CMA) has been formed. The Ministry of Water Resources announced the constitution of the CMA and the *Cauvery Water Regulation Committee* that are supposed to resolve the conflict of water distribution from the Cauvery River. The court order also grants a slight raise to Karnataka in its share of river water, while slightly reducing the one of Tamil Nadu.

The CMA will decide how much water each of the states that the Cauvery River flows through (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry) can take out. The Authority will also look after reservoirs and the regulation of water releases, and will control that the regional governments adhere to its orders. If the states do not cooperate with the CMA, the central government will step in.

The Cauvery River originates in the Western Ghats and flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It mainly supplies water to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, with Kerala and Puducherry only receiving a small share.

The conflict over the Cauvery River water distribution between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu dates back to an agreement from 1892 between the then Madras State and the state of Mysore. This agreement has been followed up by another agreement in 1924. With the new CMA formed, there is a new chance of resolving the conflict.

The central Government has been criticized for delaying the formation of the CMA. The court order mandated the formation within six weeks. It has been speculated, that the formation was delayed on purpose until after the Karnataka elections.

(Sources: thequint.com, firstpost.com, indiatimes.com, business-standard.com)

Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha appears under this section as a guest commentator and subject expert on transboundary waters focussing on India, China and Bangladesh.

Dr. Joyce Lobo analyses the triple visit by PM Modi particularly to Indonesia and Singapore while commenting on the Indo-Seychelles agreement on Assumption Island.

China and India and its water equations

Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha*

Introduction

Rivers are complex socio-natural realities that invariably get entangled with politics. India and China, two big and powerful riparian, offer an interesting account of hydro-behaviour and hydro-politics. The two not only share rivers between their neighbours, but also significantly have transboundary rivers flowing between them. The political framing thus is whether there will be elements of cooperation and understanding between the two or whether there will be uneasiness and unsettlement on the shared rivers. Another dimension to this framing is that shared rivers are an extension of the broader strategic interaction, in which China and India compete, contest and cooperate.

Riparian relations are developed by varied interpretations of the use of river water and the differing claims. Upper riparian nations essentially base their claims on “absolute territorial sovereignty”, i.e. the right to use rivers unilaterally. The lower riparian, on the other hand, claim “absolute territorial integrity” of rivers, stressing that upper riparian actions should not affect the water flowing downstream. The two claims are incompatible. There are, however, accepted legal norms of “equitable utilization”, “no-harm rule” and “restricted sovereignty”, that riparian states work through, and frame negotiations and treaties accordingly to overcome such differing positions. But more often than not, these norms in power dynamics are rendered meaningless. With state interest overriding a legally binding international treaty, riparian relations are thus largely influenced by the prevailing political dynamics and strategic considerations.

China’s upstream actions brings into attention the Himalayan and Tibetan watersheds, which have the largest accumulation of snow and glaciers outside the Poles and where for almost a quarter of the world’s population, water-related benefits and fears intersect. Many mighty Asian rivers, including the Brahmaputra, originate from the Himalayan-Tibetan glaciers, providing much of the drinking water and irrigation to the vast populations of China, India, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan.

China and India hydro-equation

China is a critical player in the hydro-politics of the South Asia region. Its hydrological position is one of complete upper riparian supremacy. According to the Ministry of Water Resources, China shares more than 50 major international watercourses with its downstream riparian neighbours, that include 13 directly bordering countries and 3 closely neighboured countries.[1] China’s riparian neighbours are North Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Bhutan, Myanmar,

Laos, Nepal, Pakistan (Kashmir), Afghanistan, India and Vietnam. An interesting fact to note is that approximately less than 1 per cent of water comes from outside China's territory, while the volume of water flowing out of China is about 730 bcm (billion cubic meters).[2]

In contrast, India is simultaneously an upper and lower riparian. India's lower riparian position increases its dependency (and thus water insecurity) on the headwaters of the rivers, such as Indus, Sutlej and Brahmaputra, which originate in the Tibetan plateau, an autonomous region of China. While China has no water sharing treaties/agreements on its transboundary rivers, India, on the other hand, has entered into water sharing treaties with its lower riparian countries Pakistan (Indus Waters Treaty of 1960) and Bangladesh (Ganga Treaty of 1996).

