



Internal fights mark BJP, Congress campaign in Himachal’s four seats

LIZ MATHEW
SHIMLA, MAY 16

INDIFFERENCE AMONG voters and internal differences among parties mark the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections in Himachal Pradesh.

The BJP, which started making inroads in the state since 1952 and won three of four seats in 1989, is banking on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s popularity and the Congress’s alleged failure in communicating its programmes, including the ambitious NYAY, to make a complete sweep in the hilly state. The state has four Lok Sabha seats — Shimla, Mandi, Kangra and Hamirpur.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, who has managed to steer the BJP boat despite being rocked by factionalism, hoped “the Modi factor” would help the party paper over every other issue.

“First of all, now we are working as a single unit. All our senior leaders, including Shanta Kumar (the veteran who has not been given a ticket this election), have been travelling extensively and working hard for party candidates,” Thakur said.

The Opposition Congress, despite the intensifying one-upmanship within the party, is giving a formidable fight to the BJP in at least two constituencies — Shimla and Hamirpur.

Shimla, a reserved constituency, is witnessing a tight fight between the Congress’s Dhani Ram Shandil and BJP’s Suresh Kashyap. Congress leaders and workers in Shimla admit that the seat is the best bet for the party in a state which has a high proportion of Dalits — over a quarter of Himachal Pradesh’s population are Scheduled Castes. At 25.2 per cent, the state has the second highest SC population after Punjab.

“There is anti-incumbency against the BJP in the state, particularly in Shimla. A large section of BJP workers in Shimla are upset



Union Home Minister and BJP leader Rajnath Singh at a rally in Kullu, Thursday. PTI

also because the sitting MP Virender Kashyap was dropped,” said Jai Singh, who was part of the door-to-door campaign for the Congress in Shimla.

A top BJP leader said Kashyap, a two-term Lok Sabha MP from Shimla, was dropped after “an internal survey” by the party in the constituency. However, Chief Minister Thakur maintained that the BJP had overcome the initial hiccups after the ticket was distributed and “its working as one unit” in Shimla.

But the CM is not taking any chances — he has addressed almost 70 rallies. “I am not leaving any Assembly seat,” he said, adding, “I made it a point to speak about the schemes, programmes and initiatives taken by the Modi government and the state government. But it was Modi’s decisive and strong leadership that came across as our strongest point in the campaign. It has overshadowed everything else.”

If communication has emerged as the biggest strength of the BJP, it may well end up proving to be the Congress’s undoing in the state. Not too many voters were aware of the Congress’s income guarantee scheme, Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY).

“NYAY? What’s that? No one told me about it. I don’t think I am eligible... I am not a farmer,” says Sheela Devi, 49, who had min-utes ago expressed her dismay at the BJP-led Central government’s alleged apathy towards daily wagers.

Lucky, a photographer waiting for his friend on Mall Road, also says, “NYAY? I do not know about any such programme.” His friend Bhatti, who joins him later, appreciates Thakur’s work as chief minister — he too hasn’t heard about NYAY.

“It’s not just that many have not heard of the Congress’s NYAY. Even those who have heard are not convinced about it. Congress still faces a trust deficiency,”

EXPLAINED E. Key challenges

In Himachal Pradesh, a state known for its bipolar politics, the BJP and Congress share several traits — among them, factionalism. While the BJP under CM Jai Ram Thakur has managed to keep a lid on internal feuds, the Congress’s differences are spilling out in public. But first, the two parties have a bigger battle on their hands — voter indifference

Chief Minister Thakur said.

However, Ram Sharma, a Congress leader in Shimla, said: “We have campaigned about the scheme extensively. The trust deficiency the CM is talking about is actually with its leadership. No one believes Modi,” he said.

In Himachal, what binds the Congress and BJP camps is factionalism. In the BJP, Thakur has managed an uneasy truce between veterans Shanta Kumar, Prem Kumar Dhumal and J P Nadda. The Congress’s former CMs Virbhadra Singh and Sukh Ram, along with state chief Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Kuldeep Rathore, tried to patch up, but differences have emerged in public during the campaign.

But both parties will face their biggest challenge on voting day, with voters largely indifferent. “Who is bothered about this small state? Election fever is in Uttar Pradesh. This time, very few people want to talk about election,” says photographer Lucky.

SEAT WATCH SALEMPUR



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav campaigning in Ballia. PTI

In once socialist bastion, Modi’s name trumps all caste calculations

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

SATYAPRAKASH KUSHWAHA and Brijesh Kushwaha run a small furniture shop in the Salempur market in eastern UP. They also harbour political ambitions. In April, when the BSP announced that its state chief R S Kushwaha would contest from the seat, they joined him amid rumours that BJP’s sitting MP Ravindra Kushwaha may not be fielded. However, when the BJP announced Ravindra’s candidature, both of them stopped campaigning for R S Kushwaha.

“We have Narendra Modi in our hearts. But since the BSP had fielded a prominent Kushwaha leader, we thought it would be good for the constituency. Now that the BJP has also fielded a Kushwaha, we see no point in canvassing for the BSP,” Brijesh says, adding that close to 60 per cent of the Kushwaha votes were going to the BJP.

