

## MAYAPURI INDUSTRIAL AREA

## In industrial hub, voting under shadow of lost jobs



At Mayapuri Industrial Area, which falls under the West Delhi constituency, Sunday. The area saw violence over sealing recently. Praveen Khanna

Factory managers and workers say still reeling under demonetisation, GST and sealing shocks

ANAND MOHAN J  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE NAMES of 12 people he fired are fresh in his memory. Shift supervisor Ghanshyam (38) is sombre when he enters the polling booth in Mayapuri Industrial Area, but re-emerges with a smile on his face. "I was asked to sack 12 people from the jeans factory where I work. I knew the men, we worked together for years. We never had to fire people en masse before. This is a vote for change," he said.

In Mayapuri Industrial Area, where more than five lakh workers slog for at least 12 hours every day, operating heavy machinery, selling scrap or manufacturing jeans, workers and factory owners standing outside polling booths said the ghosts of demonetisation, and to an extent GST, still continue to haunt. Last month, 14 persons were injured under a sealing drive carried out under NGT orders took a violent turn, and traders clashed with security personnel.

Several workers came with their families after hiring e-rickshaws, the women in bright sarees carrying small children as they headed into the polling booth. "We go with our children to work. Some day they will learn our trade, but I want them to see this is also important," said Sarala Devi, who used to work in a jeans factory but now spends her time with a local trade union.

Several workers said their salary had not been hiked in years, and most said they earned roughly Rs 7,000 a month. They also get no safety gear. Skilled workers managed to keep their jobs in units where parts are manufactured, but semi-skilled workers took the worst hit.

To make matters worse, many units designated as 'polluting' have been shifted to Bawana and even Manesar, making it difficult for women to continue working due to the three-hour commute. Elderly women said they also face the risk of being replaced. "We work in units producing jeans and decorative items. But they look for younger women. I am a school dropout, and cannot learn new things. Not at this age," said Urmila, 58.

Some, however, remained optimistic. A former packaging unit worker, Shabana, said, "They built a handful of toilets in the past five years. I hope the new MP makes more and a foot overbridge, too, so my children do not have to cross roads."

Santosh Gautam, who used to work in an electrical goods unit, said he does not mind standing in a queue. "I stood in queues when I had to change my currency notes, when I had to apply for a new job, and every time the water tanker comes to my JJ cluster. Honestly, we all just want our jobs back," Gautam said.

For Joginder, a former worker in an export line unit, the vote was "for our children". "My father was a factory worker, so am I. My children are going to grow up soon. I will be forced to make them work in a factory if things do not change. My family cannot remain in the factories," he said.

Joginder's view is in stark contrast to the hot-headed Manoj, a former plastic factory worker. "I made a black flag and waved it around at all the politicians' rallies in my constituency. Not one of them is going to work for us," he said.

## In South Delhi, many point to glass half empty

ASTHA SAXENA  
& ARANYA SHANKAR  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

STANDING in a queue outside polling station 38 in South Delhi's Sangam Vihar Sunday, a group of women talked in hushed tones about water scarcity at their homes. Clutching voter cards, they appeared to be in a hurry.

"Chai bhi nahi pee kar aaye hain, abhi jaakar paani bharna hai," said Muneesh Sharma (31). Several residents in the constituency have been facing water shortage for the past few years. This issue, along with unpaved roads, were also on the minds of people Saturday.

AAP's Raghav Chadha, incumbent MP from BJP Ramesh Bidhuri, and Congress's Vijender Singh are contesting from South Delhi. A constituency manifesto released by Chadha promised to push for an automated and systematic water wastage monitoring system. The other two parties did not release state-specific manifestos.

Extending support to AAP chief Arvind



Several residents complain of perpetual water shortage. Praveen Khanna

Kejriwal, the women, mostly from J-Block, claimed the party has improved basic facilities in the locality. "Bechare ne bezzati bhi sahi, kaam bhi karwata raha. He cares about our food and water," said Vimla Devi, a resident of

D-block. Munish Singh, another resident, said: "Politicians are never interested in unauthorised colonies. Par ye toh PM ke liye vote hai, jab CM ke liye aayega tab sochenge."

Another voter in Mehrauli, Chanda

Kumari, echoed the sentiment: "We should not focus on internal issues right now. These polls are for electing the PM and for our safety. The fear of a terror attack has reduced, no such attack has taken place in Delhi." For Suraj Shukla (34), a driver in Tughlakabad, the "surgical strikes proved our military strength".

At the SDMC primary school in Tughlakabad village, several Bengali migrants, mostly Muslims from Chhuriya Mohalla, said water shortage was top priority. "We get water only once in 10-15 days," said Munesh (42).

At Okhla Industrial Area Phase II as well, local issues seemed to play a big role. Preeti Devi (28), who lives in a JJ Camp nearby, said, "Sewage collects outside our homes and we don't get piped water. We have to rely on tankers, which barely come this way."

Around 200 metres from the SDMC school was the Govt Boys Senior Secondary School. Many voters here were from Bidhuri's village.

Most praised the MP and said water and sanitation has improved. Monika Bidhuri (19), a first-time voter, said: "We have no local problems; we will vote for national security."

## Trading hubs speak in one voice: Less insecurity

SOMYA LAKHANI &  
ABHINAV RAJPUT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

FOR ANJUM Bano Rizvi (42), memories from November 2016, when demonetisation was announced, are still fresh. "My brother had an operation scheduled just two days after the announcement; we had withdrawn over a lakh from the bank and the hospital refused to accept the notes. I am a dialysis patient and it was a worrying time. I want a government that doesn't come up with detrimental economic policies," she said, standing outside a government school in Bulbuli Khana, Turkman Gate.

At Delhi's busiest market, Chandni Chowk, demonetisation and GST dominated conver-

sations. At Dujana House polling station in Chitli Qabar, Zubair Hasan (60) said, "I had a small shoe business which I had to shut last year... how do I sell simple ladies' shoes with tax? No one was buying. I'm unemployed, my wife is earning now. I voted for employment, better economic safety nets."

Fayazuddin (85), who had an embroidery business, said, "GST destroyed *dastkars*. I had to shut down the business I had built over decades for my children."

For Mohd. Anees (70), a labourer who earns Rs 6,000 a month at a book-binding unit in Chitli Qabar, "sealing meant losing his job and going hungry". "I want a government that thinks about the poorest first, the labourers for instance," he said.

Chandni Chowk is seeing a three-way con-



Near Jama Masjid, Sunday. Abhinav Saha

test between BJP's Harsh Vardhan, AAP's Pankaj Gupta and Congress's JP Agarwal.

Kilometres away in West Delhi's Rajouri Garden market, sealing still stings till date.

"For us traders, sealing is the number one issue when we vote. We fear it now. No candidate has been able to explain how they will stop sealing though," said a Rajouri Garden trader.

Last month, the sealing drive took a violent turn in Mayapuri Industrial Area. Traders' union president Inderjeet Singh said, "We had initially decided to boycott the polls... Business is our first priority, so we will vote for a candidate with a solution." The sentiment was echoed by B K Dutt Colony resident Ashok Sahuja, whose shop was one of the 135 shops sealed in Meherchand Market.