China's per capita water resources in 2013 was just over 2,000 cubic meters, with overall water availability at nearly 2.8 trillion cubic meters.[3] The average annual per capita availability of water in India as per the 2011 census was 1545 cubic meters, with utilizable water resources of only 1123 bcm, which is likely to be 1093 bcm by 2025.[4] While both China and India are currently in high water stress category, it is projected, that by 2040 both will be in the top 50 water scarce countries.[5] Currently, both the countries face wide ranging challenges, including deteriorating water quality, uneven distribution of water resources in space and time and inefficient utilisation. The critical difference between the two countries is, that China is far more water sovereign while India receives a large portion of its water from outside its territory and hence is water dependent.

Hydropolitical security complex

As China moves towards reducing its reliance on carbon-based energy sources by increasing renewables like solar and wind, hydropower will still remain important as a stable and dispatchable electricity generation source. A large percentage of the hydropower generation will be developed on the transboundary rivers in China's southwest region, that includes the Brahmaputra and the Mekong. What quite clearly has emerged, and often is overlooked, in the river basins, is a hydropolitical security complex in which states are partly hydrological owners and partly technical users of rivers. In this security complex, to what extent factors like distribution, quality, and competing uses contribute to domestic or to regional water insecurity is critically important to peace and security in Asia.

China's hydrological position gives it enormous latitude in shaping larger political equations with its riparian neighbours. India, on the other hand, given its upper-lower riparian position and its longstanding commitment to bilateral river treaties, has to assiduously balance the anxiety and concerns of its lower riparians (Pakistan and Bangladesh), without compromising its own water requirements.

Long-standing border issues and territorial claims and counter claims govern the China-India relationship on the Yarlung/Brahmaputra. Territory and water is crucially linked in this case. The territory under dispute with China (as it claims) is Arunachal Pradesh, where the Yarlung enters as Siang and is then joined by Dibang and the rapid flowing Lohit, before it becomes the Brahmaputra in the Mishmi Hills. The claim to the Arunachal territory (Chinese regard it as South Tibet) is also a claim to the vast amount of water flowing in the area.

China, as the upper riparian, configures the shared rivers as a political leverage or what can be described as 'actor-oriented strategic security-thinking'. China's initial hydro-behaviour has been marked by unilateralism and strategic silence on its rivers development. In the last two decades or so, it had very limited dialogue with its riparian neighbours, except as quiet observers on the Mekong. But now, with river projects well underway and many on the anvil, China, presenting itself as a benign power, seems far more willing to talk on the shared rivers including joint development. In the wider geo-strategic calculations, particularly with the US' rebalancing of Asia, transboundary rivers will be a key feature of China's bargaining strategy.

President Xi Jinping in his Boao Forum speech in April 2013 asserted, that China, "while pursuing its own interests, a country should accommodate the legitimate concerns of others...We need to work vigorously to create more cooperation opportunities, upgrade cooperation, and deliver more development dividends to our people and contribute more to global growth." [6] In reality, however, China's emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity is far more pronounced than fairness and mutual benefit on managing its transboundary waters. One has to see how China balances its domestic water requirement with its 'good neighbour' policy vis-à-vis downstream riparians.

From hydrological hiatus to hydrological moment

India and China face, with alarming regularity, the twin blights of drought and floods. The management of hydro resources is a critical challenge for both the countries, one that will require a different political outlook and a deeper understanding on water. India and its neighbours are part of the river systems, intricately connected from the source (the glaciers in the mountains) to the mouth (the delta). This interdependence has been less understood and often de-prioritized over conventional and territorial disputes.

It is also evident, that China's water policies will affect lower riparian countries. A search for a new regional approach based on engagement and dialogue with China on the waterfront is imperative. Scientific evidences and observations of global warming on the Himalayan and Tibetan glaciers can be a breakthrough to hydrological traction with China. The snow, ice, permafrost and precipitation are important sources to the mighty Asian rivers, flowing from the Himalayan belt, that need protection and this could well become the hydrological moment, in which India and China can take the lead to develop a mutual beneficial relationship on the rivers, that the two countries share.

In the light of the ongoing geophysical changes in the Himalayan and Tibetan regions, there are good reasons as to why the UN Watercourses Convention (in force since August 17, 2014) is significant for South Asian countries. First, given the water attention and the food-energy connection, the convention may provide the political push for states to think of mitigating risks and sharing benefits. Second, the convention offers a good basis for further water dialogues, particularly in strengthening the architecture and regimes that exist and bringing in new approaches and addressing gaps at the basin and sub-basin level. Third, the convention can synergise with other larger environmental conventions like climate change, wetland protection, desertification and biodiversity, in order to bring a holistic understanding to the region. Fourth, issues like data sharing and emergency situations can now be looked at with fresh perspective and practicality. It must be remembered, that all water

agreements in the South Asian region are bilateral, even where more than two states share a particular watercourse. The UN Watercourse Convention may drive countries in the region to think on multi-basin arrangements and management making China inclusive to it.