Adjacent to Ballia, which was at the forefront of the anti-corruption movement led by veteran Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan and remained a bastion of former prime minister Chandrashekhar for long, Salempur had never voted for the BJP until 2014. Known as a socialist seat, the constituency was won by the Janata Dal and later by the SP and BSP multiple times since 1989. Even after the BJP swept the state in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, two of the five Assembly segments went to the SP in the 2017 Vidhan Sabha elections.

Poor and largely rural, Salempur is populated mostly with backward and extremely backward communities such as Kushwahas, Rajbhars, Yadavs, Dalits and Muslims. The BJP’s core voters, the upper castes, cumulatively account for less than five lakh votes in this constituency, which has over 16 lakh electors.

In 2014, the BJP had garnered more than 70,000 votes than the SP and BSP put together. Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, who had also contested in 2014, had managed to win about 66,000 votes.

Political equations are now up for test as Rajbhar, whose community has a significant presence in the constituency and who built his political career opposing Mayawati, is now up against the BJP.

Shailendra Verma of Sikandarpur’s Kathauda village, which has a substantial Rajbhar and Kushwaha population, says the communities are divided between the gathbandhan and BJP. “The sitting MP and BJP candidate is very arrogant and of no use to the people. When people went to him for help, he used to say you have voted for Modi and not for me,” Verma says.

Fellow villager Rakesh Rajbhar says he will vote for the SBSP as Om Prakash Rajbhar, claiming he has brought the community to

SALEMPUR	
2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BJP’s Ravindra Kushawaha	45.83%
BSP	18.68%
SP	18.66%
2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BSP’s R Rajbhar	27.54%
Cong	24.66%
SP	21.3%

political limelight.

About 50 km away in Bansdih Assembly segment’s Maritand village, however, the two communities appear to be enamoured by Modi’s leadership.

“Modi has brought development to the region. Government benefits are reaching people. Why won’t we vote for him?” asks Ram Kumar Verma, a resident of Maritand.

Fellow villager Sravan Kumar Rajbhar too says he will be voting for Modi. “Om Prakash Rajbhar has become a big man. He comes in big cars to show us that he is the richest Rajbhar. He has done nothing for the people. He has not even come to ask us how we are doing. In this election, people are not looking at candidates. Everyone is chanting Modi’s name,” he says.

At Anua Par village near Salempur, Modi’s appeal seems to have worked cutting across caste lines, barring Yadavs, Muslims and Jatavs.

Arun Kumar Kushwaha, Raju Kushwaha, Sateyendra Nath, a Gond (non-Jatav Dalit), and Ramesh Tiwari have surrounded Lallan Kushwaha, who works for the BSP in the village. They make fun of him for being an outcast when everyone is “voting for the country”.

Bablu Kumar Gupta, a Bania who runs a shop in Bansdih market, says he is voting for the BJP because Modi is honest and well-intentioned. “He can’t achieve everything in five years. We can’t manage families, he is managing 130 crore people. He does not see caste. Even Muslims have got houses. If he wanted to make money he would not have implemented demonetisation. The GST has brought prices down,” he says, showing a moisturising cream that is now selling at a discounted price.

Only Mohammed Mustafa, a paan shop owner at Majhauri Raj, is concerned that there is less talk of development and more about emotional issues. “The CM is only concerned about cows. Cows should be respected and protected. But if the amount of political capital and money being spent on cows is spent on creating jobs and making houses, it will help the BJP more. I am not getting a job and (BJP president) Amit Shah is saying, ‘sell pakodas’,” he says.

Cong’s Dewas candidate sings his way to booth

MILIND GHATWAI
DEWAS/SHAJAPUR, MAY 16

A STUFFY Bar Association room towards the end of the corridor in the Dewas district court is an unlikely setting for a philosophical discussion about life, truth and brotherhood. Indian folk singer Prahlad Tipanya quotes Kabir to drive home his point in a few words.

But the doting advocates in their black coats are not done yet. They expect and goad the 65-year-old Congress candidate from Dewas to sing the message for them. And he obliges, “Jara halke gaadi haanko mere Ram gaadi wale....”

Tipanya, who sings Kabir *bhajans* in Malvi folk style, was the EC’s poster boy in Madhya Pradesh, appealing to voters to exercise their franchise. When his name started doing the rounds as a probable candidate, the EC asked the government to remove his posters.

But the folk singer continues to draw attention for his melodious voice and simple appeal. When he spoke and sang at a rally in Shajapur, Congress president Rahul Gandhi shot a video and shared it on his social media accounts.

“I was busy singing, I did not know he was filming,” the folk singer told *The Indian Express* in Shajapur on Wednesday.

Tipanya, a former teacher, says he has been a social worker for nearly 40 years. “Now it’s another medium to help people,” he says. When asked about his competitor (BJP’s Mahendra Solanki, a former judge), he says, “When it is a competition, it does not matter whether one is a judge or something else, it remains a competition.” He says he does not know much about his rival but “maybe he had an overriding political ambition that made him resign as judge and contest”.

Tipanya says he is influenced by Kabir and follows him in life. “Kabir transcends all religious boundaries. All communities seek the supreme power in different ways. All are made of the same five elements and blood,” he says.

