

DAY OF RALLIES, ROAD SHOWS

# BJP and AAP bring out the big guns

## Issued notice by EC, CM repeats: Take money from BJP, Cong, vote for AAP

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

ACCEPT MONEY offered by other parties but vote for AAP, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told voters Wednesday, launching a series of road shows ahead of the May 12 polls. He added that “no one will know who you voted for”.

Kejriwal made the remarks hours after the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer’s office issued a notice over allegations that AAP was distributing pamphlets in slum areas, asking people to take money from the BJP and the Congress but vote for the party.

Kejriwal was supposed to respond to the notice by 5 pm. However, around 8 pm, addressing a gathering at Wazirpur, he said: “Election se pehle doosri party paise baatne aenge. Tab kya karoge? Paise sab se le lena par vote jhadoo ko de dena.”

After a pause, the AAP chief added: “Election mein vote kisko diya hai kisko pata nahi chalega, toh vote jhadoo ko dena.” The broom is the AAP’s election symbol.

The EC has censured Kejriwal twice for issuing such remarks before — once in 2015 during the campaign for the Delhi Assembly polls and also during the Assembly polls in Goa. In January 2017, it warned that action would be taken against him if he repeats such remarks in the future.



Kejriwal at a road show in Lal Bagh colony, Wednesday. Amit Mehra

## Court asks Atishi on complaint against Gambhir: How is it going to affect you?

**PRITAM PAL SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

A DELHI court Wednesday refused to restrain BJP candidate for East Delhi, Gautam Gambhir, from contesting Lok Sabha polls, as was being sought by AAP candidate Atishi. The AAP leader alleged that Gambhir committed a criminal offence by concealing that he has two voter ID cards in two separate places.

Atishi (37), through her counsel Karuna Nundy, contended before the court that Gambhir is “not eligible to vote and is not even eligible to be the candidate for MP”. “Even if he wins, people of East Delhi should not be saddled with an MP who has no chance of survival in the near future. Voters should not be made to suffer,” she argued.

Metropolitan Magistrate Viplab Dabas, however, said that “these are vague allegations and we need authentic documents to take a prima facie view”.

The court further questioned the AAP



Gambhir is the BJP’s East Delhi pick

candidate and asked her counsel to prove her locus to file the complaint against Gambhir.

It also sought to know how she was affected by the same.

The court granted the AAP leader’s counsel time till May 6 to file necessary documents to support the charges. It, however, observed that “if somebody has made wrong declaration, how it is it going to affect you (Atishi). It is for the Commission to take action”.

The court also refused to list the case Thursday on the request of the AAP leader’s

counsel, pointing out that voting is only on May 12. The complaint filed on Atishi’s behalf, through advocate Mohammed Irshad, said, “The complaint is directed against the accused for deliberately and illegally enrolling as a voter in at least two separate constituencies, as well as concealing the fact and deliberately providing false information/statements/declaration in his nomination papers and accompanying affidavit.”

### Gambhir responds

At his first large-scale public meeting, on stage with national BJP leader Rajnath Singh, Gambhir spoke briefly and focussed on criticism against his statement that he does not believe in “debates and dharnas”.

“I was not even scared of Pakistan, how can I fear this debate?... So from this stage, I challenge the head of the Aam Aadmi Party to just give me half the time that they’ve had in Delhi — half of 4.5 years — and then they can choose the time and venue,” he said, stating that he has only been in politics for 4.5 days, while they have been governing Delhi for 4.5 years.



Rajnath Singh, Gautam Gambhir at a rally in North East Delhi’s Shastri Park, Wednesday. Gajendra Yadav

Singh also promised tightening of sedition laws.

Earlier, BJP’s North East Delhi candidate Manoj Tiwari said: “Those who sit in PoK and are running terrorism factories, among them there is a name called Masood Azhar. Our PM has continuously tried that he be declared an international terrorist. Today, you will be happy to hear that he has been declared an international terrorist, and I am happy to tell you that it’s because of the efforts by the PM.”

## BJP surveys Delhi picks for last-minute campaign push

**ABHINAV RAJPUT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

THE BJP is conducting a fresh survey of all its seven candidates in the capital to better understand where they stand in terms of popularity, perception in the media, their worker base, caste equations and money so that a last-minute push can be given if they are found lacking in any department.