Moving beyond bilateral to river basin organisations

It is important to understand the historical development and political ties in the region, in order to understand the progress of the basins, including challenges such as wariness between the riparians based on ideological divides. There is also always a strong feeling of sovereign rights that adds to the difficulty of basin decisions. Despite the fact, that basins and rivers are not the same physical reality, it is possible to harvest guidelines and lessons learned from other international river basins, which can be applied to the context of the river system in the Himalaya. The common feature that emerges from most of the international basins is that institutions remain an important body for regional water governance and have the potential to remain the most effective avenue for basin-wide water-resource management.

In the given hydrological situation, Indian strategic and policy initiatives on the subject of Brahmaputra have to be carefully balanced between pursuing a 'water dialogue' with China and an emphasis on a 'basin approach', which could help leverage Bangladesh as a substantial partner. A 'water dialogue' with China has to be far more substantive and broad-based and has to be seen not only from an engineering perspective, but also substantially from an ecological concern.

Inland navigation can add great traction to basin cooperation on the Himalayan rivers. The Himalayan rivers have focused excessively on hydroelectricity, but navigation too can have economic value. In the colonial times, many of the Himalaya rivers formed important trade routes and in recent times, there has been a revival on the inland navigation on the Brahmaputra. A time may come, when China, India and Bangladesh as basin partners might consider a joint statement on inland navigation on the Brahmaputra.

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PM Modi's visit to Southeast Asia

As part of the *Act East policy 2014*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a trip to Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore which are members of the *Association for South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)*. However, these trips evoked a different response from people, particularly the India youth that Modi travels more and does less on his home turf. It must be noted, that during the tenure of Modi, all ASEAN countries have been visited by the premier, the President or the Vice President of India. These countries enjoy a strategic partnership with India.

In January 2018 India commemorated 25 years of its dialogue partnership, 15 years of Summit partnership and 5 years of strategic partnership with the ASEAN. In attendance were all the leaders of ASEAN countries for the commemorative summit. Indonesia hosts the ASEAN Secretariat and Singapore presently is the Chair of ASEAN.

Bilateral trade of India within the ASEAN is the highest with countries like Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Relations with Indonesia upgraded

Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on his first destination trip to Indonesia (May 29-31). Modi has had meetings with his counterpart President Joko Widodo on the sidelines at international and regional forums apart from the latter's visit in December 2016 at New Delhi.

In 2019, India and Indonesia will celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relations. The *2005 Strategic Partnership*, that guided the relations between both the countries, has been alleviated to a '*Comprehensive Strategic Partnership*' on May 30, 2018. This encompasses the renewed *Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA)* and the "*Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation*". India considers and gives more importance to the civilisation ties with Indonesia—Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam apart from democracy, pluralism and rule of law.

Bilateral trade has increased and stands at US \$ 18 bn. There is a grand ambition to increase this trade to US \$ 50bn by 2025. Cumulatively, Indian investment is over US \$15 billion and about 2,50,000 jobs are created by Indian companies in Indonesia. Indian investments in Indonesia are in areas such as infrastructure, power, textiles, steel, automobiles, mining, banking and consumer goods.

Indonesian investments in India are relatively modest, about \$700 million. Both sides have discussed the impediments to trade (especially in palm oil) and investment and possible areas to tap the potentials. In fact, an understanding has been achieved to set up the *Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)* at Jakarta through a MoU. Future areas that both look at are: the pharmaceutical sector, space, defence, security and infrastructure.

Maritime security: Apart from the DCA, maritime security and cooperation has got a wide coverage during Modi's trip to Indonesia. India has the policy of "SAGAR", i.e. *Security and Growth for All in the Region*, which is part of its '*Act East Policy*'. India and Indonesia since December 2016 have attempted to find complementarities between SAGAR and Widodo's *Maritime Fulcrum Policy* by preparing a roadmap. The result has been the adoption of a "*Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between India and Indonesia*" on May 30.

Connectivity in Southeast Asia has become the key to the present government in India, especially as the latter enjoys frictionless relations. Therefore, railways, air- and sea links have figured in the discussions. The idea is to build strong sea links between Andaman Nicobar-Aceh, which is built within the shared vision on maritime cooperation.