Solanki, on the other hand, says he holds his opponent in high regard “but that does not mean he will win. He is not contesting as Kabirpanthi but as a candidate of a party that does not believe in nationalist ideology.”

Manoj Saxena, an advocate in Shajapur, is certain of Tipanya’s victory. “There are three classes of people. The first is an intellectual who thinks for the Congress, the second is driven by propaganda on TV, and the third is the needy people. The first and third will vote for the Congress because it appeals to the first group and the promise of Rs 72,000 per year (NYAY) appeals to the third group,” he says, admitting that people voted differently in 2014 because of the Modi wave.

But Sunderlal Sharma of Vijayaganj Mandi village, about 35 km from Dewas, says the Congress stands no chance because the BJP’s writ runs in the area. He dismisses Tipanya as a “tantrik”.

With slim numbers on the ground, Shatru rides on starry sheen, Lalu legacy

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
PATNA, MAY 16

EARLIER THIS week, BJP chief Amit Shah and Patna Sahib MP Shatrughan Sinha — who switched to the Congress fold a month ago — were staying on the third floor of the Maurya hotel. The difference in the coterie of the two leaders, however, was stark.

While Shah was in Room 324, with his almost 50-strong cadre spilling into the hallway, the “Bihari Babu” star was in Room 301 (a room designed for him), with only a paper-thin cohort.

“After leaving the BJP, there is a shortage of men here,” said a professional helping coordinate Sinha’s campaign. “All the older Congress workers are not so active. And sir is also not so comfortable with them. *Shor machane log nahin hain* (There is nobody to make noise).”

In a tight battle between two Kayasthas for the Patna Sahib seat — two-term incumbent Sinha and BJP Rajya Sabha MP Ravi Shankar Prasad — the film star retained almost no party workers when he crossed over. He’s now left with his core team and his family. The contest will culminate on Sunday.

But the Hindi heartland heartthrob still amasses a rambunctious crowd. “*Bas dekhna nahin, chhu ke dekhna hain* (I don’t want to just see him. I want to touch him and see),” one rally-goer exclaims.

“He sprinkles in that *filmy shayari*. *Khamosh, wamosh* kar ke, everyone becomes charged,” Sinha’s coordinator said.



Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and Shatrughan Sinha at Patna, Thursday. Alok Jain

Sinha consistently campaigns on two issues: GST and demonetisation. When Congress President Rahul Gandhi, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)’s Tejashwi Yadav, and Sinha spoke at a road show in Patna on Thursday, their speeches were along the same lines.

“This Sandeep furniture store you see here,” Gandhi said pointing to a store on Nala Road, where Sinha stays as well. “Modi did not just attack farmers, but Sandeep furniture as well. I say to Sandeep furniture that we will get rid of Gabbar Singh Tax [GST] and bring in one correct tax.”

Campaign coordinators told *The Indian Express* that Sinha’s team was hoping Priyanka Gandhi would make a final show before Sunday but Rahul came instead. Still the PM-hopeful brought immense crowds.

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL HEMANT SOREN

In eight-minute poll pitch, former CM takes on ‘anti-Adivasi’ BJP in Jharkhand’s tribal belt

ABHISHEK ANGAD

RAJMAHAL, DUMKA (JHARKHAND), MAY 16

A CHOPPER ride between Barhet and Shikadipada in Jharkhand’s Santhal Pargana region takes 20 minutes. That’s all the time former chief minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha’s (JMM) executive president Hemant Soren has to wrap up lunch. On the menu is *sattu parantha*, bitter gourd and coriander chutney. Soon, the 43-year-old leader will address members of the indigenous Santhal tribe in Rajmahal, Dumka and Godda parliamentary constituencies, scheduled to vote on May 19.

Five thousand feet above sea level, as Soren has his home-cooked meal, his secretary Abhishek Prasad reminds him that he has roughly eight minutes at every venue. “If we won’t do it on time, we will have to cover the distance by road,” he says.

Soren’s Wednesday campaign schedule coincided with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s rally at Deogarh, due to which, claims his team, their flight was delayed by three hours. “We have limited time on the chop-

per,” says Prasad, who is also a JMM spokesperson.

In the 2014 general election, the JMM won two of the three seats in the region — Hemant’s father Shibu Soren and Vijay Hansdak of the JMM won in Dumka and Rajmahal respectively; BJP’s Nishikant Dubey won from Godda. In its campaign this time, the BJP has been highlighting the development work done by the party and its Chief Minister Raghubar Das in the Santhal Pargana belt.

To counter that, Soren has been talking about the BJP’s attempt to tweak the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (SPT), and the state government’s amendment of the Land Acquisition Act, terming it ‘anti-Adivasi’.

At the Taljhari Football Stadium in Sahebganj district, with the harsh May sun beating down, locals have been waiting for Soren, dancing to the tunes of traditional folk music. A few men are holding bows and arrows wrapped in JMM flags. On stage, a local JMM functionary appeals to the crowd to avoid drinking a day before the polling. Later, he goes on to sing a Santhali song to keep the



Soren interacts with locals in Sahebganj in Rajmahal constituency. Abhishek Angad

audience enthused.

