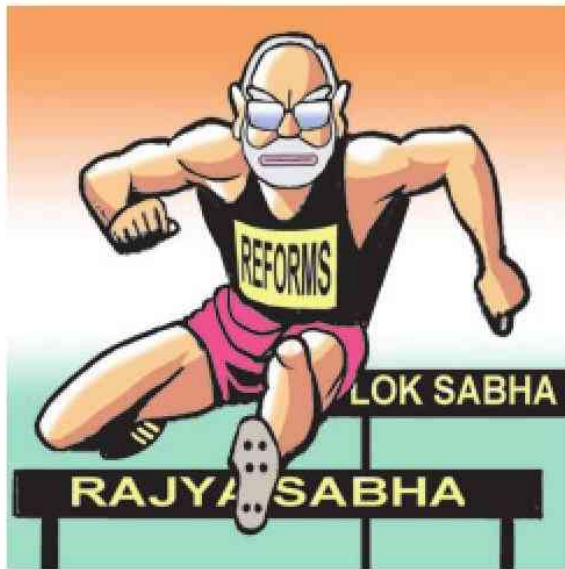


Transform India

Changing Rajya Sabha presents Modi with unique opportunity to unleash reforms

Last week's developments in Bihar coupled with results of the last round of assembly elections have significantly enhanced BJP's influence in Rajya Sabha. Given that the upper house of Parliament has always been the stumbling block in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's legislative agenda, this augurs well for NDA. The undoubted dominance of BJP in the polity, Modi's personal credibility and changing composition of Parliament present government with an unprecedented opportunity to transform India.

Though Congress and BJP have 57 members each in the 245-member upper house, adding JD(U)'s 10 members has now taken NDA's tally to 89. This could go up to 91 if they can snatch one seat from Congress in Gujarat, where a battle of prestige is being played out between top Congress leader Ahmed Patel and rebel Shankarsinh Vaghela. With



regional parties such as AIADMK, BJD and TRS often backing government on important legislations, recent developments have brought it within striking distance of the halfway mark in Rajya Sabha. By April next year, acche din could truly have arrived for BJP in Rajya Sabha. As many as nine members from UP will retire and the recent assembly election win in the state could give the party eight more members.

The numbers assume importance on account of the opportunity they present to the Modi government to take on multiple vested interests who stall change. The government's early attempts to unlock India's land market seemed to flounder on the heels of Rahul Gandhi's "suit boot ki sarkar" jibe. However subsequent elections have strengthened BJP's position, particularly the UP verdict this year. Simply put, apart from Modi, there has been no other politician in recent memory who can convince voters of the need to structurally transform India by reforming its markets for factors of production such as land and labour.

These reforms are a prerequisite if India is to solve its most pressing problem: inadequacy of job creation. With up to 12 million young people joining the work force each year, India needs to see a lot more jobs being created if it is to harness its demographic dividend. However, in the absence of job creation, the so-called dividend will tip over into a nightmare. For a long time governments have avoided deep-seated changes in absence of decisive mandates, but this is no longer a constraint. PM Modi must seize this opportunity to transform India.