

In held in may, 1996,
the bjp distinctly



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In 1989 and 1991, the BJP improved considerably over its past performance and captured 86 and 120 seats respectively. The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 resulted in the dismissal of the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh by the Centre. BJP secured a major success when it won the elections in Maharashtra and Gujarat thereby ending decades of Congress rule in these two states. BJP also captured power in Delhi when it stormed the polls for the U. T. elections. In the 11th Lok Sabha elections held in May, 1996, the BJP distinctly improved upon its all previous performances by winning 161 seats.

It even won a seat in J & K where its candidate was declared elected from the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee was sworn in as the first BJP Prime Minister in mid-May, 1996. The BJP government could not last more than 13 days because it failed to muster the requisite majority by winning over the other minor parties' support in the Lok Sabha. BJP further improved its position (180 seats) in the Twelfth Lok Sabha elections and formed a coalition government at the Centre. In its National Agenda it agreed not to raise the contentious issues of Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code. The BJP succeeded in securing the support of AIADMK, Lok Shakti, Trinamul Congress, Akali Dal, Biju Lok Dal and a few other splinter groups to form the government in March '98. The BJP-led government was, however, very fragile as it was subjected to considerable pulls and pushes by its allies. The coalition got a shot in the arms, when three nuclear tests were conducted on May 11, '98.

It galvanised the rag tag coalition and provided it with some elixir. The BJP government collapsed in April, '99, when AIADMK led by Ms. Jayalalitha

decided to walk out of the coalition over frivolous issues. The BJP lost power at the Centre by one vote.

With the failure of any other party forming a government, the way was paved for the 13th General Elections in Sept. Oct. '99. The BJP formed a grand coalition of 24 parties and termed it the National Democratic Alliance. The BJP contested 335 seats and conceded the rest to its Alliance partners. Elections to the 13th Lok Sabha were marked by vitriolic personal attacks by the leaders of practically all political parties. The BJP later mellowed down its Hindutya line, and showed willingness to extend an olive branch to all minorities. The BJP acted judiciously and prudently while tackling the Kargil intrusion by the Pakistan-inspired militants.

The entire country was united and was prepared to face the external threat. The BJP also succeeded in retaining the goodwill of the major powers through tactful handling of the situation. The BJP sailed home comfortably in the Oct. '99 elections. Its alliance with its 24 partners paid dividends as it ended up by winning 297 seats in the parliament. The NDA, however, failed to tackle the Kashmir problem and its concomitant offshoots in the form of hijacking of IC-814 in Dec., 99 and other acts of terrorism.

The BJP was routed in April-May 2004 elections by the Congress and its allies. Dissensions and groupings surfaced despite denials by the party. BJP suffered further setback when it could not wrest Maharashtra from Congress and NCP in Oct 2004. L. K. Advani was reappointed President of the Party and in 2004, he had to face the wrath of firebrand Uma Bharati; Rajnath Singh, the President of the Party, has now been replaced by Maharashtra

RSS leader Nitin Gadkari. Advani has given by his position as leader of opposition in favour of Sushma Swaraj.

The BJP has been on the cross roads, the defeat at the polls during the 15th General Elections in 2009 still stare at the faces of its leaders. A game has been going on for quite some time and the buck ends at the top leadership. The virtual collapse of the BJP at the hustings was most unexpected and jolted the party out of its slumber. The losses in some of the states were all the more shocking.

Some BJP leaders seem to be keen on assuming the role of an author. Mind you, they are not writing fiction, poetry or reflective pieces, they write on political events on the contemporary issues. It started with Advani who decided to write his " Story of Life" and now another senior BJP leader Jaswant Singh has raised hornet's nest by penning a controversial book on Jinnah and his role in Independence and division of the country. Jaswant Singh goes a step further and decided to demolish the accepted icons of post-Independence India, He blames Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel for division of the country. A hard core Hindu belonging to the RSS or the BJP will stomach anything but not appeasement of Jinnah and scorn for Patel.

Jaswant Singh invited not only criticism but also expulsion from the party. Shame-facedly, the BJP leaders fought like street urchins and Jaswant Singh specifically dug up the fiasco of the Kandhar flight of Indian Airlines which resulted in the release of the hardcore BJP cabinet minister in violation of the oath of the office and secrecy disclosed the proceedings of the cabinet and the individual role played by some of the prominent characters. The apex

body of the Hindus RSS which specifically holds its umbrella over the BJP, swung into action. Mohan Bhagwat the RSS Chief entered the fray and advised the BJP to set its house in order and change leadership at the top.

L. K. Advani, a very senior leader of the party was blamed by all and sundry for his role in the decline and fall of the party. The critics forgot the sterling and outstanding qualities of this great leader and held him responsible for the/current imbroglio. In all likelihood the churning process may do good to the party.

Woes of BJP have been continuing, in Dec. 2009, it lost Jharkhand, where its performance was dismal, to say the least.