

Challenges for Next Indian Government



simplifying sustainable success...

Now that longest drawn election in the history is finally over with last votes being cast by the time this note would be up, and results of “exit polls” would still not be aired (lest I am accused of being biased of potential trends), here’s my another attempt to put my proverbial money (hopefully not foot) where my mouth is.

With my limited knowledge of economy and extremely limited understanding of sociology & politics, I would hope, rather recommend, the new government (irrespective of its ideologies – disclaimer for full disclosure: I am on record expecting an NDA government – may be with some new allies) to focus on following five things in next 100 days:

1. Avoid Competitive Populism:

Yes, I am aware that each affiliation has promised new, and ever burgeoning, free bees but it’s worth the wrath to differ the enormous burden on already strained economy. We are an inequal society but not poor one. By some estimates India spent more that eight billion dollars (\$8,000,000,000) in this election, which is more that what US spent in 2016 – a country with ten times of our economy and 25 times of per capita income. Free Bees can wait, let’s improve the delivery and outcome of already announced schemes that are already a plenty.

2. Jobs & Employment:

Ignoring statistics, as well as cosmetics, there is no more urgent a need in India than creating meaningful & productive engagement for our youth. It is an existential imperative for us and we have to ACT BIG, FAST AND NOW. So for we have enjoyed, or at least claimed so, the advantages of demographic dividend and it would not be long before this becomes an economic, social and cultural liability. Unless we channel youth energy constructively and positively, not so friendly elements shall not waste the opportunity to radicalise them for destructive purposes – and this would be irrespective of their caste, creed, belief or faith.

3. Globalise the Economy:

We are all aware that globalization is retreating all over the world. Trade Wars are picking up and “Nation First” is the new mantra. Nobody is interested, or committed enough for the global order, particularly the so-called world powers. This is a challenge but here lies a great opportunity for next Indian Government. We could take a lead and become the torch bearer for the new world order. We should, urgently and elaborately, identify the sweet spots – of which there are quite a few across the world. Let’s forget the US, EU, China, Japan etc. for the time being and collaborate with Ugandans, Lebanese, Chileans, Vietnamese, Croatians, Australians, Cambodians, Slovaks etc. There are 54 countries in Africa and this would be continent for growth for next half a century at least, if now more. They need help and we can, & must, extend – YES! We Can. It would be worth every effort to create a taskforce with exclusive responsibility and time bound accountability.

4. Multiply Infrastructure Investments:

This is what we have to learn from China. We still have areas where connectivity and infrastructures are challenges. Time to task the bureaucrats and industrialists to create 100 functional new cities (smartness can come later) in next one year. Develop Work Break Down Structure (Blame it on my Project Management Bias) and assign a city or two to each state and each business house and PSU beyond a certain threshold on turnover. Incentivise the investment and returns shall follow.

5. Decentralize:

India is too heterogenous, complex and complicated to have centralized governance. Not only the states have to be further empowered, they should also be held accountable in achieving predefined targets – just corporatize and make them individual SBUs / Business Verticals. PM should hold the CM accountable, who should task every DM, like any group president would to his / her BU Head who fixes the targets for functional heads. And it must be go beyond finance and expand to governance, welfare, growth, sustainability et all. And it must not stop here itself. This must further percolate down to district & village level. Outline the expectations, empower them and hold them accountable – a precious lesson I learnt in my corporate journey. Admittedly, the previous government has created competitive federalism, and this must be significantly augmented.

I am consciously aware that people far more capable, competent and committed than me have given serious thoughts on the matters raised by me. I hope and would be pleasantly surprized if think tanks in various affiliations have dwelt and acted on the matters that I might have missed and are far more critical. But, just thought of doing my bit with my little might.

Please do let me know what you think!

PS: It’s 1801 hours in India and I got an SMS “As the election campaign comes to a close I’d like to thank each one of you for your hard work & effort. Jai Hind – Name Withheld by Me”

I am impressed and become more hopeful and optimist.