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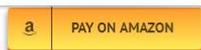
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1. Bhutanese elections: Bhutan's new generation of politicians can help strengthen Indo-Bhutan ties

- What does the recently concluded elections in Bhutan mean for India?
- What is the strategic importance of Bhutan for India?
- How was the economic Cooperation between Bhutan and India over the years?
- Bhutan is trying to diversify its export market partners in South and South East Asia. What will be its implications for India?

GS paper 2 (India and its neighbourhood relations)

What is the context about?

- The third national assembly election in Bhutan since it adopted a democratic constitution in 2008 has once again brought a new party to the Himalayan kingdom.
- The Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT), led by a medical surgeon Lotay Tshering, won 30 out of the total 47 National Assembly seats.

What does the recently concluded elections in Bhutan mean for India?

- The centrality of India in Bhutan's foreign policy is well established.
- In its party's objectives, DNT makes an emphatic mention about the need to "maintain close and

harmonious relations with all our neighbours, especially safeguarding and nurturing Indo-Bhutan friendship, in keeping with Bhutan's historical tradition.

- ❑ Against the backdrop of 699 kilometres of open border, India has to consciously think in much wider terms.
- ❑ In the wake of the Doklam imbroglio and steady emergence of a new generation of Bhutanese bureaucrats and politicians, Bhutan-India relations have to be renegotiated in many areas.

What is the strategic importance of Bhutan for India?

- ❑ It is a buffer state between India and China
- ❑ Strategic Importance: Chumbi Valley is situated at the trijunction of Bhutan, India and China and is 500 km away from the "Chicken's neck" in North Bengal, which connects the northeast with rest of the country.
- ❑ Bhutan in past has helped India to contain insurgency in North-East by flushing out militants groups like NDFB & ULFA.
- ❑ Only country in the region that joined India in its boycott of Chinese President OBOR project
- ❑ China is interested in establishing formal ties with Thimphu, where it does not yet have a diplomatic mission. Bhutan is strategically important for both India and China.

How was the economic Cooperation between Bhutan and India over the years?

- ❑ India has effectively used economic assistance as a major instrument of its foreign policy in Bhutan.
- ❑ Up to 1989-90, India dispersed about Rs 2,000 crore as its total foreign economic assistance.
- ❑ In the following decade, India dispersed another Rs 3,300 crore as foreign economic assistance to developing countries where again Bhutan was the overwhelming recipient.
- ❑ India contributed almost 100% of Bhutan's First Plan (1961-66) outlay of Rs 107.2 million and 98% of its Second Plan (1966-71) of Rs 202.2 million. However, over the years, the contribution gradually went down .
- ❑ In the Eleventh Plan (2013-18) it hit a low of 23% in the total plan outlay of Rs 213 billion.

Bhutan is trying to diversify its export market partners in South and South East Asia. What will be its implications for India?

- ❑ Most of hydel power projects in Bhutan have been built with Indian support initially on an economic assistance basis, which now has much higher loan content.
- ❑ Bhutan is wary about huge debt mostly incurred in the hydro projects and wants to move away from 'goodwill

tariff' offered by India to 'commercial tariff' triggered by market forces in upcoming projects.

- ❑ Bhutan is keen to come out of the India-centric one country buyer model and diversify its export market partners in South and South East Asia.
- ❑ In fact, making Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal partners in India's Act East Policy could actually make this sub-region a powerful South Asian growth quadrangle.