

Changing Perception of Electoral Politics in Jammu and Kashmir: A Study of BJP Dominance in Assembly Elections of 2014

Rafiq Ahmad Sofi¹, Dr. Javeed Ahmad Bhat²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar Department of Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Punjab India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Punjab India

Email: rafiqahmadsofi@gmail.com

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Abstract

The present study is an exploration into the Jammu and Kashmir's party politics, with a focus on the Bharatiya Janata Party. The study is analytical in nature and has adopted the qualitative approach to delve deep into the party politics in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and the emergence of BJP in the helm of governance. To fulfil the objectives of the study and draw the precise inferences with regard to subject matter, secondary data sources have been used. In this background, the findings of the study have revealed that in the backdrop of the one-party system that dominated in political stage of the politics in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir, wherein the only political choice or option with the masses was the National Conference predominantly a Muslim party. The emergence of the BJP had highly favourable effects on the democratic politics of this region. Prior to its advent in the state, voters lacked a different ideological option which could support the minority sentiment in state and echoed around being more democratic option to overthrow the so called dynastic rule particularly in Kashmir's mainstream politics having it influence even in the Hindu dominant region of Jammu. With BJP in place, there was tremendous competition in the democratic arena. In this context BJP arrived setting up the environment for the competitive politics; therefore a concrete effort is made to explore and analyze the BJP's performance in the 2014 election & its ideological dominance in the Muslim majority state and emergence as a political contender.

Keywords: Democratic, Dominance, Governance, Ideology, Politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The constitution of independent India has envisioned a pool of governance institutions to administer the socio-economic and political facets of social existence at large. However, in a democratic setting, copious institutions that are vital to the governing process continue to decline for one cause or another (Khurshid, 2016). The government's commitment to these institutions was low, as evidenced by the fact that a significant number of them are either improperly constituted or inadequately supported by the state. In this milieu, after the repeal of Article 370 on 5th August 2019 in the erstwhile state of J&K, all political leaders including Mehbooba Mufti were jailed and the state experienced a complete political collapse. She referred to the revocation of Article 370 as a "theft and an insult" and labeled it "a heist." black day. She has become a vocal opponent of the BJP government's plan to repeal Article 370 (Ahmed, A. 2019). The party's stance on Jammu and Kashmir's special status and Mehbooba Mufti's willingness to fight for the reinstatement of Article 370 gave the party an opportunity to rebuild and recover its image, which had been damaged by its alliance with the BJP (Kumar, 2015). The party joined the "People's Alliance Gupkaar Declaration" for this aim. Through the Gupkaar Declaration, the party has highlighted the subject of Article 370 and proclaimed its determination to fight for the restoration of the status prior to August 5. How does this party maintain its commitment to this cause? How does the party use this forum to reevaluate itself and reestablish its place in the mainstream politics of Jammu and Kashmir? In the above background, the present study is an exploration into the dominance of BJP in 2014 assembly elections and the challenges thereby.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is an exploration into the success of the BJP predominantly (a Hindu Nationalist) party in the Muslim dominated erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The paper further looks in to the aspects of the state politics wherein a majority of the dominant political parties have Muslim leadership base, in the mildest of all these the BJP managed

to gain 25 Assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections. In this context, following research objectives have been framed:

- To analyze the emergence of the BJP in the political arena of J&K.
- To delve into the reasons for emergence and success of BJP in 2014 assembly elections in J&K.
- To explore the factors that helped the BJP to dominate the 2014 J&K assembly elections.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is an analytical exploration into the emergence and success of BJP in the political sphere in the 2014 assembly elections of J&K. Considering the nature of variables and subject matter, it becomes imperative to adopt the appropriate research methodology. In this context the present study is analytical in nature and has adopted the qualitative research technique to garner an insight into the subject matter. Secondary data sources including journals, news articles, books and other published material constitute the prime data sets. The study has made use of qualitative research works including review based studies, however there is minimal use of statistics of different political contexts. Accordingly, the subject matter has been presented under appropriate themes.

