



battle for states

MINI REFERENDUM THIS YEAR

quotemartial

Right to reject is an idea inherent in democracy, whose time for execution has come.

VS SAMPATH Chief Election Commissioner



10 polls kick off

2014 countdown

POLITICAL THRILLER Along with local issues, inflation and corruption are likely to be key factors for voters across the states, five of which are governed by the Congress or a Congress alliance and three are ruled by the BJP

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NEW DELHI: Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh sprang no surprise. But though the two major parties, the Congress and the BJP, expectedly shared the two states in the assembly elections in December, will the 10 going to the polls this year provide a peek into what the 2014 general elections could be like?

If they do, the Lok Sabha polls will be something to watch out for even though the outcome of general elections doesn't necessarily reflect popular sentiments that rule assembly polls. However, the results of the assembly polls in 2013 - in three northeastern states this month,

in Karnataka by May and in Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram by October - promise to be interesting.

In five of these states the Congress or a Congress alliance is in power while the BJP governs three, including Karnataka, where the saffron party is on shaky ground.

Inflation and corruption at the central and state levels are certain to be important factors in the polls this year as are the safety and security of ordinary people - particularly of women and children - in urban areas as well as remote villages. But perhaps the most important of all will be the issue of development

- in chosen places in some states and the lack of it in neglected parts elsewhere.

By the time elections are held in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir by October, voters could get a clearer picture of whom the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led UPA project as their prime ministerial candidates.

And if people in these states see the 2014 general elections as a battle between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi, they may well factor that into their electoral decisions in their respective states. Here's a glimpse of what the 10 elections in 2013 could be all about.