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## Pakistan expects no 'change' in Indian policy after Modi's bittersweet win

Published on June 5, 2024

Document Date: Thu, Jul 17 2025 06:07:47 am

Category: ,English,International -

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ISLAMABAD:

As Narendra Modi is set to become Indian prime minister for the record third time, equaling the feat of Jawaharlal Nehru, Pakistan expects no change in India's policy towards it, according to an internal assessment. Sources involved in the process told The Express Tribune on Wednesday that the outcome of the Indian elections was not surprising based on initial reports. "The real issues of poverty, unemployment, and inflation got the better of Modi's divisive and hate politics over religion," commented one official who wished to remain anonymous. "People of India appear to have fought against the repressive, autocratic, majoritarian, and fascist regime," the official added. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may have emerged as the single largest party, however, it fell well short of the 400 mark Modi boasted about ahead of the polls. He will have to

rely on regional parties to form a government for the first time in a decade, which is uncharted territory for Modi who, as first chief minister of Gujarat and later as prime minister, ruled with an absolute majority. While the BJP held on to its traditional constituencies comprising Hindu nationalist support, it got bitten by “smart regional outplay of regional parties, especially in Uttar Pradesh and pan India unification of Muslim vote living under oppression by Modi agenda,” the assessment claimed. It further noted that the guarantee of a Modi era with him being bigger than the BJP and RSS is over and the alliance-based rule is back, which he disrespected, manipulated, and ignored for a decade. However, the narrow margin of victory could be a double-edged sword. Modi will either mend his ways or opt for more aggressive policies to revive his mojo. “A strong opposition on its heels may push BJP to aggressively pursue its Hindutva project,” cautioned the official. “Modi’s domestic and foreign policies will remain unchanged, especially with no change towards Pakistan as it will be more poised towards internal challenges,” the official added. Sources also revealed that there is a sense in Delhi that the BJP leadership is ready for talks with Pakistan, but they put the onus solely on the latter. The BJP expects Pakistan to accept the new status quo with regard to Jammu and Kashmir that emerged after the removal of its special status in August 2019. “There appears no serious appetite for meaningful talk and it is very unlikely that Modi or the BJP will approach Pakistan for talks anytime soon unless Pakistan regresses,” another

official said. The government received counsel suggesting that Pakistan need not demonstrate any sense of urgency unless India shows genuine commitment to peace by engaging in talks encompassing all issues, including Kashmir, within the framework of a Comprehensive Dialogue, and trade resumption within the scope of reviving South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.