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With the elections to the National Assembly less than two weeks away, the two parties-DNT and DPT that emerged as the two top most vote getters are seen to have finally worked out their strategy for the final round.

Yet going by the trends, it looks that it will be a very close election and even now it is not easy to make any assessment on the final results.

Unlike the primary election where the people chose the party, in the final round the people will have to choose individual candidates for the 47 constituencies.

It is surprising that the leaders of the two groups DPT and DNT appear to have different strategies on the final elections. The DPT President declared that the Party President and the pledges they make are more important to garner the required votes for the majority while the DNT President feels that individuals in each constituency would matter in the final round.

The Election Commission of Bhutan has wisely moved to ensure a level playing field. It directed the parties to stick to their manifestoes in making pledges and not promise beyond what had been declared.

The second was the fine levied on Yeshey Penjor, a candidate of DNT when he said that “development and cordial relations with India is possible only if the DPT formed the Government in 2018” The ECB found this to be a violation of Social media Rules and regulations 2018 and Political Parties Rules and Regulations 2015.

The DNT appears to be more idealistic in its approach to the elections.

Firstly, it declared that they will not take any outside candidates for the final election though there were many outstanding and competent people available more from the PDP than from the BKP though both were knocked out in the first round. By including some of their candidates the party could have got more votes from those who had voted earlier for the PDP and the BKP. It is not to be forgotten that in the 9 constituencies where the PDP won in the first round, the DNT was a close second and had a chance to garner PDP's votes also. But it may or may not happen now.

Second- the DNT and its President are focusing on the eastern constituencies where the DPT has a firm grip and had proved again and again that it is their stronghold. In trying to make a dent in the East, there is a justifiable fear among the party leaders that with the limited time available, it is better to concentrate on the "winnable constituencies" rather than looking for making some presence in the East. The DNT President Dr.Lotay Tshering is more keen to explain to the people of the East of the party's ideologies and has promised that their interests would be looked after better if they come to power. It is being said that the party has even offered three ministerial posts if they are voted to power. After all what matters is the winnability and this is not the time to be idealistic. One should see the situation in India where leaders suddenly become religious or profess great love for farmers or make statements to please the "vote banks"

Third, is the party's positive campaign of highlighting their pledges like increasing free education up to standard 12 and allowances for women during their initial months of child birth and not discuss or mention about the demerits of the opposition party or its pledges. He has even accused the DPT of 'mud-slinging', blame games and use the social media for attacking his party by anonymous writers! A serious charge indeed!

If one is to build a mathematical model, it would appear that the DPT may have to work on two more constituencies to get the magic figure of 24, whereas the DNT which obtained the largest number of votes will have get 8 more constituencies and this may have to come from the nine constituencies from where the PDP got the majority and from the postal votes which consisted mainly of government servants.

But there are many variables to this model. First is -how do the people who voted for the PDP and the BKP vote this time -whether for the DNT or the DPT. Second, where would the postal votes go. The number of voters for postal ballots and for voting in the facilitation centres is almost one third of the total electorate and it is a considerable number. Third, if the people had voted for a change, in the first round, this time both the parties were not in power and there would be hardly any difference. Fourth, whether the concentrated campaigning by the DNT in the eastern strongholds of the DPT would bring any change? And finally, would the leadership matter when the votes are for individuals in the constituencies?

It would appear therefore that this election may be a close call and one will have to wait for the final results with our fingers crossed!

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