## CAPITAL VOTES

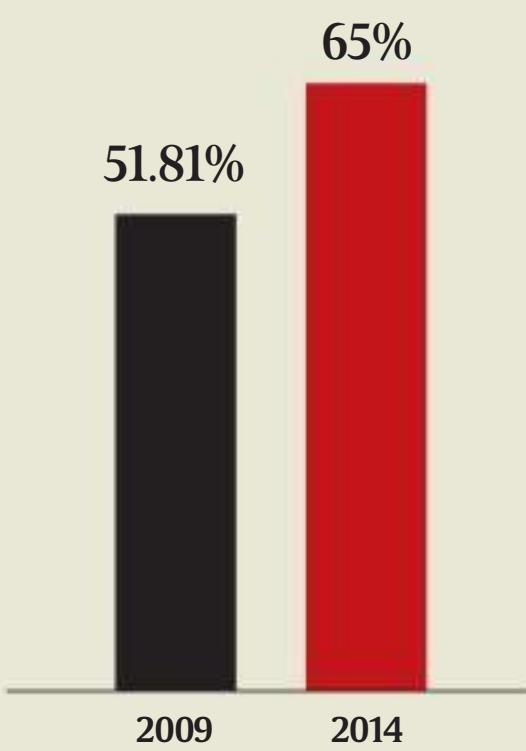
60 %

DELHI TOTAL  
VOTER TURNOUT

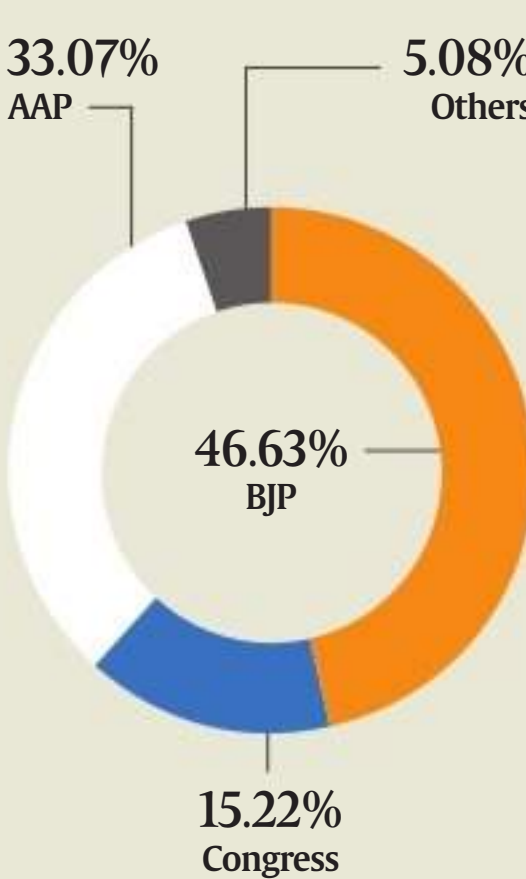
## CONSTITUENCIES

Chandni Chowk	62.69%
North East Delhi	63.45%
East Delhi	61.95%
New Delhi	56.47%
North West Delhi	58.99%
West Delhi	60.64%
South Delhi	57.3%

## TURNOUT IN PREVIOUS LS POLLS



## 2014 VOTE SHARE



60,000

police personnel deployed

450 VVPATS, 61 control units  
and 77 ballot units replaced  
during polling

**Good morning Delhi. Do vote. Vote for those who worked for you. Don't vote for those who spread hate and poison and stop work in Delhi. Your vote can transform the country."**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL  
DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

## In a first, differently abled manage polling booth in city

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

BREAKING NEW ground this election season, Mohit Arora (29) was stationed at a polling booth manned exclusively by differently abled officials. Arora, a manager with Punjab and Sind Bank, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy in his childhood and uses crutches to walk.

A resident of Bawana, Arora was recently promoted to the post of manager in the bank. But the excitement of managing the polling booth surpasses it. "Agar aap chhuti ke baare mein sochenge, toh society me kaise badlaav layenge? I hope this small initiative will have a bigger impact in the coming years," he told *The Indian Express*.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, a polling booth (PS-69) managed exclusively by differently abled officials was set up at an MCD primary school in South Delhi's Madangir. It was also visited by delegates from Myanmar.



At the polling booth in Madangir

An assistant professor with a Delhi government hospital, a computer assistant, a nursing officer and a bank manager assisted several people in casting their votes. The school also built a special ramp for booth 69.

"Taking a cue from the women's booths, we wanted to have a People with Disability booth. Officials agreed to our proposals and all arrangements were made," said Dr Satendra Singh, the booth's presiding officer.



A creche at Ambedkar Nagar SDMC School 3 poll booth. Tashi Tobgyal

ent walking with their child towards the polling booth.

Several parents welcomed the move as they dropped off their children at the creche and went to vote.



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## THE CITY

## MEANWHILE



At an all women's polling booth near Ajmeri Gate on Sunday.  
Abhinav Saha

## Missing in action

AT THE all-women's polling booth in Kendriya Vidyalaya, JNU, adorned with pink balloons and pink boards, there was no all women staff as promised. But what poll officials had arranged was a room for women to get free *mehendi*. Shama Parveen (52), who sat at Hanuman Mandir, had come with her daughter at 6 am to apply it. By noon, she estimated she had applied *henna* on more than 100 women's hands. Also present was a feeding room and a photo booth.



Sheela Dikshit, Sonia Gandhi at a poll booth. Neeraj Priyadarshi

## Polling agent held

A POLLING agent in Faridabad Lok Sabha constituency was arrested Sunday after a video surfaced of him allegedly entering a polling booth and trying to press the button on the machine before voters could cast their votes. The purported video shows the accused rushing to the booth as each new voter enters it, and trying to press the button on their behalf. He is seen doing this with three women voters in the video itself, even as other staff members watch. The video ends with the accused being told that he is being called outside. "The matter was brought to our notice and the observer, Sanjay Kumar, rushed to the spot to investigate the matter. The incident is from Asawati in Prithala constituency. The accused, a polling agent, has been arrested. He was trying to compromise votes of at least 3 women," said an official from Faridabad Election office.

## Turned away

FORMER INDIAN cricketer Bishan Singh Bedi and his wife Inderjit Bedi failed to cast their vote as their names were not on the voter's list. Bedi went to the polling booth at 5 pm, only to find their names missing. "The poll officer asked me to go back and check the EC website... We were surprised that booth did not have a single computer system to help us," he said.

## Vote before sleep

After Mohd. Harun (26) finished his *sehri* meal at 4 am, he stayed up for another three hours to complete "the day's most important task". Around 7 am, he reached the polling station in Matia Mahal to cast his vote. "A few of us decided to vote early and sleep after. Had it not been the month of Ramzan, the booths would have been busier. People will flock there in the afternoon," he said.



At a polling booth in Chhatarpur in South Delhi Sunday. The constituency saw 57.3% voter turnout. Neeraj Priyadarshi

## National concerns trump local issues in Gurgaon

SAKSHI DAYAL  
GURGAON, MAY 12

AT 10 AM on Sunday, Maya Devi (80) left her home in Gurgaon's Kanhai village, accepted a "tempo" driver's offer of a ride, and made her way to the Government High School nearby to cast her vote. Upon arriving, she stumbled to a chair, holding on to her daughter and a neighbour for support. The wife of an Army man who died a few years ago, Devi had to take two more such breaks before she could reach the polling booth.

"My daughter and other relatives kept telling me not to go because of my health, but I was determined to cast my vote. It is the only way I can contribute to my country... I am illiterate and don't even know who to vote for. But, my daughter will guide me," she said.

Other residents of Gurgaon and Badshahpur Assembly constituencies, which are among the nine that fall within the Gurgaon Lok Sabha, were more decided on the issues they would vote on, with "nationalism" and "terrorism" figuring on the list.