A senior BJP leader said the survey is nearly complete and party strategists are now coming up with a plan. “The idea is that if a particular community is unhappy with any candidate in their area, senior leaders of that community will be asked to hold gatherings there. If a party leader does not have enough workers, we will ask cadre from other states to lend a hand to his or her campaign.”

Confirming the development, BJP vice-president Shyam Jaju said, “The survey is basically being done to know if the campaign has taken off or not, what’s lacking and what can be done to make it better.” Sources said decisions on whether the party should invest



Many residents have dug underground water tanks (left) inside their houses to store water. Prem Nath Pandey

ter is not fit to drink but can be used for washing clothes, utensils and for other household chores. You will find this tank in almost every house,” said Rajkumar Sehrawat, who has



BJP president Amit Shah addresses a rally in Vasant Kunj, Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

## At Rajnath rally, national security takes centrestage

**SUKRITA BARUAH**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS and national security were the points of focus at a rally addressed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh in North East Delhi’s Shastri Park Wednesday evening. Singh began his address by referring to the death of 15 security personnel in an attack by Naxals in Maharashtra earlier in the day.

“Before 2014, the killings of security forces were so high... after 2014, because of efforts by security forces and the Centre, the number of districts affected by Naxals have been brought down to 82. Even within those, there are only eight or nine in which they are very active. But it is unfortunate that there are some who want to do politics on issues of national security,” he said.

He also touched on the Balakot airstrike, saying: “The Opposition asks us how many terrorists did the Air Force kill... If the Air Force would have killed just two or four, they would have said that... But they killed so many that how can the jawans of the security force say we have killed a certain number of people?... In the history of the world, such a large operation against terrorists has not happened... Bahadurs don’t count bodies, vultures count bodies.”

## Rahul, Kejriwal cried over Balakot airstrike, says Shah

**ABHINAV RAJPUT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

BJP PRESIDENT Amit Shah Wednesday said the people of Delhi should vote for the party because of the work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in bolstering national security, and added that they must reject Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for his “indecisiveness”.

“The Modi government did a lot of work like ensuring gas (connections), electricity, clean water, toilets... But being party president, I’m saying don’t vote for our candidates Meenakshi Lekhi and Ramesh Bidhuri for this. Modi ji has spent Rs 1 lakh crore for Delhi but don’t vote for that too... But definitely vote for the work done by Modi in ensuring national security,” he said.

Shah was addressing a rally at Vasant Kunj in support of BJP candidate from South Delhi Ramesh Bidhuri and candidate from New Delhi Meenakshi Lekhi.

He said Congress president Rahul Gandhi and AAP chief Kejriwal were not on the same page on most issues, but they agree on one thing — that “anti-India slogans raised in JNU qualify as right to speech”.

“In JNU, some children raised anti-India slogans like ‘Bharat tere tukde hongey, Inshah

Allah, Inshah Allah’, and Kejriwal stood with them. I want to ask the people of Delhi, that whether people who raise such slogans should be sent to jail or not,” Shah said.

“Rahul baba has gone two steps ahead; we say scrap Article 370, they say remove sedition laws. Why it should be removed? If tomorrow someone spies for Pakistan, we will use this law to send them to jail,” he said.

On Kejriwal, he said: “I have never seen a man who has changed his stance so many times.” He then pointed to his decision to join politics, and his attempts to ally with the Congress.

“He used to call Sheila Dikshit corrupt, then he formed a government with her for 49 days. Now, he was desperate to form an alliance, which was rejected by her,” he said.

Referring to the Balakot airstrike, he said that when PM Modi ordered the Air Force to target terrorists, the country was happy, people were distributing sweets, but there was silence at two places.

“One at Rahul baba’s office and the other at the Delhi CM’s office. They were crying. I didn’t understand why they were crying when Narendra Modi killed terrorists in Pakistan. Were they your cousins?” Shah said.

### MEANWHILE

### BJP trying to buy 7 MLAs, alleges AAP

New Delhi: The BJP is trying to “buy” seven of AAP’s MLAs ahead of polling in the capital, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged Wednesday. AAP, which has 66 out of 70 MLAs in Delhi, has made similar allegations in the past as well. “The seven refused the offers and informed us. Others, we have learnt, have been contacted as well,” Sisodia claimed. However, Delhi BJP media coordinator Ashok Goel denied the allegations.

