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### A healthy setback for the BJP

I am sure your readers will have not missed the recent state elections in India. There was enough coverage in the Asian media. BJP has once again won in Gujarat and had a landslide win in another smaller state, Himachal Pradesh. This is a win for BJP but in some ways a healthy setback.

The election highlighted the progress made by the Congress under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi. It managed to reduce BJP margin in a big way and in a state where Prime Minister Modi and his party have had a stronghold for many years. So for the BJP it was a win but a setback in the margin whilst for the Congress it was a remarkable increase in number of seats from earlier election result. This may show some trend where Congress is getting more focus and BJP may be losing some popularity. It is the classic election situation where the winner does not feel like a winner and the loser feels more like a winner! We had this situation in the UK in the last general election.

In my view, this is a healthy set back for the BJP. It's a good wake up call before the general election in 2019. This will no doubt allow BJP to introspect and analyse what will be the feelings amongst the grassroots. It will push the party to make some fresh decisions in preparation of the next election, which Narendra Modi and BJP must win for best national interest of India.

I have been connected with India more actively since 1994 and got to meet and know Narendra Modi from the time he took over as the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001. He proved to have unique leadership and a vision. He started the Vibrant Gujarat summits from 2003 to make Gujarat an attractive place to invest. As Chief Minister he travelled around the world and quickly brought Gujarat on the world map in a way no previous state or national leaders had ever done. In dealing with issues, he proved to be forthright and always keeping the state's interest at the forefront. He connected with international NRI and non NRI community

like no other leader before.

Such were the qualities that elevated Narendrabhai to the national politics and against all odds became the Prime Minister of India.

Narendrabhai has carried this vision and enthusiasm to the national level. We have witnessed his reform process despite a lot of resistance and expressions of doubt. He has made bold decisions that to an extent have yet to reveal their benefits.

Meanwhile, BJP has had recent gains in state elections which proved its popularity against Congress. BJP's stronghold has been solidifying and most predictions were already assuring BJP's win in 2019.

However the Gujarat elections have highlighted a twist and new direction that must not be ignored or passed as nothing much. Congress and Rahul Gandhi have certainly added new momentum and started to gain some ground.

Beyond all issues, the Modi government's main objective is economic growth and for the benefits of growth reaching lowest of the strata. I personally subscribe to this philosophy as when an average Indian is able to have money in his or her pocket and is able to enjoy basic comforts of life, there is bound to be more peace and happiness. Many differences of caste, religion and economic strata start dissolving with personal economic progress. Of course this increases consumerism and leads to growth in the economy. But such policy changes require years to take effect. This may yet prove a challenge for the government. It will need to show quick tangible gains before the 2019 elections.

This healthy set back of Gujarat may just be enough to bring the necessary change in the thinking and approach from over confidence to realisation and new enthusiasm. When I see how much India and its economy have evolved over the years and how Gujarat was pacing ahead of other states, I remain very confident that the Modi led government in 2019 will do India a lot of good in the long term.