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Survey warns of an electoral rout of UPA, NDA in 2014

New survey predicts that neither Congress nor BJP will be able to manage even 150 seats in the next general election

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Prospects of a third political alternative coming to power in the next general election due in 2014 brightened, with the latest survey predicting that neither of the two national parties, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), would be able to manage even 150 seats.

Delhi-based Marketing and Development Research Associates (MDRA), which studied its own by-monthly sample surveys and other recent surveys across the country, said as of July 2012, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) would decline to 130-140 seats if there was an election now to the Lok Sabha, losing 120-130 seats from its present tally of 266 that excludes outside supporters.



A hung Parliament could potentially put the onus on newly elected President Pranab Mukherjee. The president has to invite a party or a combination to form the government in case no party or pre-poll alliance crosses the halfway mark. Photo: Hindustan Times

Similarly, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would see an erosion in its strength by about 25-35 seats, reducing the number to anywhere between 115 seats and 125 seats.

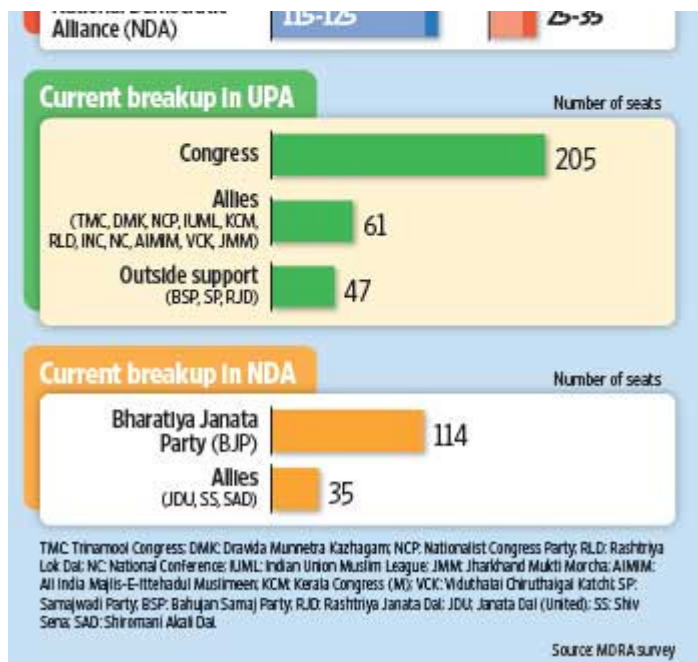
Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari rubbished the survey, saying it was too early, while the BJP said it was a "sponsored" one. "If they say the NDA is losing, then I will say the survey is sponsored and motivated. There is a complete anti-Congress mood in the country. The NDA allies are winning everywhere," said BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar

Prasad.



Tewari added: "The election is due in 2014 and it would decide law of the land in a glorious democracy like ours."

N. Bhaskara Rao, who analysed the study, feels that the poor performance of the national parties



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could be attributed to the anti-corruption campaign by activist Anna Hazare and yoga guru Ramdev. "A couple of parties like the TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samithi), YSR Congress (founded by Jagan Mohan Reddy, son of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy) could improve, assuming they contest on their own," he said.

The Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) back the government from outside.

The UPA's constituents are the Trinamool Congress (TMC, 19 lawmakers), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (18), the Nationalist Congress Party (nine), the Rashtriya Lok Dal (five), the National Conference (three), the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (one), the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (one), the Indian Union Muslim League (two), the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (two) and the Kerala Congress (one). The Congress has 205 members in the Lok Sabha.

With neither national alliances likely to perform better, the non-Congress and non-BJP parties are expected to come together to form the government. "Even without increasing its numbers, the Left Front is likely to be courted by both alliances," Rao said.

The Left parties, which backed the UPA in its first term from 2004 to 2008, have been reduced to 24 in the current Lower House from 62 in the 14th Lok Sabha.

A hung Parliament could potentially put the onus on newly elected President Pranab Mukherjee. The president has to invite a party or a combination to form the government in case no party or pre-poll alliance crosses the halfway mark in the 545-member Lok Sabha.

The UPA, which returned to power with an impressive majority in the 2009 elections, has been under political attack for a series of corruption charges and controversies. Not only has it dented the popularity of the UPA, it has also caused a policy paralysis that has affected investment.

The MDRA analysis points out that the UPA's chances depend on three factors—how the Congress performs at the polls in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka; whether it will improve at least marginally its tally of seats reserved for scheduled castes; and which of the two parties the UPA will retain among the TMC, the SP and the BSP. "If the Congress could carry the SP and the BSP same time in Uttar Pradesh, could it also do so with both the Left Front and the TMC," said Rao.

The YSR Congress, a breakaway group of the Congress, recently swept the by-elections— winning 15 out of 18 assembly constituencies and the Nellore Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh, defeating the Congress.

MDRA also agreed with senior BJP leader L.K. Advani, who has recently written in his blog that the next Lok Sabha elections can throw up a non-Congress, non-BJP prime minister. It says former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati may get a

chance if the BSP performs well outside the state. It adds that Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar has the potential to emerge as the front runner for the top post.

While Rao said the UPA, despite its poor performance, will be in a better position to muster the numbers and rally around a leader, Mumbai-based political analyst Jai Mrug said the old Janata Dal bloc, which had splintered into different parties, would come together and could act as a binding force in the aftermath of a hung Parliament. "It is true that the anti-corruption campaign has blunted the possibilities of the national parties. Also, the federalization of politics and increasing importance of regional parties also will lead to the national parties' low tally," Mrug said. The Janata Dal (S), the RJD, the SP, Orissa's ruling Biju Janata Dal and the Janata Dal (United) are breakaway groups of the Janata Dal.

Anuja and Sahil Makkar contributed to this story.

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