

STATE OF THE STATES

BJP recently received a jolt in the heartland where Congress made big gains in three Assembly elections. But if BJP is up against anti-incumbency, Congress is a divided house in many states. Regional parties are looking at expanding their footprint with strategic alliances. Here's a look at what's cooking in the states ahead of the mega election

TOTAL LOK SABHA SEATS WON IN 2014: **BJP+ 336** **CONG+ 58** **OTHERS 149**

Data: Lok Sabha Secretariat, Election Commission | Illustrations: Ajit Ninan | Graphics: Sajeev Kumarapuram

Rajasthan | 25 seats

Congress's victory in the recently held Assembly polls will definitely provide an impetus to the party, especially in a state that has a history of Lok Sabha results mirroring its Assembly polls. In 2014, BJP bagged all 25 seats, but subsequently lost two seats in the bypolls at Ajmer and Alwar. Congress has two heavyweights — CM Ashok Gehlot and his deputy Sachin Pilot. Though they have put up a united face, each has his loyalists, which could make ticket distribution a tricky issue. Political circles are buzzing with speculation over whether former CM Vasundhara Raje will contest, and whether Gehlot will field his son Vaibhav

BIG ISSUE Farm crisis

Punjab | 13

AAP, which at one point looked like a serious player, has split. BJP's partner SAD, too, is in disarray. SAD has not managed to calm voters' anger over the menace of drugs and the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib that led to the ouster of the Parkash Singh Badal government. A group of senior leaders broke away to form Akali Dal (Taksali). Congress wrested power in the state in 2017

BIG ISSUE Drug abuse

Haryana | 10

In a show of might, BJP pulled off a big win in the recent bypoll in Jind. Congress, which had fielded Randeep Singh Surjewala, did not poll even half the votes the BJP candidate got. INLD is in disarray over the Chautala family feud

BIG ISSUE Jat reservation

Jammu & Kashmir | 6

The political situation in J&K remains fluid after the break-up of PDP-BJP alliance. Pre-poll alliances look unlikely. The Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP is struggling to remain a force in the Valley while Omar Abdullah's NC, too, is battling for space. PDP's former partner, BJP, has emerged a strong force in Jammu, particularly after the Pulwama terror strike. There is a question now over why simultaneous state polls were not announced

BIG ISSUE Militancy

Himachal Pradesh | 4

BJP has a strong organisational base in this state while Congress is struggling to keep its flock together. Former CM Virbhadra Singh and former PCC president Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu are at odds with each other

BIG ISSUE Air connectivity

Uttarakhand | 5

The 'Modi magic' may be fading here, but BJP is still in a better position than Congress. BJP has the support of Brahmin and Thakur voters, a major chunk of the electorate. Congress is divided into various factions, one of them led by former CM Harish Rawat

BIG ISSUE Job creation

Uttar Pradesh | 80

Arithmetically, an SP-BSP coalition looks formidable — it could reduce BJP and its allies' 2014 tally of 73 seats by more than half. But how far it will succeed will depend on how their cadre — traditional enemies — reconcile their differences. For BJP, the real test would be in getting its caste combination right to check the impact of the tie-up between Akhilesh and Mayawati and neutralise the anti-incumbency factor. Both in 2014 and in the 2017 assembly polls, its caste arithmetic paid off well — it won over non-Yadav OBCs and non-Jatav Dalits. Congress, the third player, has got in Priyanka Gandhi. If Congress wins over upper castes, BJP would be hit. If, however, Muslims find Congress a viable option, it would affect SP-BSP

BIG ISSUE Jobs

Bihar | 40

NDA has finalised its seat-sharing deal: JD(U) and BJP get 17 each, while Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP gets six. But what worries NDA is Nitish Kumar's track record of embracing and dumping friends, first BJP and then RJD. Deteriorating law and order and rising corruption are also issues now. Mahagathbandhan's biggest challenge will be to keep its constituents — RJD, Congress, RSP, HAM(S), Vikassheel Insaan Party, CPI(ML), CPI and CPM — united. Lalu Prasad's absence may further complicate the problem

BIG ISSUE Special package for Bihar

Assam | 14

BJP and its CM Sarbananda Sonowal are up against resentment over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The situation is different in Barak Valley, though, where the Bengali-speaking population largely backs the Bill. Congress hopes to cash in on the backlash elsewhere in the state. AGP, which walked out of NDA over the bill, appears to be in a limbo