Soon, Soren’s chopper lands. Dressed in a *blue kurta*, a *gamcha* hanging from his shoulder, he takes to the stage without wasting much time. “BJP government is working to finish Adivasis... They have used a Santhal as a pawn (referring to BJP’s Rajmahal candidate Hemlal Murmu),” he says, amid applause.

As he prepares to leave, a few men dash outside to get a glimpse of Soren’s chopper. Many say they have seen one for the first time.

Back on the chopper, the conversation drifts towards Soren’s tweets earlier in the day. He posted screen shots of CM Raghubar Das’s tweets attacking him, questioning the amount of time the BJP leader spent on the

social media platform instead of focusing on people’s issues. “There are a few people helping me out in the campaign,” he says, adding that he deliberates with his team to select issues.

In Barhet, he raises the loopholes in the Aadhaar-based Public Distribution System. “If someone is ill, how will he get his ration through Aadhaar-based authentication. Should he be carried on a cot? Should his thumb be cut off,” he says. Eight minutes over, he takes off again.

On the flight, Soren complains about MGNREGA wages in Jharkhand, Rs 171 for a day’s work, being much less than other states. While he doesn’t comment on the prospects of the mahagathbandhan in Jharkhand — the JMM has allied with the Congress, the RJD and the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha in the state — he says he is confident of his party winning all three seats in the Santhal Pargana region.

Later, as he winds up after making a total of seven stops in the day, he adds, “I feel happy that I belong to the tribal community. They are poor, but they never rob or steal. They just want to live with nature.”



Vishal Srivastav

‘When there was talk on SP-BSP alliance, I said even if I have to walk two steps behind (BSP), I will do it. This is a gathbandhan for the future’

The coming together of long-standing rivals SP and BSP in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh has given this parliamentary election a new dimension, a new frisson. Akhilesh Yadav, national president of the SP, who holds up one end of UP's Mahagathbandhan, talks about how it happened, what lies in store, in an interview to ASAD REHMAN and VANDITA MISHRA

It is being said that this national election will hinge on Uttar Pradesh. Do you think the result will be decided in your state?

If the BJP government was formed at the Centre in 2014, it was because of Uttar Pradesh. If the (BJP) win in UP had not been so big, then it might not have been a BJP government, but an NDA government. This time, if they are losing seats here, the question is, where will the numbers come from.

The people of UP are angry because this is the first prime minister who made promises and did the exact opposite of what he said. They said they will provide 2 crore jobs every year; they took away jobs with the note ban and GST. They said they will double (farmers') incomes, give cheaper fertiliser. They told the youth, you are not getting jobs but making *pakodas* is also employment. They said they will build smart cities, and right now in UP, the High Court has taken note of the deaths happening due to the *saand* (bull). In the last month, 11 people have died in Lucknow, the court has given a deadline to clear the city of animals. I built a world-class Expressway from Agra to Lucknow, there have been 160 accidents on it only due to animals.

Those who showed people dreams of smart cities, Digital India, they are not able to control the animals on the streets.

Your party and BSP came together ahead of this election, formed the Mahagathbandhan. The PM calls it Mahamilavat and BJP holds it up to say this election is about Modi vs Ail. Isn't your alliance, in fact, founded on a confession, that you cannot take on Modi singly?

I would put it another way. The BJP's strength and foundation is based on lies and hatred. But it has also been said by the media that the BJP is adept at social engineering. In UP, the BJP struck an understanding with the Apna Dal, with Om Prakash Rajbhar's party and many leaders of other parties were also taken in by the BJP. So, will you then say that the BJP was weak, had nothing of its own?

Our gathbandhan was formed because PM Modi came to UP and said he is (from) a backward (caste). People have understood that he is not. *Samajik nyay se bada parivartan ho jaye, uss disha mein hum dono, teeno, mil kar kaam kar rahe hain* (The two, three, of us are working to bring changes through social justice).

Mamata Banerjee has said the BJP's rise in West Bengal in a short span of time was made possible by the near collapse of the Congress and Left. To what do you

attribute the BJP's surge in UP, though it was from a different starting point?

The Bengal circumstances are not there in U P. In UP, from Day 1, the BJP started with a politics of hate, stoked caste and religious conflict. Can the country's Prime Minister speak like this? Could anyone imagine that this would also be talked about — where electricity has reached first, and where later? That there will be accusations that we gave electricity more on Ramzan than on Diwali? Today, the government has all the data, let them see if we provided electricity selectively. *Kya kabristan ki boundary pe politics hogi? Kya pradhan mantri kahenge ki thaane mein ek hi jaati ke log rehte hain* (Will we spar on the boundaries of burial grounds now? Can the PM say things like only one caste is represented in the police station)? *Arrey*, you tell me, in UP, if there is even one DM or SP today who is a Yadav.

These people made castes turn on each other and after they formed the government, they said that they would set up a commission to probe how many Yadavs are in government jobs. They found that there weren't too many, it turned out some other caste was over-represented. That report has still not been made public.

If you look at the 2014 election, we were fighting on the issue of development. We made the Expressway, the Metro, a cancer institute, medical colleges, increased the number of MBBS seats, completed large infrastructure projects. But the BJP was fighting the election on caste and religion. *Isliye humne kaha ki yeh gathbandhan zameen ka, gareeb logon ka gathbandhan hai jinke adhikaron ko chheena jaa raha hai* (So we said this is an alliance on the ground, of the poor, of those whose rights are being taken away).

