

1. **take a back seat** (phrase) – take a less important role.
2. **steadfast** (adjective) – firm, resolute, single-minded.
3. **come as no surprise** (phrase) – something which is not surprising someone, but is as expected one.
4. **tripartite** (adjective) – involving three parties.
5. **build on** (phrasal verb) – develop, expand/enlarge on; enhance.
6. **incumbent** (noun) – office-holder, office-bearer, current occupant.
7. **take a beating** (phrase) – suffer damage.
8. **viable** (adjective) – reasonable/logical, effective, valid.
9. **imperative** (noun) – necessary condition, essential, requirement.
10. **go through** (phrasal verb) – suffer, experience, endure.
11. **at stake** (phrase) – at risk or issue.
12. **arithmetic** (noun) – calculation, reckoning, tally.
13. **tinge** (verb) – affect, modify, distort.
14. **sectarianism** (noun) – excessive attachment to a particular sect or party, especially in religion.
15. **cohere** (verb) – unify, bind, hold together.
16. **efficacy** (noun) – effectiveness, efficiency, power/ability to give estimated results.
17. **coherent** (adjective) – logical, reasonable, rational.
18. **attrition** (noun) – wearing away, weakening, debilitation.
19. **dependent on** (adjective) – conditional on, based on, determined by.
20. **scoff at** (verb) – ridicule, mock, laugh at.
21. **portray** (verb) – describe, depict, characterize/represent.
22. **incoherent** (adjective) – unclear, confused, muddled.
23. **mishmash** (noun) – selection, assemblage, combination.
24. **here to stay** (phrase) – be widely accepted, possibly be permanent, likely be present for a long time.
25. **be lost on** (phrase) – fail to be noticed/appreciated.

The Akali factor: on BJP-SAD alliance in Punjab

With its alliance in Punjab, the BJP admits the need to take a back seat in some States

The Shiromani Akali Dal has been among the most steadfast allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the two parties having been in coalition since 1998. It comes as no surprise that they have aligned again in a seat-sharing arrangement in Punjab for the Lok Sabha **election**, with the Akalis as the dominant partner to contest 10 seats in the State and the BJP contesting the other three. In 2014, the alliance won 35% of the vote to secure six of the 13 constituencies in a tripartite contest. The Congress, which won three seats, will seek to build on its victory in the Assembly elections in 2017 as State-level incumbents

usually enjoy some momentum going into a national election. The Akali-BJP alliance took a beating in the Assembly election after having been in power for two terms, but still managed a substantial 30.6% vote share, which could keep it competitive in the Lok Sabha election. There is also the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party as a viable contestant in the State (especially in the southern Malwa region). For the BJP, a coalition with the Akalis, despite being allotted only three seats, was therefore an imperative. As with its other coalition partners such as the Shiv Sena, the alliance in Punjab too went through degrees of rough weather, but there was too much at stake for seat-sharing talks to fail. Besides reasons of arithmetic, the SAD also presents a strong and traditionally anti-Congress position in its ideological core, tinged with a certain degree of sectarianism. This coheres well with the overall vision of the BJP.

In allocating a larger share to the Akalis in Punjab, the AIADMK and other partners in Tamil Nadu, besides retaining its alliance with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the BJP has signalled its awareness of the efficacy of coherent pre-poll coalitions based on the party's strengths in these States. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has seen some attrition since 2014, with the loss of the Telugu Desam Party. But it has compensated with additions such as the Janata Dal (United), besides the retention of other allies. Even though it has projected a certain personalised form of administration with Prime Minister Narendra Modi being the dominant face of the government, the BJP is crucially dependent on the support of its allies. In the last five years, the party has steadily lost parliamentary by-elections and its current tally in the Lok Sabha is below the majority mark. Only with the support of the allies does the NDA now have a comfortable majority. The BJP might scoff at attempts made by the Opposition to form a grand coalition and portray them as an incoherent mishmash of organisations, but the fact that coalitions in Indian **politics** are here to stay is not lost on its leadership.