Indonesia is the closest maritime neighbour from India's Andaman & Nicobar Islands to Sabang (a town in the north of Banda Aceh), which is 90 nautical miles away. This can lead to tourism and better people-to-people contacts. Already a decision to set up a Joint Task Force to undertake projects for port related infrastructure in and around Sabang is taken. So far the *ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement* is being worked out to reach a conclusion.

This maritime vision includes enhancement of greater flow of goods, services, investment and technology; connectivity (institutional, physical, digital and people-to people) between Andaman and

Nicobar Islands of India and Provinces in Sumatera Island of Indonesia, including business linkages, promoting sustainable development of marine resources including the promotion of the Blue Economy, disaster risk management, tourism etc.

The DCA directs officials of both sides to expand mutually beneficial collaboration between their defence industries for joint production of equipment, technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity building, as well as sourcing of defence equipment. Defence cooperation includes joint exercises between the armies and navies. A MoU between PT Pindad and Bhukanvala had noted with appreciation the ongoing collaboration between PT Pindad and Tata Motors, to source defence related equipments for mutual benefit. Also the first *Trilateral Senior Officials Strategic Dialogue* is scheduled involving Indonesia-India-Australia in Indonesia, on 27 November 2018, to have a dialogue amongst the democracies in the Indo-Pacific.

Clean energy, outer space, terrorism, IT were discussed in detail. About 18 agreements were signed, which includes those mentioned above. Some of the other areas include outer space, S&T, railways, health, etc.

Singapore and Shangri-la

PM Modi made a brief stopover in Malaysia to meet the newly elected Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohammad.

On the same day, May 31, 2018, Modi met his Singaporean counterpart Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. This becomes Modi's third visit after 2015, while the premier of Singapore had visited India in October 2016 and January 2018. The focus of the visit largely has been on economic cooperation. Frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Fintech, water research, business and investment opportunities were extensively dealt with.

The talks led to the completion of the second round of the India-Singapore *Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement* (CECA), to give a thrust to the bilateral trade and investment. India has tried to promote its apps such as RuPay, BHIM, etc and also sought to promote start-ups and skill development. India has sought the help of Singapore to formulate its data policy.

Apart from concluding the Second Review of CECA, other agreements and MoUs that were signed included Naval logistics and service support, drugs, personnel etc. Armed forces of both countries maintain high level annual exercises, visits and exchanges. The premiers observed the signing of 13 agreements at the "*India and Singapore: Stepping into Future*" business event in areas like investment promotion, start-ups, FinTech, innovation, skills, artificial intelligence, data analytics and water.

India has based its *Strategic Partnership* since November 2015 with Singapore on four pillars— security, economic cooperation, technology and innovation, and cultural links and contacts. Bilateral trade accounts for US \$ 16bn, accounting for 20% of India's trade with the ASEAN region. Singapore is the second largest source of FDI in India, accounting for 16%. Since 2000 to 2017, there are more than 8000 Indian companies in Singapore. In India, Singapore based companies are major partners in areas like urban development and planning, smart cities and infrastructure development including sports, aviation, industrial parks and logistics.

Bilateral naval exercises have continued unabated. The naval exercises call SIMBEX will reach the 25th year. India has better air connectivity with 242 flights per week, each way connecting Singapore to 15 Indian cities. Singapore has a sizable population of Indian origin, i.e. 360,000 (10%); the total resident Indian population amounting to 800,000; and an annual 1.3 million Indian tourists.

Singapore, being an important logistics hub, it is at the foremost in building airports and seaports in India. This has been its contribution towards the connectivity agenda of India as part of the *Act East Policy*.

Modi's Shangri-la keynote address

Modi delivered the [keynote address](#) at the *17th Shangri-la Dialogue* on June 1st 2018 which was done for the first time by India at the premier level. This dialogue is a platform to articulate regional security issues. Here, the Indian PM articulated India's policies on peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region with emphasis on *Act East Policy*, ASEAN and SAGAR.

India is advancing a comprehensive agenda of the regional co-operation through the *Indian Ocean Rim Association*. SAGAR is articulated today as part of the Act East Policy, to join India (east and north-east) with the land and maritime partners in the East. Modi firmly committed his policies to ASEAN as part of his address and in his meetings with leaders of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Generally speaking, there was no major country or region that was left out of Modi's keynote address with a positive touch. However the speech focused on the centrality of the Indo-Pacific. While dispelling doubts, that the Indo-Pacific policy was directed against any country, he assured its inclusiveness, openness and of ASEAN's centrality and unity. Modi listed the elements for such a policy as:

- i. free, open, inclusive region
- ii. centred on Southeast Asia and therefore ASEAN
- iii. faith in multilateralism and regionalism
- iv. equal access as a right under international law
- v. open and stable international trade regime (RCEP)
- vi. connectivity
- vii. cooperation minus rivalry.