### Sheila Dikshit is now on Instagram

New Delhi: Former Delhi CM and Congress candidate from North East Delhi Sheila Dikshit has joined another social media platform, Instagram, to connect with voters. On Wednesday, she put up a video of herself, asking her followers to “connect”.



**ASTHA SAXENA**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

IT’S 3 PM on Tuesday and several residents of Sangam Vihar have gathered near a broken water pipeline with empty buckets. While a few try to repair it, others refill their buckets as dirty water flows out in force.

“Paani ke bina kya zindagi hai, hum sab paani ko lekar bohot pareshaan rehte hain. Hamari samasya ka koi samadhan nahi,” said Jagannath (75), who runs a stationery shop.

Located in South Delhi, Sangam Vihar is the biggest unauthorised colony in the capital. The constituency also has the most number of unauthorised colonies. With many of them yet to get proper pipelines, water will play an important role in the upcoming Lok Sabha

polls as Delhi votes on May 12. The area will witness a triangular fight between BJP’s Ramesh Bidhuri, Congress’s Vijender Singh and AAP’s Raghav Chadha.

“At times, there is no water supply for almost 10 days and we are left dependent on private water tankers and packaged water bottles. Candidates and leaders only visit our area during elections and give assurances. But the problem still persists,” said Saroj, a resident of C-block, standing outside her house to collect water from the leaking pipe.

As several localities in South Delhi face a water crisis, many residents have dug four-foot-deep underground water tanks inside their houses to store water. Every second house in Sangam Vihar has an underground water tank, residents claim.

“This is the only option we have. The wa-

been storing water in this manner since 2005. Sehrawat has built a six-feet-deep underground tank under his basement, which he cleans and refills every week.

Parmeshwar Yadav, pradhan of C-block, said the block has around 2,200 houses and only 400 of them have access to uninterrupted water supply. There are 36 such blocks in the locality.

In 2018, the Delhi Jal Board had approved a proposal to lay down pipelines in a few pockets of Sangam Vihar. “Almost 70% residents are getting adequate water supply in that area. Earlier, the land was under the forest department and work was slow. But we have managed to bring water supply to most houses now,” DJB vice-chairperson Dinesh Mohaniya told *The Indian Express*.

For boosting water management, the DJB

also approved construction of a second 140 million gallons per day water treatment plant (WTP) at Sonia Vihar, which already has one WTP. “Blocks that have proximity to the plant get uninterrupted supply. The other blocks are still dry,” said Maya, a resident of J-block.

Other important issues are unpaved roads and lack of a medical facility. The Sangam Vihar constituency, which came into existence in 2008, still does not have a government hospital. The nearest one is Batra hospital, a private facility, 3 km away.

“A plan to set up a 200-bed hospital in our area was passed by the Sheila Dikshit-led Congress government in 2009. But not even a single stone has been laid yet on the land. We have been writing to (Chief Minister) Arvind Kejriwal ji but there has been no response,” said Yadav.



# 6 DECISION 2019



# Two seats and a high-stakes battle for Hoodas

**COOMI KAPOOR & VARINDER BHATIA**  
ROHTAK, MAY 1

AMONG THE most keenly watched electoral battles in Haryana's parliamentary polls are the ones in Rohtak and Sonipat, two seats with high stakes for the Hoodas.

Rohtak is the citadel of the Hooda family. Former chief minister Bhupinder Hooda's son, Deepender, has represented the constituency thrice and is the sitting MP. The senior Hooda has been MP from Rohtak four times and also won from the Assembly constituency Garhi Sampla Kiloi with thumping margins several times.

In 2014, Deepender, 41, was the only Congress candidate from the state to resist the Modi wave. Unsurprisingly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah and Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar have made the defeat of the father and son duo, from Sonipat and Rohtak respectively, a prestige issue. If the former chief minister wins Sonipat, Deepender points out that "the door will be open for the Congress to be back five months later, when the assembly elections come around". At a rally on Monday, Khattar advised Hooda to stop "day dreaming" of his return as CM.