4. EMERGENCE OF THE BHARTIYA JANATA PARTY IN J&K

The emergence of the BJP during 1980's is termed as the most important factor in Indian political history. Among other things, the dominance of the Nehruvian Consensus is collapsing (Ahmed, 2019). Since Nehru's intermediate route of free enterprise and communism had not produced a more substantial change in India, there was widespread unhappiness with the unfulfilled promises of modernization and ideological confusion (Guha, 2008). The BJP could take advantage of this political and ideological void. This was supported by the Congress's remarkable decrease, which consistently refuted claims of debasement. In the midst of economic uncertainty and change, the concept of Hindu solidarity served as a societal adjustment (Jaffrelot, Ch. 2015).

The BJP continues the legacy of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Hindu MahaSabha, both of which were founded in 1951 (Appaiah, 2008). The support of the BJS for a Hindu state did not resonate with the voters during the Congress Raj, since the Congress party, under the leadership of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and therefore his daughter Indira Gandhi, dominated Indian political matters. Under the secularism of the Congress, India's numerous social, ethnic, and religious cleavages could be appeased or buried through the prudent use of government funds and initiatives (Blarel, 2019). This Congress Raj provided meetings such as the BJS with limited political and discretionary open doors. A breach in the armor appeared in 1975, when Indira Gandhi caused a highly sensitive situation, effectively suspending the constitution, when a court found her guilty of wartime misconduct, a verdict that barred her from participating in governmental matters (Chaurasiya, 2014). Janata Morcha (the People's Front), a coalition of non-Congress parties, caused this weight of crisis management. This decade is crucial in Indian government politics because it marks the Congress party's irreversible fall. In this particular instance in 1980, the prior remnants of the Janata Party .The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) was founded by a group with close ties to the BJS (Sumit, 1999). The important question is whether the Congress's decline was a necessary and sufficient condition for the BJP's surprise surge. Had the Congress continued in power, would the BJP have been able to achieve and support its foundational achievements beginning with the ninth Lok Sabha (House of the People) decision in 1989? It is argued that the annihilation of Congress was a contributing cause, but not the most significant one. In the end, there was a more significant development in Indian politics that roused the public, both the middle and upper class Hindus and the lower classes. This energizing put these two meetings on a collision path, creating a political opening for non-Congress parties, like as the BJP (Kumar, 2016).

5. THE ALLIANCE PARTNERS: PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP)

Mufti Mohammad Syed, the former Home Minister of India, analyzed the political climate and the plight of the people and, in 1998, created the People's Democratic Party (PDP) with the intention of alleviating their plight. In J&K, the PDP came to power in the assembly in October 2002 (Shankar, 2016). It was a member of the UPA, which was the Congress government of the center-left. Mufti Mohammad Syed oversaw the PDP-INC Coalition Government from October 2002 and October 2005 (Peerzada, 2016). He led the party till his passing. His daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, now leads the party. The core idea of the PDP is self-government, which is incompatible with autonomy. Self-government is the party's core philosophy. These tendencies are also reflected in the legislature.

The investigation is whether secularism is shrinking at the expense of progress. G. N. Azad stated that every Indian should be concerned about it. "The rise of the BJP in the remote state, which is under psychological warfare, is a source of anxiety for the entire country," he said. Azad claimed, "Their sole objective is to generate tension among the general public," adding, "They are being rejected by the nation due to their communalism." Elections in Jammu and Kashmir have always been a

contentious topic due to its political influence or circumstances (Chowdhary, 2019). On Election Day, the competition between political parties and separatists is high. On the one hand, the protection and blacklisting of dissidents demand an election. Political parties, on the other hand, strive to engage in conflict, each for its own motives for making decisions and proclamations. Since 1957, there have been numerous changes to decisions, including the transfer of power from Sheik Abdullah to Bakshi and then back to Sheik Abdullah following the deal with Indira Gandhi (Khurshid, T. 2016).

