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Rio Magic In Nagaland

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The assembly result in Nagaland has proved that Congress has almost lost its grip in this sensitive state. The third time win of CM Neiphiu Rio with increased tally in comparison to the last election clearly points that Naga Peoples' Front (NPF) has entrenched well in the state. The state is also example of the alliance politics. NPF had contested the elections as Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) in which BJP and JD(U) were the other partners like previous election. The role of such alliance politics is good for the democratic processing as this shows that influential regional party in this remote state is keen to align with the major national political parties which can help state to integrate with the dynamics of national politics.

Congress had twenty three seats in the last 2008 election though it could manage only eight seats this time. This is a serious setback to it. Congress also failed to win even a single seat in many districts. It failed to open its account in Peren, Kohima, Phek, Wokha. In eastern Ngaland region it won only one seat in the Mon. NPF performed well by winning seven seats in the district of Kohima and five each in Phek and Mokokchung. Thus influence of NPF was comprehensive on the electorates. Loss of Congress was not only in terms of reduction in the seats but also its overall loss on the minds of electorates as it not only lost many seats but also got 3rd position at eleven places, 4th at five places and even the 6th position in one constituency. On the other hand the NPF has increased its tally to thirty eight from twenty six. Its two allies BJP and JD(U) have also won one seat each in the election. Although BJP had won two seats in the last election. NPF increased its tally from last election and only at two places stood at 3rd position and in one constituency at 4th place showing its overall grip over the voters in the state.

Congress lost its attraction due to no clear roadmap for the development, no effective leadership and weakness at the level of rank and file in enthusiasm. One important development in the election was increased role of the independents. They captured seven seats and stood 2nd at seven other places though their impact in the government formation is negligible but the emergence of independents, decline of Congress and rise of regional party NPF suggest that electorates have
put faith in the governance by the regional party, a trend which has been voiced by CM Rio too. National parties like Congress and BJP have won fewer seats. NCP has won four and JD(U) one seat only. RJD could not win any seat. This trend suggests in clear terms that in this remote state regional party exercise more sway and there is a greater need on the part of the national parties that they should come forward effectively to play a binding role of the state with rest of the country.

Nagaland is unique state in India with a history of alienation and insurgency. One compelling factor for all the governments in New Delhi have remained as how to keep the state in the mainstream of the Indian politics and align it with the overall development of the country. In this respect this 12th legislative election in the state has shown much promise. There was enthusiasm at the level of the voters to participate in the election process. The role of the Chief Minister Rio is very much important in this respect. He has maintained influence of Naga Peoples’ Front led DAN alliance influence in the state. He has succeeded in this election with impressive win and in fact by depending upon certain policies and political actions he has maintained his political control in the state since 2003.

Besides establishing influence of regional party within alliance framework with clear aim to restrict the Congress and making an impact in the congress strongholds, he worked over the eastern Nagaland policy, in which he focused on the four eastern Nagaland districts which return the twenty seats in the sixty seat legislature. NPF won total thirteen seats in eastern Nagaland region. In these four districts the show of NPF was quite impressive as it won six seats in Mon, four in Tuensang, one in Longleng and two in Kiphire district. Its allies BJP and JD(U) won two seats in this region. Thus major share of the seats was contributed by this region. Congress could manage only one seat in this region as a result it was severely crippled in tally.

CM Neiphiu Rio also focused towards the resolution of the problem of insurgency. He has often emphasized that he wants use of the non violent methods to resolve the problem. His emphasis upon the resolution of this long standing problem has definitely attracted a major section of the society. The youth, who is now in a mood to move towards more peaceful path of development, is widely impressed. The insurgency issue had put the state on the retrogressive path of development. Hence many in the state believe that this problem need to be tackled earliest. Though ceasefire has remained in existence since 1997 but the prevalence of peace during Rio’s
regime has impressed voters to cast their votes to NPF. Rio government has put its faith in the peace process initiated by the centre but at the same time is keen that this issue should be resolved earliest in order to achieve a lasting peace which may trigger the economic development in the state. Rio government wants to achieve about 10% growth rate with development of infrastructure and allied economic units in the state. The decline of insurgency and increased peace in the mind of electorates influenced them to come in support of the government. Now Rio wants that centre should resolve this issue earliest. This is a healthy development because the state which has faced the problem of insurgency and alienation since independence is trying to adopt a new constructive path.

In Nagaland the role of Village Development Board (VDB) has become an important instrument of good governance. The NPF government has worked over it. The Village Development Boards have helped people to participate in local governance. This helped the ruling party in mobilizing the voters towards voting it. The concept of VDB is unique as these are representative structure of decentralized democratic system in the state. They are unit of rural development. The VDBs are based upon the philosophy of common belonging, an important feature of the social and rural life and cultural heritage of Nagaland. These involve every villager to be their part and these boards are involved in the sphere of development, security and welfare etc. These are also legally declared as the micro financing institution. The first VDB was established in Ketsapomi village in Phek 1976, since then these have assumed important role in the decentralized governance in the state. Many developmental works as road construction with deep involvement of the village people as donation of the lands by the local residents in the state has been facilitated by these boards and Village Council, hierarchical superior structure to VDB. In Kohima about 90 such boards exist. Rio government attempted to strengthen these units of development. This has paid back in substantial terms.

The assembly election in the Nagaland showed that women representation followed the set pattern of the previous elections with no women being elected for the legislative assembly. Even the voting behaviour is largely governed by the restricted value system in which women have lesser freedom to decide to whom they should vote for. Their representation in the assembly is yet to take place. In this election none of women contestant won the election. This shows a disturbing feature of Nagaland politics. The society is purely male dominated at political level with women usually having no important political role to play. There is no political space
available to them as their counterparts have maintained a strong hold on the political power. Women too are not strong enough to play any important role in the politics due to their social life. This assembly election has brought the same theme again in the forefront which is unlikely to change quickly in the years to come.