For Khattar, despite his present comfortable position, the Hoodas remain a thorn in his side. The CM, along with several members of his Cabinet, accompanied the procession when the BJP candidates, Arvind Sharma for Rohtak and Ramesh Chander Kaushik for Sonipat, filed their nominations. Shah is expected to begin his rallies in the state from Sonipat on May 5 and Modi will



Sitting MP Deepender Hooda (left) has represented Rohtak thrice while his father Bhupinder Singh Hooda has been MP from the seat four times, *Express*



## EXPLAINED

### Why seats are key

ROHTAK WAS the only seat the Congress won in 2014. For sitting MP Deepender Hooda and his father Bhupinder, the former CM and candidate from Sonipat, win in these two seats will mean the Congress has a fighting chance ahead of the October Assembly polls. But a defeat here will mean that Congress's rout is complete in a state where it once held sway.

be in the region on May 9 and 10.

The Hoodas' modest but sprawling house in Rohtak town gives the impression of the home of a winner. In the early morning, Jat villagers from all over the constituency are swarming around — in the courtyard, bedrooms and sitting rooms — waiting to get an audience. Every day, the MP's secretary makes a list of "joinings" — members of other parties defecting to the Congress, who pose with the candidate for photos as he puts a Congress scarf around their necks.

"Come with me to the villages, people see me as their younger brother and helper," says Deepender, the fourth generation of a distin-

guished Congress family whose grandfather Ranbir Singh Hooda was a member of the Constituent Assembly.

Rohtak town, with swanky glass-fronted multi-storey buildings that house educational institutions and medical centres, bears testimony to Hooda senior's impressive contribution when he was chief minister of the state from 2005 to 2014. The former chief minister claims that when he took over in 2005, Haryana's budget was half of Punjab's and that when he left in 2014, it was double Punjab's, with the state per capita among the highest in the country. He rattles off the names of more than a dozen universities, IITs, IIMs, fash-

<b>ROHTAK 2014 LS POLLS</b>	
Cong's D Hooda	46.86% votes
BJP	30.55% votes
<b>SONIPAT 2014 LS POLLS</b>	
BJP's R C Kaushik	35.19% votes
Cong	27.35% votes
<b>Haryana's 10 seats vote on May 12</b>	

ion institutes and medical colleges that he started. He dismisses Gurugram MP Rao

Inderjit Singh's charge that of 5,135 schemes announced during Hooda's term, 2,045 were only for Rohtak, Jhajjar and Sonipat. Hooda also refutes allegations of misuse of land by his administration and favours to Robert Vadra to keep his party high command happy.

Hooda was reportedly not keen to contest from Sonipat, adjoining both Rohtak and Delhi, and would have preferred to wait for the Assembly polls in October. But Rahul Gandhi is said to have insisted that all the state's squabbling Congress stalwarts, most of whom do not get along with Hooda, must contest this time.

For the Congress, Sonipat, though it has an even higher percentage of Jats, may not

be quite as safe as Rohtak. For one, there is a certain polarisation between Jats and almost all others. Besides, Digvijay Chautala, great grandson of Devi Lal and a member of the Janayak Janta Party (JJP), might cut into Hooda's Jat votes. Hooda, however, confidently says he is willing to resign if Digvijay does not lose his deposit. Five of the nine Assembly seats are with the Congress.

With Khattar accuses Hooda of being an outsider, Hooda responds by saying that he is the "son-in-law" of Sonipat (his wife is from the constituency) and that the bachelor Khattar cannot appreciate such important social ties in Hindu society.

## SEAT WATCH JAIPUR

# 48 years after a 'maharani', Jaipur's first woman candidate hopes to make a mark in BJP bastion

**DEEP MUKHERJEE**  
JAIPUR, MAY 1

IN NOVEMBER last year, miffed at not getting a ticket for the 2018 Rajasthan Assembly elections, former mayor of Jaipur and Rajasthan Congress general secretary Jyoti Khandelwal relinquished all party positions except her primary membership of the Congress.

In a letter to Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Khandelwal had pointed out that she had fulfilled all criteria for getting a ticket but was ignored despite the high command's claims of encouraging women candidates.

Five months later, the tables have turned. Khandelwal is the Congress's candidate for the Jaipur Lok Sabha seat. Her candidature is the first instance in 48 years when a national party has fielded a woman candidate from the seat, which has around 20 lakh voters.

"Yeh bahut badi baat hai ki adthalis saal ke baad kisi mahila ko mauka mila. Lekin mujhe ye bhi lagta hai ki koi meri akele ki jeet nahi hogi. Yeh bahut sari mahilayon, betiyon ko aage badhne ke liye rasta kholne wali jeet hogi (It's a very big thing that after 48 years a woman has got the chance. But I think that this will not only be my victory. This will open the channels of growth for women and daughters)," says Khandelwal while campaigning in Jobner Bagh in Jaipur.