Sheikh Abdullah's administration was transferred to his son, Farooq Abdullah, at the time. Farooq Abdullah became resolute towards India. During the revolt, Farooq Abdullah was dominated by Indian government directives. The PDP was formed in 1998 by the former house mufti, Mohammed Syed, following this period of heightened revolt. Elections came to dominate the Sheik period during the 2004 elections. Individuals now anticipated that something would evolve. They did so throughout their whole term in office. PDP was somewhat willing to solve people's problems; but, in the subsequent election, Omar Abdullah, i.e. the national conference, seized power and rejected the aspirations of people's organisations (Hussain, 2016). In 2009, the PDP won the elections. This time, they displayed some degree of decent governance. They assumed a big number of responsibilities and delegated a large number of responsibilities, such as power distribution, to the central government. In the 2014 elections, the BJP, along with parties such as the NC, PDP, and Congress, fielded candidates in every nook and cranny of J&K. (Ahmed, 2022) The startling result of this election was that the BJP won the majority of Jammu seats, 25 out of 87, while the PDP won 28 and the balance went to other parties.

6. ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN 2014: AN EVALUATION

The elections were held in November in five phases, November 25- December 20. Despite Hurriyat Conference boycott calls, the election had the highest voter turnout in the previous 25 years (Hussain, 2022). Voter turnout was over 65%, which is higher than the regular voting rate in different parts of India. The top 04 political parties were: PDP with 28 seats, BJP with 25 seats, National Conference with 15 seats INC finishing 4th with 12 seats (Gulati, 2021).

The Hurriyat Conference (JK) urged the citizens of Kashmir to boycott the forthcoming elections. Participating in elections is like to lying with the blood of martyrs. "Until we attain freedom, we will continue to make sacrifices." With elections scheduled for 2014, Kashmiri separatists have begun pushing for the blacklist to vote. Following his release from a lengthy detention on development-related charges, the head of the Hurriyat, Syed Ali Geelani, sought a list of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections to be followed by the J&K assembly elections. Geelani referring to standard political gatherings, declared, "They are collaborators in the continuation of Indian domination in Kashmir." Ace India political meetings have constantly increased the energy of our shared assets (Kumar, 2021). Geelani, making fun of both the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and their way of thinking, stated that Kashmiri's would not accept arrangements like the self-control of the PDP or the self-sufficiency proposed by the National Conference (NC) or any other substitute offered by other standard political parties.

Regarding standard political meetings, Geelani's release has transformed into a civil dispute, which, according to them, has implications for next polls. The principal opposition party, the PDP, has recently expressed anxiety regarding the arrival time of the Hurriyat leader. PDP delegate Naeem Akhtar has accused the National Conference (NC) of playing political games "difficult legislative issues" There are concerns, and many persons believe that Geelani was fired because the National Council (NC) is profiting from his survey blacklist campaign "explained Akhtar (Christopher, 2015). According to gathering insiders, there is a reason why Geelani's blacklist call benefits NC: it keeps the majority away from the polling booth while the NC structure decides how to vote. In any case, the NC has severely restricted Geelani's call to the blacklist. Mustafa Kamal, the general secretary of the NC, claimed, "Geelani has lost his credibility because no one pays attention to his blacklist or strike calls." Regardless, he will not allow the tranquil situation to persist for very long. He would employ every trick in the book to again disturb the tranquilly. In the saga of claims and counterclaims, it appears that 2014, which has been designated as the survey year for Kashmir, will be rife with political conflict (Ashraf, 2019).

Inconsiderately, political parties urged voters to vote and reflect their choice and show active participation in the representative form of democracy. The significance of the decisions was heightened because this was the time when the BJP emerged as a prominent power. Examining the regional situation reveals that the statewide decision is largely the result of a combination of problems in different sections of the state. In Hindu-majority Jammu, the BJP was the obvious victor, but in Muslim-majority Jammu, there was a four-cornered battle, with each of the four major parties obtaining between 20% and 28% of the vote and the largest party, the Congress, gaining only five of the 12 seats (Batti, 2020). As was the case in Jammu, the test was not identical in the northern and southern portions of the Kashmir valley. South Kashmir was decisively won by the PDP, which won 13 of the 21 seats and more than 40 percent of the vote. Despite obtaining at least 30% of the vote, the National Conference could win nearly four seats due to the 10% disparity between it and the leading party in the region's extremely polarised election. The Congress came in third place with 13.2% of the vote and two seats. In North Kashmir, the two major parties fought more evenly, with the NC's 28.2% substantially closer to the PDP's 34.2%. This was also reflected in the seat count, with the NC winning eight seats to the PDP's two (Bukhari & Khalid, 2020).