Bus, humne BJP se seekh liya, BJP ka hee formula un pe laga diya (So we learnt from the BJP, applied the BJP formula back on the BJP).

It is not just your political opponent who says you presided over Yadav raj. Among the people, particularly among non-Yadav OBCs, there is a perception that jobs and development were monopolised by one caste group.

See, we don't have the kind of power the BJP has. The power to distract. They know which issue to use and when. This issue has

been created by them. This is what their functionaries said, from the Governor downwards. This is what they spread on social media. They would go to villages and say that all the jobs have been taken by Yadavs and Muslims.

But the people have come to know the truth. And the result of that came when we contested and won the (by)poll in Gorakhpur against those who were in government, who thought they couldn't lose. The truth came out in five years.

Do you feel this perception, that the SP favours the Yadavs, needs to be addressed?

This election is not about that. It has gone far ahead.

The SP-BSP partnership can be said to have been forged in adversity. People are asking what happens after? When the polls are over?

People have also told me that Ambedkarji and Lohiaji came close to working together, but time and circumstances did not give them a chance. Then, Netaji and Kanshi Ramji worked

together. The state's politics changed, but it was these same forces that broke up that alliance. This time, when there was talk on the alliance, I said even if I have to walk two steps behind (the BSP) I will do it. This is a gathbandhan for the future of this country.

What happens when state polls come?

The alliance will stay.

You and Mayawati will both be chief ministerial candidates?

That is not decided yet. If we thought so far ahead, this gathbandhan would not have been there. I don't think about what will happen tomorrow. The alliance is based on what is going to happen today. Our politics is not based on posts, today or tomorrow.

The criticism of the alliance is also this, that you are not thinking ahead, leaving too many things for later?

I have just reminded you of Lohia and Ambedkar. This is the alliance of the poor. And it was not just our leaders, our workers wanted to work together because of the injustices and false cases. I saw this in Gorakhpur. The BJP government had said they will do away with pending cases, that there will be new courts.

But, lakhs more (cases) were lodged, against Dalits, backwards and minorities, with serious charges like NSA.

Don't you think the contradictions and tensions on the ground between the two groups, the Yadavs and Jatavs, will return to haunt?

There are so many contradictions within the upper castes but nobody talks about those. Don't you know that in Khalilabad, a Brahmin MP beat up a Kshatriya MLA with his shoe? Now, if a Yadav had beaten up someone, how big would the news have been! There are some issues in society that are hundreds of years old. They will go slowly.

And who are the people who have been killed in encounters? There was a fake encounter in Noida, a Yadav was killed and the accused has still not been arrested. In Muzaffarnagar, a Muslim was killed in an encounter. A Rajbhar boy was killed in Azamgarh. This government has got the maximum number of notices (on encounters). Whenever a government comes which functions properly, these officers will go to jail.

Those being killed in encounters all belong to backward castes. *Thoko-neeti chal rahi hai* (it's a policy of hit jobs). Not just the *chowkidar*, but the *thokidar* also has to be removed.

On questions on the Mahagathbandhan's agenda, you hark back to Lohia and Ambedkar, or you say things will resolve themselves slowly. But your opponent has an organised machine in the present moment.

There is nothing special about the BJP. They have only cheated the country. When the BJP came to power, the country was under a debt of Rs 35 lakh crore. In the last five years, it has gone up to Rs 70 lakh crore. Where did this Rs 35 lakh crore go? Who got it? The farmers did not get it, nor the poor, or the youth. On the

Our gathbandhan was formed because PM Modi came to UP and said that he is (from) a backward (caste). People have understood that he is not. Samajik nyay se bada parivartan ho jaye, uss disha mein hum dono, teeno, mil kar kaam kar rahe hain"

Even those who travelled on the Expressway did not vote for us. I ask you: Was there a special Yadav lane on the Expressway? People did not vote for me despite the Expressway because they were waiting for the bullet train perhaps. Now that it has not come, they have come back"

on paper, he has been saying he is from the 'poor' caste. Now, which new caste is this? It is not part of the Mandal Commission report. He can't fool the people.

Now let's compare the work. He was CM in Gujarat for 15 years, he must have done something... How many Expressways did he build? How many metro trains? The metro in which he travelled with the South Korean president from Delhi to Noida was given by the Samajwadi government. The solar plant he inaugurated in Mirzapur, that was also given by us. Where he sat on a swing with the Chinese president, you can see that riverfront, and compare it with the one built by the Samajwadis.

But the media does not give us credit. During the Air Force drill, when the Mirage, Hercules, and Sukhoi aircraft land on the Expressway, all prominent channels cover it, but not one names the SP or its government. What can be a bigger misfortune for us?

Do you think the election has changed after Pulwama and Balakot?

The BJP has tried hard, but the truth is out ever since they got scared of a *jawan* (Tej Bahadur Yadav, former BSF jawan, was given the SP ticket from Varanasi, but his nomination was rejected by the EC on technical grounds). What was his fault? That he spoke up on the poor quality of food.