Gurgaon is set for a showdown between incumbent BJP MP Rao Inderjit Singh,

Congress's Captain Ajay Singh and the Jannayak Janata Party's Mehmood Khan. The BJP and AAP have tied up for this election.

Ravi Yadav, who works at an MNC and voted at a booth in Sector 47, said, "Nationalism, taking a stand against terrorism, and a strong reputation in the global community are at the top of my mind while deciding whom to vote for today..."

Another voter, who did not wish to be named, said, "I am voting for the BJP. I feel the Congress is too corrupt and favours a particular community... Some people are dissatisfied, but a PM cannot satisfy everyone. There are claims there are no jobs, but I feel the youth are just aspiring for too much..."

In neighbouring Nuh district, Sunil Kumar, who drives an Ola cab in Gurgaon, said: "People in our area will not vote for Modi because they believe he is a divisive figure. However, I will vote for him... he has worked hard to change the country's image."

Shahabuddin, a Nuh resident, said, "Over the last five years, a lot of fear has set in in our community... We are unhappy with the work done by this government, or by the MP. He never visited this area, except in the last few weeks to ask for votes."

**67%**  
voting in Gurgaon, according to data compiled until 10 pm Sunday

## No let up in toxic campaign in East

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

ONE PERSON questioned her caste, the second her "missing" surname. Next, her parents were put on the dock: "*Afzal Guru ke samarthak hain*."

A vocal group countered, saying that AAP candidate Atishi was the "most qualified" of 21 candidates fielded by the AAP, Congress and BJP in the capital. "She worked for Re 1 for three years. Do you know that?"

The conversation played out at West Vinod Nagar's D Block in East Delhi around 1 pm Sunday. In a constituency that saw a particularly bitter campaign — from a bid to get Gautam Gambhir's nomination cancelled to a derogatory pamphlet against Atishi — even polling day saw no let up when it came to toxic exchanges between both sides.

Chaudhary Madan Singh led the group of vocal BJP supporters, barely 200 metres from a polling centre in a Delhi government school. "*Ye jo Marlena hai, ye kaun hai? Kya jaat hai? Inke parents Afzal Guru ke liye maidan pe utre the*," Singh, who contested the 2008 Assembly polls from Patparganj on BSP ticket, said.

Around half a dozen people around him endorsed his comments, but many didn't. Dinesh Raghav, a businessman, stepped in, strongly rooting for Atishi due to her "selfless work in the area of education".

"She is by far the most qualified candidate.

## CONSTITUENCY HAS 2 GOVT HOSPITALS

## East Delhi hopes hospital promises become a reality

All parties have touched on better healthcare facilities but words ring hollow, say residents

SUKRITA BARUAH &  
SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

IN EAST Delhi, where all three candidates have promised new hospitals in their manifestos, voters Sunday said they have little hope that the poll outcome will change the state of healthcare in the constituency.

This is the only constituency where there is not a single MCD-run hospital, and where there are two Delhi government hospitals — Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital and Dr Hedgewar Aarogya Sansthan.

The shortage was raised by AAP's Atishi, who linked it in her manifesto to full statehood, promising three new Delhi government hospitals in the constituency. BJP's Gautam Gambhir has promised to set up a central government hospital on par with Safdarjung Hospital within two years of being elected, while Congress's Arvinder Lovely also promised new hospitals along with facilities like free diagnoses for senior citizens.

"Who knows what to expect? What did (incumbent MP) Maheish Girri do in the last five years? Did we even see his face?" said Abdul Alam, a resident of Trilokpuri.

Four months ago, Alam lost his father when he could not be rushed to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, 15 minutes away from home, in time during a severe asthma attack.

Residents also spoke of overcrowding in hospitals. "I went for a check-up during my first pregnancy, and had to spend the entire day in a line. I never went back and have been going to private hospitals ever since," said Sonia Verma (32), a resident of Mandawali, whose two children are 12 and 8. Asked if better public healthcare was a consideration while choosing who to vote for, she said, "*Ummeed hai ki Modi ji isme bhi bhala hi karenge*."

Mandawali also lacks a mohalla clinic — the one which had been set up was removed after a year of operating.

Vandana, a third-year undergraduate student at Delhi University's School of Open



At a poll booth in Trilokpuri in East Delhi. Prem Nath Pandey

Learning, said a trip to the neighbourhood dispensary can be a tedious affair. "To just get medicines against a prescription, sometimes you have to spend the entire day in line at the dispensary, there is so much crowding. It is the only dispensary in the vicinity, so it is choked."

But like most voters *The Indian Express* spoke to, Vandana believes the most crucial healthcare initiative required here is a new, large government hospital to reduce crowding at current ones. "If not a new hospital, facilities and area of Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital need to be expanded so people have a hospital where they can go to without being referred elsewhere. People here keep running to Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi Gate because it has better facilities," said Manoj Ojha (64), resident of Trilokpuri.

Asked if he believes his vote is a step towards changing that, he said: "*Kuch nahi hone wala hai*. All (parties) are as bad as the other in these respects — they'll just blame each other for everything."

At West Vinod Nagar, Biren Sahu (30), who works as an assistant at a diagnostic lab, reiterated that there is a dire need for better healthcare in the area. "I deal with patients from poor families on a daily basis and I know the travails they go through. While people may not vote purely on that ground, whoever wins should work on it."



East Delhi candidate Atishi with her family, Sunday. Tashi Tobgyal

These people want to vote for Modi ji and are looking for excuses to run her down since there are no strong reasons in reality. Had AAP and Congress allied, she would have won. But that looks unlikely now," Raghav said.

Since her candidature was announced, Atishi's religion and caste have repeatedly become a point of debate, owing to statements made by local leaders of rival parties.

In August last year, Atishi's decision to drop her second name, Marlena, derived from Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, had stoked a controversy. She justified her decision claiming herself to be a victim of a "whisper campaign to brand her as a Christian".

Meanwhile, Raghav's opinion found resonance at Khichripur village, near Kalyanpuri. Arshad, who works in a meat shop, claimed there was "clear division" in votes here. "Most people are impressed by AAP's work in education, health and power. But there is a strong belief among a section that this is a national election, where AAP is but a speck," he said.

Further, a section of Dalit voters were resolute in their belief that BSP deserves their vote because it needs to keep the status of a national party. "During the last elections, BSP polled more than two crore votes. AAP is a force in Delhi, but we will not shift loyalties," Amit Kumar, an engineer with a private firm, said.

## RETURNING HOME TO VOTE A LUXURY, SAY MIGRANT WORKERS

## Stories of capital's unmarked fingers: Ghar jayenge toh kamayega kaun?

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

AS DELHI voted Sunday, there were thousands spending the day under flyovers, along open sewers and at dusty construction sites, who didn't bear any mark on their finger. Dozens of labourers, migrants in the city, told *The Indian Express* that travelling home was a luxury, and the prospect of losing wages, or not getting their job back when they returned, stopped them from exercising their mandate.

Amit Bhadana from Rajasthan's Bharatpur district and Braj Kishore from Mathura, both Jatavs in their early 20s, sat at the construction site of a luxury apartment in North West Delhi's Rohini. "*Vote ke chakkar mai gaon jaake kya fayda?*" said Amit (20), whose family owns around 5 bighas land back home. The men, who have voter ID cards, cut marble, earning

Rs 350 and Rs 450 respectively.