BIG ISSUE Citizenship Bill

West Bengal | 42

This is Mamata Banerjee's bastion but BJP is a growing force here. In 2014, BJP bagged two LS seats. By 2018, the party had consolidated — in the gram panchayat polls, BJP ended up ahead of CPM and Congress combined. Mamata, however, is on solid ground for now, and is hoping to improve on her 2014 tally of 34 with the support of rural and urban poor, small traders and the minorities. BJP is banking on religious polarisation. Left is struggling, and so is Congress

BIG ISSUE Minority appeasement

Jharkhand | 14

In power since 2014, BJP and ally AJSU Party may encounter a tough challenge from a gathbandhan comprising JMM, Congress, JVM-P and RJD, especially in Adivasi-dominated regions. Tribals feel threatened by the government's attempt to dilute their land rights. Mahagathbandhan, however, has yet to work out a seat-sharing deal

BIG ISSUE Displacement of villagers

Chhattisgarh | 11

After the recent assembly elections in which Congress swept to power with three-fourths majority, BJP is staring at losses yet again in the Lok Sabha polls. In each of the last three parliamentary elections, BJP won 10 of the 11 Lok Sabha seats. But this time, it looks difficult as a majority of the Congress candidates won their assembly segments by impressive margins

BIG ISSUE Higher MSP

Andhra Pradesh | 25

The battle's between CM Chandrababu Naidu's TDP and YS Jaganmohan Reddy's YSRCP. Jagan's party is strong in the backward Rayalaseema region. TDP, which severed ties with BJP, has an edge in parts of the coastal belt

BIG ISSUE Farm crisis

Odisha | 21

The state has been under BJD rule since 2000 and is now gearing up for simultaneous parliamentary and assembly elections. BJD will have to battle anti-incumbency. BJP has emerged the second-largest party, displacing Congress. CM Naveen Patnaik has come up with KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation), a much-acclaimed pro-farmer project. BJP is promoting similar central schemes

BIG ISSUE Agrarian distress

Telangana | 17

The main fight is between Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and Congress, and TRS has a clear advantage. In the recent Assembly elections, TRS got 88 seats, while Congress won only 19. TRS president K Chandrashekar Rao is proposing formation of a Federal Front with non-BJP and non-Congress parties

BIG ISSUE Farm crisis

Madhya Pradesh | 29

Going by the 2018 Assembly scoreline, Congress is seen to have an edge in at least 14 of the 29 LS seats — a big comeback from just three seats in 2014. CM Kamal Nath has put farm loan waiver, job creation and power sops on the fast track. He has rolled out the country's first scheme for 100-day job guarantee for urban youth and the agri loan waiver money has already started reaching farmers' accounts. BJP, on the other hand, can draw hope from the fact that it was neck and neck with Congress despite the anti-incumbency of 15 years of rule

BIG ISSUE Farm loan waiver

Gujarat | 26

This is the home turf of PM Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah. They would hope for a clean sweep again. But between 2014 and 2017, the state witnessed major upheavals like the Patidar quota agitation, post-Una Dalit uprising, and farmers' agitation. Congress gave a stiff fight to BJP in the 2017 assembly polls with BJP facing a drubbing in the rural belt

BIG ISSUE Farm crisis

Maharashtra | 48

Maharashtra has seen serious rural distress during the past four and a half years as a result of drought and problems of glut. Farmer suicides have continued in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions, yet BJP has recorded a string of successes in a majority of municipal and other local body elections. Congress and NCP have been on a comeback trail only recently, while Shiv Sena has sent mixed messages as BJP's 'frenemy.' Sharad Pawar's return to the LS poll fray may galvanise the NCP cadre

BIG ISSUE Drought and distress owing to debt and other factors

Goa | 2

Manohar Parrikar's illness will be a huge handicap for BJP's campaign. Its candidates will also have to battle anti-incumbency. Congress has yet to pick its candidates. Besides, Vijai Sardesai, who had single-handedly led the Congress campaign in 2014, has now formed his own party and is in an alliance with BJP

BIG ISSUE Mining industry shutdown

Karnataka | 28

After the 2018 Assembly polls, Congress stitched together an unlikely alliance with JD(S) and propped up an HD Kumaraswamy-led government. BJP tried to get even by toppling the government but failed. Congress, however, is divided into two camps led by Siddaramaiah and Mallikarjun Kharge. JD(S) is still bargaining hard with Congress to work out a pre-poll deal. Led by ex-CM BS Yeddyurappa, BJP continues to be in a strong position in the coastal regions