Firstly, the firm consolidation of the organisation and structure of the crusade followed by component of the BJP's battle hosts has been the removal of local party structures and organisations through the concentration of campaign planning and strategy

with the party's top command, led by the party's leader, and the Executive office (Balu, 2019). The personalization of the campaign behind the PM's personae and the third characteristic of the BJP's strategy is the total personalization of the campaign behind the PM's persona, who is expected to be a kind and fortunate leader who, bolstered by his experience controlling India's fastest-growing state for a considerable length of time, would apply his mind to do likewise at the national level, disregarding exceptional interests, be they of position, region, or partnership (Bulutgil, & Neeraj, 2023).

The fourth distinguishing feature of the BJP's campaign is that the main motifs of the Hindu conservative assembly are still employed, albeit in a more enigmatic, background manner. The constituent guide is divided into "sociologically homogenous zones" (i.e., insightful positions) and candidates are selected based on their position. In addition, religion continued to be an important means of political mobilization (Chaudhuri, 2022). The fifth and final component of the BJP's methodology is designating fairly unknown persons as prominent figures who do not fit into typically dominant political gatherings. In political context, with 28 seats, the PDP has become the most dominant party in the elections for social affairs, followed by the BJP with 25 seats. The PDP has the "ethical need" of being generally open, and the BJP should strengthen this characteristic in order to create the future government. The PDP has won 25 seats in Kashmir, in addition to three in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP has won 25 seats in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP has the potential to link this openness between the Valley and Jammu regions to the maintenance of state unity. The BJP has earned 23 per cent of the average vote in the entire state, while the PDP has secured 22.7 per cent of the popular vote. The BJP had 1107194 votes, and the PDP is aware of how to obtain 1092203 votes. Without a doubt, the BJP has received the largest number of votes in the state, but the gap between the BJP and the other political parties is only 14,991 votes (Gulzar, 2019).

7. THE ASCENT OF THE BJP IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The fundamental component is the eradication of pre-optional unions, a prevalent aspect of Indian administrative difficulties that aims to increase the triumphant possibilities of coalitions by means of pre-constituent seat-sharing agreements. The proposition is out of date in India, but it was systematized in the late 1990s, when the "everyone for himself" method prompted limitless government courses of action and affected a greater proportion of the population. Associations and seat-sharing agreements were crucial to the development of the BJP in a few states and on the national stage, where it was able to oust the Congress and the third front coalition in 1998 by forming its own distinctive, broad National Vote-based Alliance (NDA) (Hassan, & Bhat, 2021). Since the 2014 battle, the BJP has fought every election on its own, abandoning all of its usual allies. In Kashmir, the BJP did not mention social themes in potential partnership discussions. The BJP's victory in Jammu and Kashmir during the 2014 elections was also a significant milestone for the party.

There are reasons behind that, one of these is the Modi wave, which swept over a number of Indian states and also affected Jammu & Kashmir. The BJP won nearly all of the seats and was regarded as a significant power investor in the Jammu region, it being more complex that it appears (Reekha, 2015) while the PDP emerged victorious by winning 28 out of 87 seats. A strong balance between the PDP and national conference explains the BJP's loss in Kashmir. Internal ties exist between these two groups of people. Nonetheless, in Jammu, the local BJP advanced toward becoming a real party prepared to return to improvement and Hindutva activities. Constituent government challenges in Jammu have centered on the rural community that resides along the rough borders with Pakistan. In Jammu, they lost seats to the PDP. It garnered 48.1% of the vote and won 22 of the 25 seats (Jadhav, 2021). This, along with the fact that the region also had the greatest voter participation in the state, was sufficient to ensure that the far-flung portion had a significant representation. The BJP's greatest achievement was the manner in which it conducted its media crusade in Kashmir. According to one political observer, it was the most expensive campaign waged by any party in the recent history of Jammu and Kashmir, to the point where other parties, including the Congress, were forced to adopt the same strategy. Banners, hoardings, and buntings were displayed in cities and towns in the north and south of Kashmir, including Srinagar, the capital. However, the BJP misjudged its needs.