I have friends who are officers in the Army, my wife is from an Army background, my father was defence minister. We can't be nationalists if we ask questions? Is asking for the truth wrong in a democracy?

Shouldn't the country know, shouldn't the government tell, how much RDX there was at Pulwama, and how it got here? What was the route? Forget what happened to Pakistan. Just tell us what was the route the RDX took.

In your rallies, you do not mention the lynchings that have taken place in the name of the cow — Mohammad Akhlaq's killing by a mob in Dadri had drawn the nation's attention in 2015.

In my speech in Sonbhadra, I said, look what the *thoko neeti* has done. That is why I say we should remove the *thokidar* too.

When you talk about the thoko neeti or thokidar, it is encounters you talk about, not lynchings.

When I say *nafrat* (hate), people know what I mean. *Samajhdaar ko ishara kaafi hai* (the wise need only a signal).

Let's talk about the Congress. Why are they are not part of your alliance?

Congress gathbandhan mein do seat ke *saath hai* (it has two seats in the gathbandhan).

You have given them those two seats. They are not part of the gathbandhan.

The Congress and BJP are the same. All the issues in the country — corruption, unemployment, poverty — what is the reason? If they had not followed wrong policies, our country would have been *khushhaal* (prosperous).

Has Priyanka Gandhi's entry made a difference?

They want to re-make their party, not stop the BJP. Congress leadership, their style of working, their borrowed candidates — they don't want to stop the BJP.

You tried to bring in changes within your party. You said you wouldn't give tickets to criminals. Now in Ghazipur, Afzal Ansari is the alliance candidate from the BSP. You had taken a stand against his brother Mukhtar Ansari.

You should see a copy of the FIR against the UP chief minister (Yogi Adityanath). There are cases against him.

But were you not supposed to be the political alternative?

You should also see the FIR against the Deputy CM (Keshav Prasad Maurya).

Has the SP made mistakes the BJP is taking advantage of?

The SP has not made mistakes. We have been fighting the BJP from day one. *BJP se humne jaatiyon ki ginti seekh lee. Woh jaatiyan ginte thay. Kyunki desh ki sabse zyada jaati-waadi party toh BJP hai. Yeh humne UP mein dekha hai* (We have learnt to do caste headcounts from the BJP. It is the BJP that is the most casteist party, we have seen that in UP).

You have been coy on the question of the gathbandhan's PM candidate. Will it be Mayawati? You have been working with her, what have you discovered about her that you didn't know?

The gathbandhan will make that decision on May 23. But I will say this. Mayawati ji has been UP CM several times. She has the experience. She has taken important decisions. We see discipline in her programmes.

Haalanki itni abhi charcha nahii hui unse (there hasn't been that much conversation between us) but I can say for sure that she wants to work — for the poor and the Dalit, for the backward, while taking along the forward castes. I feel she has taken politics in a new direction. And the gathbandhan has shown a wider path.

8 DECISION 2019



How Eastern UP villagers interpret Modi's foreign policy

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

CHANDAULI, BALLIA, GHOSI (UP), MAY 16

IT'S 8 AM, and Ramesh Chauhan is winding down at a paan shop outside the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Railway Station, once famous as Mughalsara, after a disappointing night on the platform as a porter. "This is not a job worth doing anymore. I went to the station at 8 pm and got my first load at 4 am. I am barely making ends meet. Stations have got elevators, suitcases have got wheels, who needs a porter anymore?" he asks.

The station falls in Chandauli constituency, adjacent to Varanasi from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is contesting the Lok Sabha polls. With both seats going to polls on May 19, Chauhan, despite his daily discontent, is clear about his vote. "Modi, who else? People will vote for the man who has got the country from seventh to fourth in the world," he says.

The 55-year-old is joined by Radheshyam Chauhan, a daily wage labourer who is struggling for work. "We have to make Modi win. Today, Italy, France, China and Israel have all been made to bow before India. Thankfully, there is Modi, otherwise they browbeat us."

Both of them don't have any details to back their claims, they don't even know what rankings they are based on. But then, the perception that India's international standing has vastly improved over the last five years is good enough to forget their personal woes and vote for Modi.

Rarely has a leader been able to package foreign policy for domestic electoral politics in the manner and scale that Modi has done. And constituencies across eastern UP echo this refrain that has found resonance across the country. With his frequent articulation of foreign engagements, big-ticket events with the Indian diaspora and emphasis on publicity, Modi seems to have convinced the electorate that India's world standing has soared under his watch.

"More than in India, people from abroad want to see him as Prime Minister," says a voter in Azamgarh.

The strikes against Pakistan appear to have further cemented this image. "Would anyone have been able to bring back Abhinandan Varthaman (the IAF officer who was captured by Pakistan during the face-off



At the gathbandhan rally in Varanasi on Thursday. Anand Singh

following the Balakot air strike)? Kulbhushan Jadhav (the former Naval officer) was incarcerated in Pakistan during the Congress time. The Congress could not bring him back," says Jagdeesh Nishad, who sells sugarcane juice at the Ramgarh Lakefront in Gorakhpur.

Similar voices are heard in Ballia. Balmiki Ojha, a Brahmin from Phephana, says there is no point voting for the SP-BSP Gathbandhan since "they will go in different directions after coming to power".