BIG ISSUE Drought

Kerala | 20

Regional issues — the 2018 floods, the state government's handling of women's entry into Sabarimala, and the menace of political killings — will dominate the election campaign here. UDF and BJP will play the Hindu card whereas LDF will focus on a new social engineering experiment. The LDF plans to divide Hindu votes and win half of them by winning over the prominent Ezhava community and the SC/STs

BIG ISSUE Women's entry to Sabarimala

Tamil Nadu | 39

This election is the first big test for the AIADMK and DMK leaderships after the deaths of M Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa. A perceived anti-Modi sentiment and charges of corruption and nepotism against the K Palaniswami govt could give the MK Stalin-led DMK's alliance with Congress and the Left an edge. But in a state spoilt by populism, the AIADMK-led alliance with BJP and PMK hopes to capitalise on freebies and budget sops announced by the state and the Centre

BIG ISSUE Water shortage & inter-state river disputes

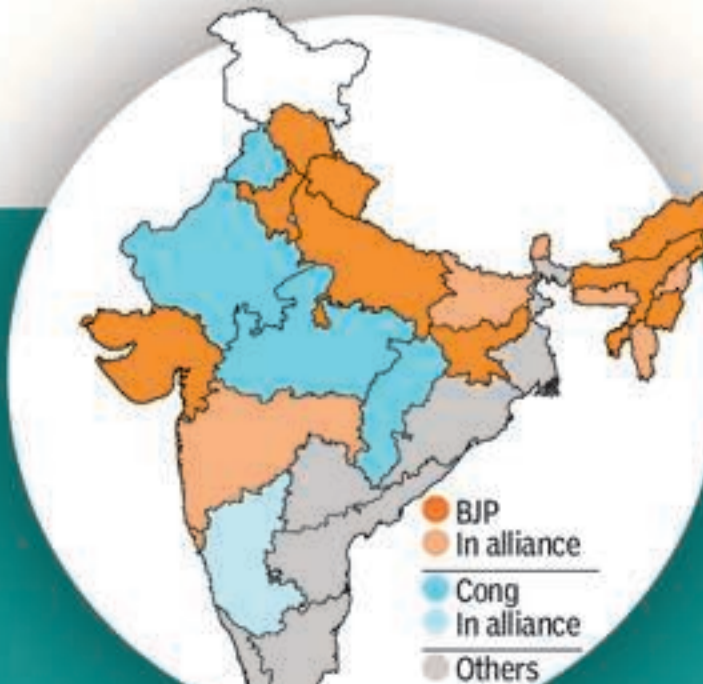
UNION TERRITORIES

Delhi | 7

CM Arvind Kejriwal has been eyeing an alliance with Congress, but it hasn't happened so far, paving the way for a triangular contest. Delhi is AAP's base and how it performs will have a bearing on Kejriwal and his party's future. In the 2015 assembly polls, AAP won 67 of 70 seats. Congress has brought in former CM Sheila Dixit to lead the party. BJP will gain from a division of votes if there is no AAP-Congress tie-up

BIG ISSUE Full statehood

- Andaman and Nicobar Islands ● 1
- Chandigarh ● 1
- Dadra and Nagar Haveli ● 1
- Daman and Diu ● 1
- Lakshadweep ● 1
- Puducherry ● 1



BJP+	15
Cong+	5
TDP	1
TMC	1
AIADMK	1
TRS	1
CPM+	1
BJD	1

*J&K is under President's Rule

WHO RULES WHERE

The map shows parties in office in the states. BJP rules in the three blocks of saffron. Congress's wins in the three recent state elections have given it a chunk of the heartland. A contiguous stretch from Kerala, all the way up the eastern coast, is ruled by regional parties, most of whom are not aligned with either of the national parties

THE NORTH EAST

The 11 seats in the seven north-east states, excluding Assam, will be keenly watched this time, with the repercussions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill having made the political atmosphere volatile. BJP has made inroads into the region, having stormed to power in Tripura and stitching up alliances in other states to be part of the government. But this time it will find the going tough with the mood having soured over the BJP-backed bill that favours Hindus. In some states, like Arunachal, it will be a straight fight between Congress and BJP, while in states like Nagaland, the ruling BJP-NDPP will be pitted against its former ally, NPF. In Manipur, BJP, which runs a coalition government, may have to work extra hard to wrest the state's LS seats from Congress

- Arunachal Pradesh ●● 2
- Manipur ●● 2
- Mizoram ● 1
- Meghalaya ●● 2
- Nagaland ● 1
- Tripura ●● 2
- Sikkim ● 1