The party took a little longer to realize that territorial cooperation was the key to unlocking the door to Kashmir, but it eventually did. The state of Jammu and Kashmir consists of three political regions, including Ladakh, and its eastern border is shared with China. It has borders with Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Pakistan to the south, while the Kashmir Valley to the west shares borders with Pakistan and exchanges states with India. Individual-vote-based PDP, BJP, NC, and INC are the most prominent political parties in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP and PDP intend to form a government with Mufti Mohammad Syed, a 79-year-old politician and party founder, as the primary home minister, and after two months of fierce dispute between both political parties regarding the common minimum program-CMP (Kuszevska, 2022). The basic objective of this is to recognize that peace, harmony, and certainty are preferable. Managing government via difficult administrative issues within the state and across the LoC for a complete transition in the dominating section. In addition, the confederation must define conditions and phases to assist the assurance of all issues that are catching up with the state. As a consequence, the hanging organisation of Jammu and Kashmir would initiate a strategy for the huge trade with all the dissenter pioneers, regardless of their ideologies, in an effort to establish a broad consensus in light of the assurance of every extraordinary issue creation of the government.

8. GOVERNMENTAL FORMATION & POLITICAL COLLATION MEASURES

The BJP, the PDP, and the central legislature of India had initiated a series of initiatives to institutionalize the abhorrent relationship with Pakistan. In the spirit of "Insaaniyat, Kashmiriyat, and Jamhooriyat," the current coalition government would similarly maintain a watch on the method of commerce with each and every political group, including the Hurriyat conference. This political measure will aim to build a wide framework of understanding in light of the remaining Jammu and Kashmir state challenges. The step made by the examining government to ensure safety from a security standpoint, the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir has vastly improved since the 1990s. The current government will try to increase public confidence in its viability (Magar, 2019). The Jammu and Kashmir province as a whole is prepared to comprehend the estimation of peace and common qualities in the state.

In terms of security, the present coalition administration has meticulously studied the state's security situation in order to evaluate the necessity and allure of all the extraordinary laws associated with the state in light of the prevailing scenario. The current examination apparatuses will survey the troublesome regions of the state and make off-key adjustments in accordance with the needs of the state's vital populace in terms of viewing and assuring the country's union legislative body. The grounds obtained by security controls in the state without a lease and licenses pursuant to the Land Obtaining Act will be restored to the actual legitimate proprietors, unless holding the land is absolutely necessary in the context of a particular security necessity. In any case, monetary payments, whether for rent or payment, shall be paid at exhibit rates. The Jammu and Kashmir coalition government has drafted a CMP. To strengthen the political situation of the state, both resemblance partners must establish peace, stability, and dependability (Misra, 2022).

The current administration should be replaced with one that is intelligent, transparent, and accountable. In addition, it is the responsibility of the central government to ensure that Jammu and Kashmir is not a degraded state. The state's current administration will examine a general financial arrangement that will change the state's monetary structure. The current administration must protect the autonomy of integrity institutions, such as the state accountability commission, the vigilance commission, and access to the Appropriate to Data Act. Former National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee established the rule of insanity, Kashmiriyat, and Jamhooriyat, which the administration should obey.

In addition, the state government will have an important discussion with its external partners, which will include political groups of all ideologies. The administration of the state assembly will investigate the need to visit troublesome areas, allowing the local government to make an official decision regarding the continuation of the Arms Power Exceptional Power Act in these regions. Regarding the current examination under government Article 370, the current posture, including the unique status, would be maintained (Mukerji, 2022). Despite ideological disagreements, the coalition administration would also seek communication with the Hurriyat Meeting. The land that is acquired by security authorities in the state without rent and licenses under the Land Obtaining Act will be returned to the legitimate legal owners, unless holding the land is very essential from the perspective of a special security requirement. Regardless, all monetary compensation, whether rent or salary, should be made at market rates. The resemblance government would make a one-time settlement to the Pakistani exiles who participated in Kashmir in 1947, 1965, and 1971. Additionally, the coalition administration will take necessary measures to aid the displaced people of western Pakistan. The government will also offer benefits to individuals who live "off the grid" (LoC) and on the fringes of society. The administration will ensure that the state government receives the advantage of the National Hydro Power Task (NHPT) resulting from Jammu and Kashmir's water. The assembling government will accord with the NHPC on all matters of prominence. Keeping in mind the mandate of the people