Kishore earns a little more as he has "more experience". A staunch supporter of the Mayawati-led BSP, the 21-year-old may not have voted, but he keeps track of politics in UP, and believes the SP-BSP alliance will dent BJP.

Kishore's family is landless and does not have anyone with a steady job. Polling has already taken place in Bharatpur and Mathura.

At a West Delhi construction site, Sukanto Malla (40) and Jogin Oraon (32) had a similar tale. Mallas, meaning boatmen, are traditionally engaged in fishing while Oraons are a Scheduled Tribe found in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bengal and Assam. Both hail from West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district and said they came to Delhi two months ago in search of work. Raiganj, their Lok Sabha constituency, went to polls on April 18.

At the Noida-Delhi border, off the DND flyway, a cluster of shacks made of loose bricks



Labourers near the DND flyway. Many of them work as daily wagers.

house around four families, including a group of children, hailing from UP's Mahoba and Bihar's Begusarai. They are building a concrete drain a few metres from the site.

Sanjay Mahto, aged "40-42", said he usually goes back to Begusarai during polls, but could not "afford" it this time. A Kurmi, Sanjay has supported RJD's Lalu Prasad Yadav in the past, but is now loyal to Bihar CM and JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar. Vinod Yadav, also from Begusarai, said they spend around six to seven months in Delhi-NCR every year, moving from one construction site to another. "*Kamayenge toh khayenge*. We cannot go back. We don't have land. We manage to earn around Rs 6,000-Rs 8,000 during these months," he said.

Sanjay said the *mistris* earn around Rs 400 daily while labourers get Rs 300.

Like others, zameen or land tops the list of demands of Kavita, one of the labourers who has come with her four children. "*Biji paani*

*hai. Ek saal pehle bijli mili. Cylinder bhi mila. Jab paisa hota hai cylinder mein pakate hai, nahi toh lakdi se. Par zameen nahi hai*," she said.

Most labourers have not heard of any social safety net such as insurance or pension schemes by the government. Asked about his thoughts on the five years of the Narendra Modi government, Sanjay said there has been development in his village with new roads and latrines coming up, and families coming under the LPG net.

"However, I got only Rs 6,000 for the latrine, half the sanctioned amount. *Baaki paisa pata nahi kaha chala gaya*," said Sanjay. He said he wants his children to get a good education.

Unlike Sanjay, Kali Charan, a Dalit, has not managed to get a toilet built under the Swachh Bharat scheme. His wife and two daughters work alongside him at the site. "When we don't get to eat, don't have work, toilet sounds like a luxury," he said.



# 6 DECISION 2019



**SEAT WATCH VARANASI, UP, VOTING ON MAY 19**

## BJP has a ‘development’ list, but in PM seat too, ‘national security’ trumps all

**LALMANI VERMA**  
VARANASI, MAY 12

TO SUPERVISE its campaign in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Varanasi constituency, the BJP has set up an election office in an around 4,000 sq ft area on the second floor of a multi-storey building in Mehmoorganj area of the city. A vertical flex board hanging on the building declares, ‘*Main bhi chowkidar*’.

From the office and Modi’s own constituency office, five-page booklets are being handed out to BJP leaders coming to campaign for Modi, talking about major development works undertaken in the city of temples in the past five years with him as the seat’s MP. However, on the ground, it’s not development that is the BJP’s predominant campaign theme. That is “national security”, and why the Modi government must be voted back to check terrorism and Naxalism.

On April 25, when Modi, in Varanasi to file his nomination papers, held a road show, the BJP put up more than 100 stages to welcome him, from where flower petals were showered and patriotic songs blared out. In an address to citizens of the city the same day, the PM talked about the blast inside Sankatmochan temple in Varanasi in 2006. Before he arrived, on a day the temple was holding its annual Shri Sankat Mochan Sangeet Samaroh, artists gathered to paint paintings and sketches of officials killed in different terror attacks, as a tribute to them. Among them was a painting of former Mumbai ATS chief Hemant Karkare, which drew the most people. The BJP has distanced itself from the controversial remarks of its Bhopal candidate, Pragya Singh Thakur, against Karkare.

“Development of several thousand crores has been done in Varanasi in the past five years. People are observing these things in their daily life. But voters should be made aware that the Modi government has controlled terror and did airstrikes inside Pakistan,” says Santosh, a BJP worker.



The Prime Minister at a road show in Varanasi on April 25. Ritesh Shukla

### 2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE

BJP's Narendra Modi	56.37%
AAP	20.30%
Congress	7.34%

### 2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE

BJP's Murli Manohar Joshi	30.52%
BSP	27.94%
SP	18.61%

A group of RSS workers, under the banner of the Lok Jagran Manch, are running a similar campaign, with appeal to support a ‘*rash-trawadi* (nationalist) party’ and to reject those who “question the bravery of security personnel”. At the RSS office in Mehmoorganj, an office-bearer who doesn’t want to be named says, “Modi’s win is sure. We are focusing on increasing voter turnout, and for two reasons.

First, we are worried that the BJP’s traditional voters may avoid stepping out in such hot weather as they are sure of his win, and secondly we want to increase the victory margin.”

Modi had got 5.81 lakh votes in 2014, defeating the Aam Aadmi Party’s Arvind Kejriwal by 3.7 lakh votes. Even in the 2017 Assembly elections, the BJP had won four of the five segments falling under Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, with its ally Apna Dal winning the fifth.

Even before Modi, Varanasi had been a BJP stronghold, with the party retaining it consistently since 1991, but for 2004, when the Congress’s Rajesh Kumar Mishra had won.

Asserting that Modi would win by even more votes this time, an RSS office-bearer, Jai Prakash, says, “*2014 me keval Modi ka naam tha. Iss baar unka naam aur kaam dono hain* (In 2014, there was only Modi’s name. This time his name and work will both count).”

A majority of the voters in Varanasi constituency are upper-caste Hindus, including

Brahmins, Bhumihars, Jaiswals, followed by Muslims and OBCs.

Shivakant Mishra, a grocery shopkeeper near Dashshwamedh Ghat, says he supports the BJP making national security a poll issue. “Slogans of *Bharat ke tukde-tukde* have been raised. Such forces need to be stopped,” he says.

The Congress candidate is Ajay Rai, renominated by the party as its Varanasi candidate just hours before Modi’s roadshow, putting to rest speculation that general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may contest against Modi.

But Abdul Lateef, a weaver living in Madanpura area of Varanasi, says they don’t have much hope of the Congress doing well. “If Priyanka had contested and the SP-BSP gathbandhan had supported her, the fight would have been stronger. Anti-BJP votes would have pooled together in her favour. But the Congress has fielded Rai, who lost in 2014 and 2009, and the SP-BSP former Congress leader Shalini Yadav. Votes of Muslims will get divided, to the BJP’s advantage,” he says.

The BJP might also gain from the entry of Vijay Jaiswal, who had been the BSP candidate from Varanasi in 2014, into the party fold.

In the Muslim-dominated locality of Sonarpura, Shahid Masoor talks about demonetisation and the GST having destroyed their traditional trade of weaving. “My two sons left for Maharashtra in search of jobs,” he says.

If he questions the BJP’s claims of development in the city, his friend Mohammad Akram asks how the party can make nationalism and national security a poll agenda. “The government has not shown any proof that any human being was killed in the (Balakot) airstrike. We are also nationalist. But we vote on the issue of employment and basic amenities,” Akram says.