"In the state, one can think about them but at the Centre, we need someone who can go to other countries and talk about India. These guys will have to read out of a paper," he says.

In Lalganj constituency's Babura, the road leading to the village has not been repaired for months. Sudhu Rajbhar, a farmer, says he will still vote for Modi. "I have not seen a leader like Modiji. He has done so much work." Asked to explain, he says, "He has got so many people stuck abroad back home. People keep saying he has spent public money to roam abroad but he has achieved something. Look at how the world is looking at India."

In the constituency's Retawa village, Ramesh Chouhan has a different take on India's improved ranking. "India is more respected in the world now. From 13th, it has come to fourth spot. Give Modi five more years and we will climb to number one," he says.

In Salempur's Bhimpur Village, Ratnes Gupta, 25, has a better ranking for India — third spot. "India had no place on the international table. Now it is at the third spot. Is this any less that you must ask about what development work has happened here? Modi is working for the country," he says.

At Mau, in Ghosi constituency, a group of labourers wait for work at the Bhatti Chauraha. Jayraj Kumar, a Dalit contractor, says he is voting for Modi amid opposition from others in his community. "Don't listen to them. I am educated and I can see how Modi has improved India's standing in the world," he says.

The contractor gets support from Suresh Kumar, a youngster who captures this phenomenon in one sentence: "You tell me, when PMs made foreign visits earlier, did anyone even come to know about them?"

Sonia reaches out to allies, other Oppn parties for meet on May 23

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

WHILE THE results of the Lok Sabha elections may be a week away and one phase of polling for the Lok Sabha elections is still left, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi is learnt to have reached out to Congress's allies and other opposition parties and non-NDA parties, setting in motion an exercise aimed at shoring up support in the event of a splintered verdict.

Sources in the Congress confirmed that she has written to UPA constituents, inviting them for a meeting on May 23, the day counting of votes will take place. Sources said her emissaries are also reaching out to non-NDA parties like the BJD, YSRCP and TRS.

The idea behind convening a meeting of UPA parties on May 23, sources said, is to



Sonia Gandhi is learnt to have entrusted the task of reaching out to parties like the BJD and YSRCP to a set of senior leaders.

waste no time in trying to drum up the numbers and stake claim for government formation in the event of the ruling NDA falling well short of the magic figure of 272.

Gandhi so far has kept herself away from the hustle and bustle of campaigning leaving the responsibility of leading the Congress campaign to her son and party chief Rahul Gandhi and daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. As the elections reach the last mile, her

moves indicate that the Congress feels the ruling BJP and the NDA may not get the required numbers to form government.

Gandhi is learnt to have already entrusted the task of reaching out to parties like the BJD and YSRCP to a set of senior leaders, prominent among them being Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath.

Some of the opposition parties had earlier planned to meet in Delhi on May 21, two days before counting, but a consensus could not be arrived at as some parties were of the view that a meeting before the full picture becomes clear is meaningless exercise.

The BJP, meanwhile, poked fun at the Congress. "The decision that Congress friendly opposition parties will have to make is whether they want to mourn their defeat in isolation or participate in a collective mourning experience," said BJP spokesperson G.V. Narasimha Rao.

Rahul kept mum when Aiyar abused PM; BJP will form the next govt: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MAHARAJGANJ, BALLIA, MAY 16

BJP PRESIDENT Amit Shah on Thursday accused Congress president Rahul Gandhi of remaining silent after his party leader Mani Shankar Aiyar hurled abuses at Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a rally in Maharajganj, he termed Aiyar "guru ghantal" (shrewd). "Mani Shankar Aiyar used abusive words against PM Modi but Rahul baba remained silent," Shah said.

Aiyar had stirred a controversy recently through an article in a newspaper, reminding readers of his "neech aadmi" comment made against Modi in 2017. He had been suspended from the party for his statement.

"Can anyone tolerate abusive words against the prime minister," Shah asked voters at the rally.

Referring to the Balakot airstrike, the BJP president claimed that while there was excitement in the country and people were distributing sweets, there was "mourning" at



Shah with CM Yogi Adityanath and BJP candidate Ravi Kishan at a rally in Gorakhpur on Thursday. Vishal Srivastav

the offices of Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

"The glow on their faces had vanished as if their own had died," he alleged.

Referring to Zakir Naik, Shah said the controversial Islamic preacher believed that if the Congress or the Mayawati-Akhilesh Yadav alliance came to power he would not

be caught. Naik, now abroad, has been accused of delivering inflammatory speeches besides money laundering.

"Due to his influence, hundreds of people were killed in terror attacks in Sri Lanka. This person is promoting terrorism and inciting people. When someone asked him when would you go to India, he replied, when the Congress comes to power," Shah claimed.

"I want to tell him that the BJP is going to form the next government and if you dare to enter the country, you would be brought to book," Shah said.

Shah also claimed that during the 55 years when the Gandhi family called the shots, no initiative was introduced for free medical treatment.

"I have visited many states. Wherever I went, I only heard Modi-Modi. This is not an election slogan. It is coming from the hearts of the people," he said.

The voting in Maharajganj will take place on May 19. The Congress has fielded former journalist Supriya Shrinete against the BJP's Pankaj Choudhary.