9. CONFLICTS FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT FORMATION

The 2016–17 unrest in Kashmir, generally referred to as the Burhan wave, indicates the escalation of violent conflicts in the Kashmir Valley. On July 8, 2016, Indian security forces killed Burhan Wani, the head of the Kashmir-based Islamic militant group Hizbul Mujahideen. In all 10 districts of the Kashmir Valley, Indian contrasts began to be undermined after his death. To circumvent time confinements, dissidents employed attacks on security forces and unlocked properties. On July 15, the government enforced curfew in all 10 valley zones and suspended relevant associations. Kashmir was subject to a 53-day continuous time limitation, which was abolished in all areas on August 31, but reinstated in a few districts. The Jammu and Kashmir Police and Indian paramilitary forces employed pellet weapons, poisonous gas shells, flexible bullets, and strike rifles, killing more than 90 civilians and injuring more than 15,000 (Pandya, 2022). The majority of the injured were apparently crippled due to pellet weapons.

Two or three columnists, such as Prem Shankar Jha, have dubbed the conflict "Kashmir's Intifada." Burhan Wani, an assailant and insurgent pioneer, was executed by Indian military and police in a remote region of Kashmir on July 8. The encounter initiated a series of unrestricted presentations and contrasts, which, in a matter of days, morphed into a re-established, unmistakable radicalism against India's sphere of influence over the contested state. Observers in Kashmir reported progress in homegrown Islamic militancy and the radicalization of Kashmiri Muslim individuals between late 2015 and mid-2016. Two or three reasons for the change have been cited, such as the absence of a political talk, the absence of budgetary open doors, dissatisfaction with excessive unemployment, and nonsensical and repeated violations of human rights by the security forces. The turmoil has injured more than 19,000 people, including more than 15,000 civilians and an

additional 4,000 security personnel. According to local specialists, 117 people were expected to lose their sight as a result of buckshot-related injuries. Three cops vanished on July 9, and one was killed on July 10 when a group rammed his vehicle into the Jhelum river during unrest in Anantnag. Another police officer surrendered on July 24, succumbing to injuries sustained on July 15 during an ambush at a police house office in Kulgam. Two of the missing cops were later located by state police and discovered to be incommunicado following the severing of all adaptable connections. On September 18, 2016, after an attack by aggressors in Uri, 18 Indian power officers were executed.

10. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study found out that the National level political parties can be successful in changing the voting patterns and political behavior of the voters at large. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, emergence of the BJP gave the people of the state, particularly the voters in Jammu Division of the state a new option to vote of the change. The formation of the government at the Centre led by Narendra Modi was also the dominant factor that BJP was able to gain ground in the politics of the J&K. The study also found out that the trend also invited the regional divide in the state as BJP could not secure a single in the Muslim dominant division Kashmir.

11. CONCLUSION

It can be inferred from the above discussion that the previous hung government was attempting to strengthen all three divisions of Jammu & Kashmir. In addition, it steers the state's political development by fostering peace and agreement among citizens from all three divisions and keeping a look out for ways to preserve the strong relationship with Pakistan. Additionally, its connections with Focus are excellent, as Focus is governed by the NDA. As in the past, it is also working on methods to keep people off the streets. They are not able to accomplish as much in Kashmir as in Jammu despite their greatest efforts. The slogan "Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat" failed miserably, as no one is pleased with the PDP-BJP partnership. The absence of basic services like as roadways, electricity, potable water, and sanitation is a contributing factor, as is dissatisfaction with the basic minimum programme (CMP) and with the government's election-time pledges. In addition, they have failed to build a tranquil environment.

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