Both the Congress and gathbandhan have also been targeting the Modi government’s Rs 600 crore Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project, for which a number of houses have been demolished, stoking local anger. The BJP is countering the opposition by calling the project in the interest of devotees.



To show BSP symbol, a papier mache elephant mounted on a van. Amrith Lal

## Rise of Modi, Dalit assertion in Cong’s Chamarajanagar fort

**AMRITH LAL**

NIJAGUNA RAJU is invested in Narendra Modi, who he believes is the most popular person in India after Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar. However, Raju, who runs a resort in Chamarajanagar, believes it is the BSP that will decide the winner in Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha seat. He reels out statistics: Lingayats and Dalits have 3.5 lakh voters each while Vokkaligas and Muslims number 80,000 each, followed by Kurubas and Upparas, who together are over 2 lakh. If the BSP attracts a substantial chunk of the Dalit vote, the BJP candidate, V Srinivas Prasad, a five-time MP, will win, according to Raju. The assumption is that the Lingayats and Dalits vote en bloc for the BJP and Congress respectively and a split in these votes could influence the election outcome.

Chamarajanagar, a reserved seat, voted on April 18. It is considered a Congress seat and the sitting MP, R Dhruvanarayana, is credited for being accessible and undertaking development works. He won in 2009 and 2014. However, the BJP won three of the 8 Assembly seats in Chamarajanagar, as many as the Congress, in the 2018 Assembly polls. Prasad, who won the seat four times as a Congress nominee, is seen as a formidable opponent of Dhruvanarayana, his protegee once.

But this election is not about Prasad. In Chamarajanagar, Modi is a polarising figure. For every Raju who worships Modi, there is a counter-narrative that holds the PM responsible for demonetisation and GST, which seem to have impacted businesses. Puttasami, a Congress councillor, and Nasarullah, a middle-aged trader, lead the charge at a shack. Across the road at Delux Bakery, a young Mansur speaks about the divisive character of the PM’s speeches. “Is this how a prime minister should speak?” he asks. He then plays an audio clip to press his case about what ought to be the tone and tenor of political speeches. The audio is of South Kanara Congress candidate Mithun Rai, who is arguing that the version advocated by the BJP is antithetical to the Hindu view of life. Mansur says there is nothing wrong in politicians talking about their faith in public, but religion must not be a tool for them to pit one person against another.

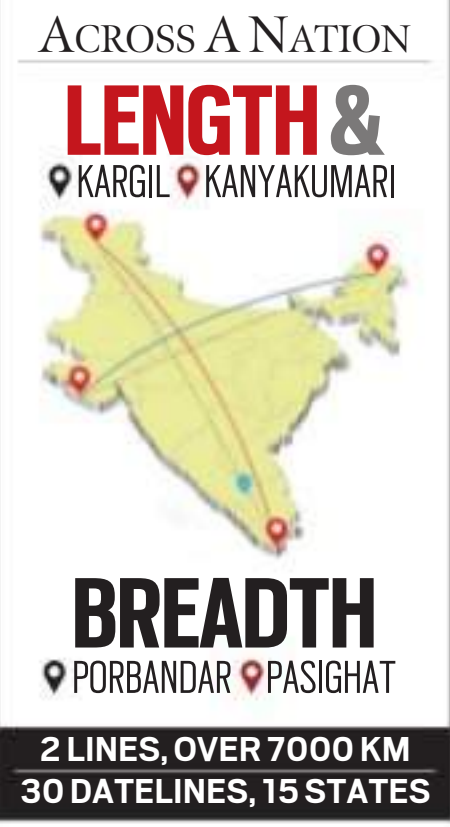
Beyond the town, the conversation boils down to livelihood and identity issues. At Nagavalli-Nalloor village, an hour’s drive towards B R Hills, Ganesh, a young engineer, is betting on N Shivakumar, the BSP candidate. Shivakumar, who holds a doctorate in Kannada, is an aspirational figure for many young Dalits, who recognise in his candidature Ambedkar’s

prescription for liberation, “educate, organise and agitate”. Sivakumar, 42, is unmarried and trains civil services aspirants in Hyderabad and Delhi. “He is new to politics, but he speaks well, knows his Ambedkar and will attract young voters,” says Ganesh, who argues that Congress MPs have failed to remove the backward tag on Chamarajanagar. In his campaign, Shivakumar is precise in explaining why he is contesting and what he intends to do as an MP. At a gathering in T Narsipura, a town on the Cauvery, he puts the BSP’s presence in the contest in the national context. He speaks about the gathbandhan in UP and reminds the crowd that there is a chance for Akka Mayawati to become the PM. He warns that the Constitution is under threat from the BJP regime. He also holds the Congress responsible for loss of jobs. “Both the BJP and Congress are together in subverting the spirit of the Constitution,” he argues. A small crowd listens attentively and appreciates the prospect of Mayawati becoming PM. A life-size papier mache elephant crafted by Harish and Nanjundswamy, students from Sri Ravivarma Art Institute, Mysuru, and mounted on a pick-up truck leads the entourage as it wind pasts the bylanes of T Narsipura.

While Karnataka has been home to a powerful Dalit movement and intellectuals like Devanuru Mahadeva and Siddalingaiah wield influence beyond a Dalit constituency, the assertion in Chamarajanagar seems more recent. It also seems to be an extension of a politics of social and cultural empowerment reflected in initiatives like Buddha

Balaga of neo-Buddhists in Nagavalli. The election of N Mahesh, the BSP state chief, from Kollegal, an Assembly seat in Chamarajanagar, in 2018, and his induction as a minister in the JD(S)-Congress cabinet indicates a new phase of Dalit political assertion outside the Congress umbrella. Incidentally, Chamarajanagar has the largest proportion of Dalits in Karnataka.

Social scientist AR Vasavi frames politics in the region in terms of caste and capital combining to facilitate the rise of dominant caste political actors as regional political satraps. “Dalits and OBCs (largely the Uppara) have supported somebody from one of the communities and capital has not been as significant a basis for the choice of candidate or for mobilisation (since the rich or elite are very few). Since the Assembly election of 2018, we see a split among Dalits as the Madigas (or chamars, or leather workers) are now seeking to vote against the Congress and BJP (to indicate their anger against the non-implementation of internal reservation). This accounts for the rise of the BSP in the district,” she says.



## On roll, gathbandhan hits non-Yadav OBC hurdle

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
CHANDAULI, MAY 12

IT’S 9 AM and a crowd has already begun to jostle at the PDS shop in Rewasa, a small village on the outskirts of Varanasi in UP’s Chandauli Lok Sabha constituency. Gupta Yadav, Ramjatan Kumar and Qadir Ahmed are sitting together and chatting, waiting for their turn to pick up cereals and kerosene.

The conversation is centred around rising prices of kerosene. “Only a year or so ago, you could get kerosene at Rs 18 a litre. It is now Rs 34 a litre. It is rising by a rupee almost every month,” says Qadir Ahmed.

Ramjatan, a Dalit farm worker, agrees. “It’s not just inflation. Ever since the Modi government has come, everyone is troubled. He promised development and jobs. But I am forced to work in the farms even though I am educated. No vacancies were announced this year.” Gupta Yadav makes his point: “Why are we forgetting the stray cow menace? All our crops are getting destroyed.”

Their conversation captures the success of the electoral arithmetic that the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have been able to build with their alliance. In the run-up to the last leg of the 2019 polls, Yadavs, Dalits and Muslims seem to be not only agreeing on issues but also their voting preferences.