INDIAN NAVY

A N O C E A N O F O P P O R T U N I T I E S

Indian Navy invites online applications from unmarried Men and Women candidates for Permanent Commission (PC) and Short Service Commission (SSC) in under mention Branches/Entries in the Indian Navy through Indian Navy Entrance Test (INET) for course commencing June 2020 at the Indian Naval Academy Ezhimala, Kerala.



ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

Sr. No	Branch/ Cadre	Eligible streams of Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Technology and Other Qualifications	Vacancy	Gender	Born Between (Both Dates Inclusive)
Executive Branch					
(a)	SSC Naval Armament Inspection Cadre (NAIC)	BE/B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks. (Candidate must have 60% aggregate marks in class X and XII and minimum 60% marks in English in class X or class XII). (i) Mechanical (ii) Electrical/Electrical & Electronics/Electronics/Micro Electronics/Instrumentation/Electronics & Communication/Electronics & Tele Communication/Instrumentation & Control/Control Engineering (iii) Production/Industrial Production/ Industrial Engineering (iv) Applied Electronics & Instrumentation/ Electronics & Instrumentation (v) Information Technology/Computer Science/Computer Engineering/Computer Application (vi) Metallurgy/Metallurgical/Chemical/Material Science (vii) Aero Space/Aeronautical Engineering (viii) Post Graduate degree in Electronics / Physics	08	Men & Women	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jan 2001
(b)	SSC ATC	BE/B.Tech in any discipline from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks. (Candidate must have 60% aggregate marks in class X and XII and minimum 60% marks in English in class X or class XII).	04	Men & Women	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jul 1999
(c)	SSC Observer	- do -	06	Men & Women	02 Jul 1996 & 01 Jul 2001
(d)	SSC Pilot (MR)	- do -	03	Men & Women	- do -
(e)	SSC Pilot (Other than MR)	- do -	05	Men	- do -
(f)	SSC Logistics	(i) BE/B.Tech in any discipline with First Class from AICTE recognized institute / university or (ii) MBA with First Class or (iii) B.Sc / B.Com / B.Sc.(IT) with First class with a PG Diploma in Finance / Logistics / Supply Chain Management / Material Management or (iv) MCA / M.Sc (IT) with First Class	14	Men & Women	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jan 2001
(g)	SSC X (IT)	(i) BE/B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks in Computer Science / Computer Engg/IT (ii) B.Sc (IT) with First Class (iii) M.Sc (Computer / IT) with First Class (iv) M.Tech (Computer Science) with First Class (v) MCA with First Class	15	Men	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jan 2001
Technical Branch					
(h)	SSC Engineering Branch (General Service) (GS)	BE/B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks in streams (i) Mechanical (ii) Marine (iii) Instrumentation (iv) Production (v) Aeronautical (vi) Industrial Engineering & Management (vii) Control Engg (viii) Aero Space (ix) Automobiles (x) Metallurgy (xi) Mechatronics (xii) Instrumentation & Control	24	Men	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jan 2001
(i)	SSC Electrical Branch (General Service) (GS)	BE/B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks in streams (i) Electrical (ii) Electronics (iii) Tele Communication (iv) Electronics & Communication (v) Power Engineering (vi) Power Electronics (vii) Electronics & Instrumentation (viii) Instrumentation & Control (ix) Instrumentation	24	Men	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jan 2001
Education Branch					
(k)	PC Education	(i) First Class in M.Sc. (Maths/Operational Research) with Physics in B.Sc.	05	Men	02 Jul 1995 & 01 Jul 1999
		(ii) First Class in M.Sc. (Physics/Nuclear Physics) with Maths in B.Sc.	03	Men	
		(iii) First Class in M.Sc. (Meteorology/Oceanology/ Atmospheric Science)	02	Men	
		(iv) BE/B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks (Computer Science/Information Technology/Computer Technology/Information Systems/Computer Engineering)	02	Men	
		(v) BE / B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks (Electronics & Communication/ Electrical & Electronics/ Electronics & Instrumentation/ Electronics & Telecommunications/ Electrical)	03	Men	
		(vi) BE / B.Tech from AICTE recognized institute / university with minimum 60% marks in Mechanical Engineering	03	Men	
		Note : Candidates applying for the Education entry must have scored minimum of 60% marks in class X and class XII and minimum 60% marks in English in class X or class XII.			

Note
(i) These vacancies are tentative and may be changed depending on availability of training slots.
(ii) Commercial Pilot License (CPL) Holders Candidates having valid and current CPL issued by DGCA (India) and born between 02 Jul 1995 and 01 Jul 2001 (both dates inclusive) can apply for Pilot entry as per eligibility criteria stated at Para 2(d) & 2(e).

DAVP-10701/11/0005/1920

ONLINE REGISTRATION IS OPEN FROM 18 MAY 2019 TO 29 MAY 2019



Note: 1. Identity proof is mandatory for online registration. For details visit www.joinindiannavy.gov.in & Employment News dated 18 May 2019.
2. Please read the instruction given in the website carefully before submitting your "e-Application" from. Candidates can also call on Toll-Free number 1800-419-2929 and press Option 7 to speak to a customer care representative from Monday – Sunday between 0800-2000 hrs.

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