Seychelles President Faure in New Delhi

Seychelles becomes important to India for a few reasons. First of all, India expects the littoral states and neighbouring countries to be participants in the *Security and Growth for All in the Region* (SAGAR) vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, given the fact that Seychelles has emerged as a leader of *Blue Economy*. The Indian navy considers itself as the net security provider of the littoral states in the Indian Ocean. The Indian navy today patrols the *Exclusive Economic Zone* (EEZ) of the Seychelles. Again it wants a foothold through the Assumption Island for communication and surveillance facilities for its navy. India wants, in general terms, to build friendly relations around the world, to emerge as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

The India-Seychelles agreement to develop naval communication and surveillance facilities, including an airstrip and docking infrastructure at the Assumption Island was mooted seven years ago. The agreement to this effect was signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in March 2015. Though India ratified the agreement, Seychelles refused on the grounds of its sovereignty. The Indian-origin politician, Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan, from the *National Party* is Seychelles' Leader of the Opposition. Ramkalawan has been at the forefront of opposing the Assumption deal.

When President Danny Faure visited India (June 22-27, 2018) there was no forward movement on the Island project. On the Assumption Island, both sides have put a decent front citing, that interests of both countries would be taken into consideration, while taking the project forward.

The agreement would have created a joint naval facility, dealt with piracy, check Chinese presence, monitor the EEZ and counter drug trafficking. Rather, India has extended a credit line of US \$ 100 million, to purchase defence equipment from it to build the maritime capacity of the Seychelles.

India and Seychelles established diplomatic relations since the latter's independence in 1976. Seychelles has been able to develop its defence through the personnel training, through military infrastructure and through the patrols by the Indian navy.

As promised during the March 2015 visit to Seychelles, Modi's government finally handed over the second Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft during Faure's visit to India.

India today is engaged in civil projects in the form of state-of-the-art Magistrate's Court, purchase of bus transport, healthcare, the building of Government House, new Police Headquarters and Attorney General's Office etc. Grants have been given for small development projects. Other MoUs between both the countries include cyber security, culture, IT and electronics etc.

Part IV South Asia

Dr. Joyce Lobo writes that the September 23rd presidential elections in Maldives will be held under

the non-democratic norms leading to no guesses.

Political crisis in Maldives—no endgame

Maldivian politics has witnessed different shades of political rule. Largely a Buddhist nation, the people have been converted to Islam by the 12th century. In the 16th century, it came under the influence of the European colonisers. By the 19th century, the Sultanate came under the protectorate of the British Crown. In the 1950s the Sultanate was actually ruled by the British educated reformist leaders. The colonial influence continued unabated. Only in 1968, with the British severing its colonial ties and the subsequent referendum, did Maldives transition to a full-fledged republic.

By 1978, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom started his 30 years rule up to 2008. Maldives witnessed real democracy, when the *Maldivian Democratic Party* (MDP) led by Mohammed Nasheed won the multi-party elections.

The incumbent President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom won the protracted elections in Maldives in 2013. More controversial has been his rule ever since.

Yameen has ever since imprisoned his dissenters, including Nasheed. Nasheed is currently in exile and debarred from the Presidential elections to be held in September 2018.

Yameen defied the Supreme Court orders to release the law makers and instead imposed an emergency, through which he arrested the Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and Judge Ali Hameed. He also got the former dictator Gayoom arrested. This irked India, which strongly opposed his moves towards judges, Gayoom and for imposing and extending the emergency in the state. This has had negative effects on Yameen, who has diplomatically distanced India – which clearly lost its former influence - in favour of China.

The September 23 Presidential elections are already micro managed. The *Election Commission* has debarred those with criminal charges from contesting. Hence the jailed and exiled political party members cannot contest elections. The field is free for only one party, i.e. the *Progressive Party of Maldives* led by Yameen, to secure the majority votes.

With the judiciary, the *Election Commission* and the Parliament, being made president-friendly institutions instead of remaining Constitution bound, Yameen's victory in September 2018 is a foregone conclusion. There seems to be no end in Maldives political history, given the autocratic tendencies, to enable democracy to take firm roots.