In village after village in Chandauli, from Mughalsarai to Sakaldih, these three communities seem united on whom to vote for. Even those who see an inevitability in Narendra Modi getting a second term have their loyalties intact. Dinesh Yadav, who drives an au-

torickshaw in Mughalsarai, says, “Most people are in favour of Modi. I hear them talking in my auto. But I am voting for the SP. How does it matter? I am going to be driving a rickshaw no matter whose government comes.”

At a tea shop in Mughalsarai, several retired train drivers have gathered for their morning tea at 7 am. Most of them are Yadavs. “The BJP is not getting more than 37 seats in UP,” says Mithailal Yadav.

Others gathered there talk about the “falling” political discourse, pointing to the PM’s use of “*shehzade*” and “*shehzadi*” for rivals and the state CM Yogi Adityanath calling Lord Hanuman a Dalit. “I am telling you, the way things are going, by the last phase, there will be a gunfight,” says Girija Prasad Yadav.

But this is where the galloping gathbandhan hits a hurdle. It has been unable to cause much enthusiasm among other castes. Just across the road from the tea shop is a *paan* shop run by Suresh Chouhan.

Chouhan, who belongs to the backward Nonia community and voted for the BJP in 2014, says this time he will vote for the gathbandhan. He is immediately interjected by at least five others from his community: “Modi jeetega, Modi. *Poora Chouhan log unhi ko vote karega. Suresh babu ko bhi line pe le aeenge* (Modi will win. All Chouhans are voting for Modi. We will get Suresh to toe the line too).”

Chandauli has over 1 lakh Chouhan votes; Brahmins, Thakurs and Baniyas make up almost four lakh votes. Yadavs, Dalits and Muslims have close to five lakh votes in the constituency. The rest are non-Yadav OBCs. The gathbandhan has brought in Sanjay Chouhan from Ghazipur to garner Chouhan votes.



ASP worker in Chandauli. Deeptiman Tiwary

### CHANDAULI (VOTING ON MAY 19)

#### 2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE

BJP's M N Pandey	42.23%
BSP	26.25%

#### 2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE

SP's Ramkishun	26.85%
BSP	26.78%

At the Chandauli market on the Chandauli-Varanasi highway, Raju says his Koeri caste (similar to Maurya in these parts) is voting for Modi. He says he is doing this even though sit-

ting BJP MP Mahendra Pandey, who has been renominated, has done no work and even the PM has not measured up to expectations.

“Look, the last man to get any work done here was the Congress’s Kamalapati Tripathi in the 1970s. Pandey hasn’t even come here once in the last five years. Even Modi has not done much. But we trust him. We want to give him one more chance,” says Raju, 60.

Standing by his side, Vikas Singh, a 23-year-old Thakur, says, “So what if Modi has not done much? Did Mayawati and Akhilesh do anything? At least the BJP government has stopped cheating during examinations. Now no one is getting more than 75%.”

On the other side of the road, Nakdu Prasad is wearing a mask to shield himself from the dust belowing out of a flyover construction site nearby. He disagrees that there has been no development under the BJP. “What is this if not development? When Mayawati and Akhilesh were CM, all Central funds would go back. And Congress? It is saying it will give Rs 72,000 to everyone. Where will the money come from? The country will sink,” he says.

The mood among non-Jatav Dalits is no different. Golu Sonkar, a vegetable vendor at the Sakaldiah market, is rooting for Modi. “There is no party here, only Modi. For the nation’s development, I will vote for him. Why hold him responsible for the fact that there is no visible development in the area? Even the gram pradhan can’t do much in five years.”

It is said that in Chandauli, a topographical quirk makes the Ganga flow from east to west. Whether these elections herald a similar reversal of fortunes for the gathbandhan or the BJP remains to be seen.

## Making old gold: Meet Himachal’s new poll ambassadors

**RAJESH CHANDER SHARMA**  
UNA, MAY 12

AT A time when political parties are putting a premium on youth and asking patriarchs to take a back seat, the old guard in Una is at the political forefront asking people to vote.

They are a part of the ‘Centenarian Club’, the new brand ambassadors of the District Election Office in Una, Himachal Pradesh. After the special summary revision of electoral rolls, their number was pegged at 103. A team of the district administration is approaching each one of them and recording their appeals to vote.

“Many times they give a tight hug. One guy didn’t leave me for five minutes,” says Somil Gautam, a Himachal Administrative Service probationer who is the nodal officer for this SVEEP (Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation) campaign.

Deputy Commissioner-cum-Election Officer Rakesh Prajapati intends to cover all centenarians. “There are many who have completed 100 years of age and have been voting in every election. I want to document all of them.” The *Indian Express* travels with the team to some centenarians:

**KARAM DEVI; 102,**  
GONDPUR BANEHRA UPPER VILLAGE

Ask her age, and she claims to be “*sau te upar* (more than 100)”. She is hard of hearing but has a sharp memory. Her husband’s mention makes her eyes moist; he passed away “long ago”. She lives with the family of her youngest son, who works with a paramilitary force in the Northeast. Her pillar of support is her daughter-in-law Anu Dadwal, 47, who is the pradhan of the village.

Devi says she has been voting in every election. “Even when my daughter-in-law was working in Ajouli, about 70 km from our village, we would come to vote here,” she says, sitting on a *charpoy*. “Casting vote is a must.”

**KHUNI RAM; 100,**  
FATEHPUR VILLAGE

Even the scorching sun is not able to stop him. His family looks for him, calls for him and finally finds him in a field nearby. When he comes to know he is to be interviewed, he washes his face first, before walking over with the help of a stick.

“*Majra kya hai* (What’s the matter)? Why have these people come?” he asks, when his grandson makes him sit in a chair.



Ram forgets his age; sometimes he says it’s 80, sometimes 90. He gets it right with the help of his family.

Done with the shoot, he again asks, “*Majra kya hai?*” He seems to have figured it out when the team is about to leave. “You guys are late,” he quips, using a local phrase to say it’s like digging a well when the house is already on fire. “I’ll vote for the other party.”

**KALA DEVI; 108,**  
PIRTHIPUR VILLAGE

She first says she is 108, and then hastens to add with a twinkle in her eyes, “That’s not exact. I’ve reached 200!”

Devi is full of life. She refuses a selfie by hiding her face with a *dupatta*. Finally, when she agrees and the selfie is clicked, she takes a good look at her picture.



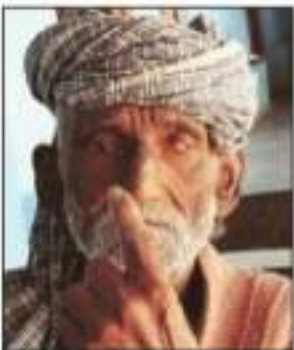
She recognises poll symbols, not parties. She does not know who the current PM is, but remembers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi when they ruled the country.

She also remembers the British rule. “Then things were different and peaceful. Now corruption and crime are on the rise,” she says.

**CAPTAIN JASWANT SINGH (RETD); 101**  
KUTHERA JAISWALAN VILLAGE

Well-informed and politically correct, he reads newspapers, Hindi and English both, and can talk politics. Without naming the PM or the Congress president, he believes it’s childish to call the “*chowkidar*” a “*chor*”.

Mention national security, and his eyes light up. “The Balakot airstrike was a good step,” he says. Singh was in the Army and posted in Delhi when the British flag was brought down



(From left) Jaswant Singh, Kala Devi, Karam Devi, Kashmir Singh, Khuni Ram

on Independence Day. He says he remembers those days as well as the taunts he faced when he went abroad before Independence. “Are you from India? India is a slave country.”

India, he says, still needs to do a lot to claim its rightful place in the world. “Steering India in that direction is not an easy task,” he says.

**HAVALDAR KASHMIR SINGH (RETD); 106,**  
ISPUR VILLAGE

His baritone voice can put many leaders to shame. “I learnt Roman Urdu – Urdu in Roman script – in the Army, the way (UPA chairperson) Sonia Gandhi learnt Roman Hindi – Hindi in Roman script,” he says.

Singh claims he has been voting since the first Lok Sabha election in 1952. Greed, he believes, has brought down the level of politics. To



### Raising awareness

IN THE 2014 polls, when Himachal Pradesh had recorded a voter turnout of 64.42%, Una had seen 71.40% polling – the highest in the state. Through various SVEEP activities such as organising voter awareness events, the Una district administration is trying to better the turnout even more this time

stem its further decline, the educated should enter politics, he adds.

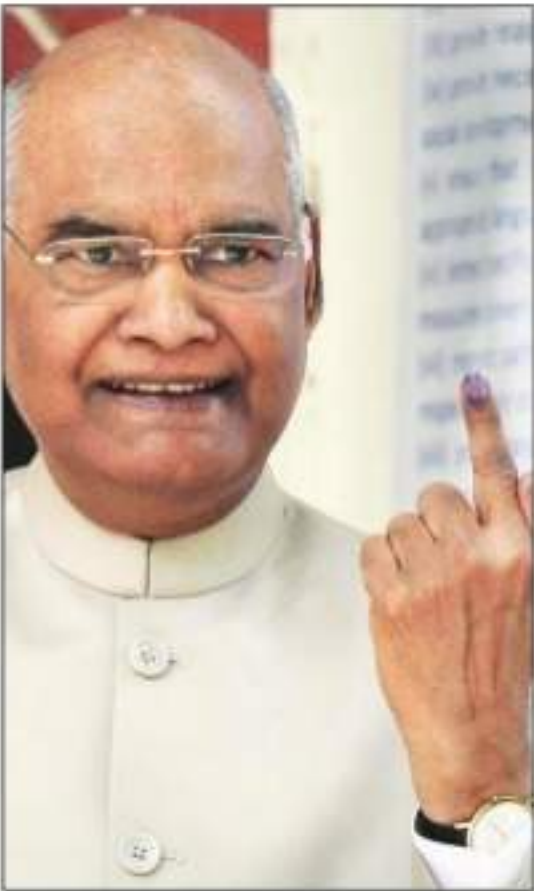
The mention of education makes him sad. “Didn’t get proper education, didn’t go to college,” he says about himself. “One can’t have any knowledge without college.”



# 7 DECISION 2019



## THE TURNOUT



President Ram Nath Kovind after casting his vote at the Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, within the Rashtrapati Bhavan complex, in New Delhi. *PTI*

<b>7</b>	<b>59</b>
STATES	SEATS
<b>State (seats in Phase-6)</b>	
<b>Uttar Pradesh (14/80)</b>	<b>54.74%</b>
<b>Haryana (10)</b>	<b>68.63%</b>
<b>West Bengal (8/42)</b>	<b>80.39%</b>
<b>Bihar (8/40)</b>	<b>59.29%</b>
<b>Madhya Pradesh (8/29)</b>	<b>64.94%</b>
<b>Delhi (7)</b>	<b>60.12%</b>
<b>Jharkhand (4/14)</b>	<b>64.50%</b>

(All figures till 10pm)

## PHASE-VII VOTE ON MAY 19

<b>7</b>	<b>59</b>
STATES	SEATS

# BJP MLA assaults poll officer in UP's Aurai; Maneka, rival engage in spat

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, MAY 12

FOURTEEN CONSTITUENCIES went to polls in Uttar Pradesh in the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections on Sunday, with the state recording a turnout of 54.74 per cent till 10pm. Ambedkar Nagar marked the highest turnout of 58.78 per cent, while Phulpur registered 51.38 per cent.

A total of 177 candidates are contesting in these 14 seats, where 2.53 crore people were eligible to vote at 16,998 polling centres.

Brahm Dev Tiwari, Addition Chief Election Officer, Uttar Pradesh, said that voting was largely peaceful, barring a few stray incidents. He said in Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency, BJP MLA from Aurai, Dinanath Bhaskar, assaulted a presiding officer at a primary school in Lakshmana village. "The presiding officer, Radhe Shyam Tewari, was replaced after he was injured. He is being treated," Tiwari said.

Bhadohi SP Rajesh S said an FIR was registered against Bhaskar and investigation was on. "Bhaskar and some unidentified persons have been booked... He and his supporters have been booked under sections of the Representation of People's Act," Rajesh told *The Indian Express*.

Circle Officer, Aurai, Yadvendra Yadav said, "The MLA had some issue with the presiding officer over his conduct and polling at a booth in his area. Instead of complaining,



At a polling station in Prayagraj. *AP*

he resorted to violence and verbal abuses," Yadav said the officer received minor injuries.

A video from Sultanpur constituency that was widely shared on social media showed BJP candidate Maneka Gandhi telling her BSP rival that "dabangi (bullying) won't be accepted".

BSP's Chandrabhadra Singh, alias Sonu Singh, retorted saying, "What bullying are we indulging in? You are abusing me, your son is saying he will get me to open his shoelaces."

BJP MP Varun Gandhi recently stoked a

controversy targeting the SP-BSP alliance, after a video emerged in which he was heard saying that he gets such people to "untie his shoes".

Additional CEO Tiwari said "no complaint was received about the argument from either side and voting in Sultanpur was peaceful".

Allegations were levelled from both sides in Sultanpur that voters were being put under pressure by the candidates and their supporters. "We tightened the security and deployed heavy force to ensure peaceful polling," Tiwari said.

## CPM goes to EC against PM statements, BJP rejects charge

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE CPI(M) has approached the Election Commission against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks regarding Army action against militants in Jammu and Kashmir in a campaign speech in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, and an earlier statement he made during an interview to a TV channel about the Balakot airstrike.

In a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said that the PM was reported to have said that "today terrorists were killed by our Army in Kashmir. Now some people are worried as to why did Modi kill the terrorists when voting is underway? An armed terrorist is attacking, do my jawans go to the Election Commission to seek permission to kill him?"

Yechury said that the Prime Minister has claimed that "he killed the terrorists not our armed forces".

Also, Yechury said that the Prime Minister in his interview to News Nation channel, had said that he had approved the Balakot strikes "despite bad weather and against professional expert advice because the clouds would hide Indian fighter jets from Pakistan radars".

Rejecting the charge, senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar said, "PM Modi did not reveal anything (about the Balakot strike) he was not supposed to reveal."

Yechury said the Prime Minister "gave out operational details of a sensitive military mission, with a purpose to influence the voters during the silent period of the campaign".

"His (Prime Minister's) behaviour and statements are in clear and deliberate violation of the guidelines which are reissued and reiterated by the Election Commission before the first round of polling, which made it clear that the armed formed which belong to all of India, cannot be a subject for hyperbolic and false claims by any party for garnering votes," Yechury said in the letter.

this issue? Before 2014, India saw multiple bomb blasts. *Ab Bharat ghar me ghus ghus kar marta hai* (Now India is entering homes to kill terrorists),"

He said, "Congress has just one issue: Modi hatao," alleging that Congress's wrong policies paved the way for terrorism and Maoists. "Today there is a queue for becoming prime minister. But tell me, of all these faces you see who can fight terrorism?" he questioned.

Picking on Indore's fervour for cricket, he said, "In 2009 and 2014, the government refused to conduct IPL because elections were underway. But see when government changes what all changes. This time IPL is also underway. This is New India that is holding elections even as Easter, Navratri and Ramzan are underway."

Modi also mentioned the gangrape of a Dalit woman in Alwar. "The case was suppressed so that Dalits don't get angry. The media will not tell you this but I will," he said.

Khandwa and Indore vote on May 19 - the last phase of Lok Sabha elections. In Khandwa, sitting MP Nandkumar Singh Chouhan will take on Arun Yadav of the Congress. Meanwhile, in Indore, eight-term incumbent Sumitra Mahajan is out of the political fray, and the BJP has propped Shankar Lalwani against Congress's Pankaj Sanghvi.

## Shah reiterates: Will scrap Article 370 if BJP is voted back

**KAVITA UPADHYAY**  
SHIMLA, MAY 12

BJP CHIEF Amit Shah on Sunday reiterated that his party, if voted back to power, will ensure that Article 370, which gives a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, is scrapped.

Shah was in Himachal Pradesh and addressed rallies in Chamba, Sirmaur and Bilaspur. Chamba falls under the Kangra Lok Sabha seat, while Sirmaur and Bilaspur fall under the Shimla (SC) and Hamirpur constituencies respectively.

Speaking in Chamba, Shah warned that under Modi rule, anyone talking of dividing the country will be put behind bars. He said that while the BJP says that it will scrap Article 370 if voted to power, "the Congress, on the other hand, says (in its election manifesto) that it will scrap the sedition law".

Attacking the Congress for its overseas chief Sam Pitroda's recent "hua toh hua (It happened, so what)" remark on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Shah said, "He (Pitroda) was asked about Sikhs being killed (in 1984), and he said 'hua toh hua'. We ask them (Congress) about the 26/11 Mumbai attacks where 300 people were killed and they say 'hua toh hua, bhool jao (forget it)'. We tell them that bomb blasts happened in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Delhi under your (Congress) rule where many people were killed, but they say 'hua toh hua, bhool jao'. We tell them that Kashmiri pandits and Sikh brothers were ousted from Kashmir under your rule, but they say 'bhool jao, hua toh hua'..."

# EC junks Cong charge that PMO 'misused' Niti Aayog, finds no model code violation

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE ELECTION Commission (EC) on Saturday disposed off the Congress' complaint against the Prime Minister's Office that it misusing think tank NITI Aayog for election purposes. The poll panel found no violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in the case.

Citing the Commission's October 7, 2014 instruction which exempts the Prime Minister from the MCC provision barring ministers from combining official and electioneering visits, Deputy Election Commissioner Sandeep Saxena told reporters that the Congress' complaint had been examined and violation was found.



At a polling station in the Jhargram constituency, Partha Paul

# West Bengal records 80.39% turnout, BJP says one worker killed

**RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & SWEETY KUMARI**  
JHARGRAM, KOLKATA, MAY 12

SPORADIC VIOLENCE marred voting in West Bengal in the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections on Sunday when eight constituencies went to polls, recording a turnout of 80.39%.

Aariz Aftab, West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said, "Barring a few incidences of stray violence at Ghatal, the polling was overall peaceful. Three cases of EVM tampering were reported."

"Altogether 16 people have been arrested and five FIRs have been registered. Five incidences of firing by the central forces were also reported. Twenty-six people were injured in separate incidents of violence and one presiding officer has been removed," ADG (law and order) Siddhinath Gupta said.

The BJP claimed that one of its workers was killed by TMC workers in Jhargram.

The body of Ramen Mondal (43) was found in Gobballavpur under Jhargram Lok Sabha seat. The BJP alleged that "goons backed by Trinamool Congress" beat him to death. The incident took place around midnight.

"TMC-backed goons have murdered our worker in Gobballavpur. They are resorting to terror tactics and politics of murder because they know they are going to lose," said BJP state president Dilip Ghosh. Police said it wasn't clear if he was murdered and said the body has been sent for post-mortem.

According to the Election Commission, 80.39% voting was recorded in the eight seats. All 15,428 polling stations in this phase were manned by central paramilitary forces.

"Central forces are asking people to vote for Modi. People will give a befitting answer. In the name of central forces, RSS supporters have been brought in. I have heard in Keshpur that the Central forces opened fire and one of our minority brothers was injured," said Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee at a public meeting in Canning.

Clashes broke out in Dogachia village un-

# Bengal: Family of arrested BJP youth leader to move SC

**SANTANU CHOWDHURY**  
KOLKATA, MAY 12

THE FAMILY of a BJP youth wing leader from West Bengal, who was arrested and slapped with non-bailable charges for posting a photoshopped image of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Facebook, has said that they will move the Supreme Court on Monday to file a bail petition.

Priyanka Sharma, whose Facebook profile describes her as Howrah district club cell convener of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), was arrested on Friday. The next day, the 25-year-old was produced at the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court in Howrah, which remanded her in judicial custody for 14 days. She is presently lodged in Alipore Women Correctional Home.

On Sunday, Sharma's brother Rajiv told *The Indian Express*, "As there is a strike going

**EXPLAINED**

## Central forces in focus

IN THE sixth phase of polling, the Central forces had to resort to firing in five incidents, according to the ADG (law and order). Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee used this to target the Central forces during her public meetings on Sunday. While the Election Commission is trying to ensure the presence of central forces in all the polling stations, the TMC has accused them of "misusing power".

Meanwhile, opposition parties like the Congress and BJP have insisted on the presence of Central forces not only in all polling booths but also neighbourhoods, stating that they have no confidence in the state police.

der Keshur police station in Ghatal around 8.30am. BJP candidate Bharati Ghosh alleged that when she entered a booth, women TMC workers manhandled her. Her security personnel allegedly baton-charged the protesters, infuriating the mob. Bharati further alleged that local TMC workers lobbed bricks at her convoy, ransacked her car and one of her security officers was injured.

TMC workers, however, claimed that her security personnel opened fire and one of their workers, Baktiyar Khan, was injured.

The West Bengal CEO has sought report from the district administration in connection with the incident where Bharati's car was attacked. The EC also removed the presiding officer of the booth.

on in courts across that state we have decided to move the Supreme Court. Tomorrow we will file her bail petition there." BYJM Howrah district president Om Prakash Singh will be accompanying Rajiv to Delhi.

The BJP also organised a rally from Howrah Bridge to Dashnagar — Priyanka's residence. The rally was also attended by Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, who also met Sharma's mother and assured her of all help. "Our party president Amit Shah asked me to visit her house. We have told them that there is no need to get scared as we will stand by them," he said.

Meanwhile, the Opposition slammed the TMC government for taking action against Sharma.

Senior Congress leader Om Prakash Mishra said, "It (the photoshopped image) was not in good taste and the people should exercise restraint. However that does not necessitated such a drastic action."

campaigning.

Following the complaint, the EC had sought NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant's comments. To which, Kant is learnt to have denied any wrongdoing. He is also said to have justified the data collection as a routine exercise since the think tank often profiles different districts.

While speaking to reporters, Saxena also said the EC had sought a report from the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, under the Commerce Ministry, on the Congress' allegation that the DPIIT was misused by the BJP to collect details on government schemes for inclusion in the party's vision document and manifesto ahead of the ongoing Parliamentary elections.