Pitted against incumbent BJP MP Ramcharan Bohra, if Khandelwal wins, she will be the first woman after late Gayatri Devi to win the seat. In 2014, Bohra had defeated Congress's Mahesh Joshi by over 5 lakh votes.

Devi, the wife of Jaipur royal Late Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II, represented Jaipur between 1962 and 1977, and was elected to parliament thrice from the seat. Her win in 1962 entered the Guinness World Records for the biggest election victory after she won 1,92,909 of 2,46, 516 votes cast. In 1971, Devi was the last woman to win the seat. Since then, no national party has fielded a woman candidate from Jaipur.

Almost half a century after Devi's win, the 44-year-old Khandelwal faces the uphill task of winning a seat which is known as a BJP bastion and has been won by the Congress only



In her campaign speeches, Khandelwal appeals for votes as 'Jaipur ki beti, Jaipur ki bahu'. *Express*

once in the last thirty years, when Mahesh Joshi emerged victorious in 2009.

In her campaign speeches, Khandelwal, who served as mayor between 2009 and 2014, appeals for votes as 'Jaipur ki beti, Jaipur ki bahu' to counter sitting MP Bohra, the BJP's rhetoric of nationalism and the charisma of PM Modi.

"It was my fortune to work for you as mayor. I have always worked as a Jaipur ki beti, Jaipur ki bahu. The city has given me love and respect and I have fought for you. Whenever someone needed me in their grief or happiness, I have been there.

Therefore, I am asking from you what is my hak (right) — that is your vote. Your vote and support will help me and women to get ahead," says Khandelwal in a public interaction.

The Jaipur Lok Sabha constituency, which has eight Assembly segments (Hawa Mahal, Vidhyadhar Nagar, Civil Lines, Kishanpole, Adarsh Nagar, Malviya Nagar, Sanganer and Bagru), has become a prestige issue for the Congress as the party won five of the seats in 2018 Assembly elections.

By fielding Khandelwal, a member of the Mahajan caste, a thriving business community known to traditionally support the BJP, the Congress hopes to make a dent in the saffron party's core vote bank.

"If we manage to take away even 50,000 votes of the business class who have traditionally voted for the BJP till now in every Assembly segment, we can hope to gain significantly," says a senior Congress leader who did not wish to be named.

On the other hand, Bohra, a Brahmin, is part of the community which has given the maximum number of MPs to Jaipur. The late Girdhari Lal Bhargava, another Brahmin BJP leader who was elected Jaipur MP six times between 1989 and 2009, remained undefeated until his death. Brahmins, Vaishyas and Muslims are the three biggest social groups in the constituency.

Bohra starts his campaign speeches by urging people to chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' before talking about the importance of the Lok Sabha polls.

"We have seen and fought many elections

but this one is different. This election is being fought on the basis of patriotism by one side, and on the other side are the Opposition parties who want to divide the nation," says Bohra at a rally in Bagru.

Bohra counts the resolution of Doklam standoff and the airstrikes in Balakot after the Pulwama attack among the major achievements of the Prime Minister.

For the Congress to pull off a victory in this BJP bastion, it has to begin by checking factionalism in its ranks.

Before the 2018 Assembly elections, Khandelwal was not on good terms with several leaders, including Amin Kagzi and Mahesh Joshi, who were given tickets by the party and won from Assembly seats from where Khandelwal was herself vying for tickets.

"Khandelwal now needs to secure the support of these MLAs... Although Khandelwal and the two legislators are now presenting a united front in public and appealing to workers to forget the past differences, it will be clear only after the results whether the leaders have left the infighting behind," says a Congress leader.

**KARISHMA MEHROTRA**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

A LOW-PROFILE campaign consulting firm, with its leadership drawn from the company that led then prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi's 2014 election campaign, is among those managing the BJP's 2019 Lok Sabha campaign strategy. Set up in December 2016 and headquartered in Mumbai's Malabar Hills, Jarvis Technology and Strategy Consulting Pvt Ltd has seen its revenues jump from nil in 2016-17 to Rs 10.5 crore in 2017-18.

Piyush Jalan and Nandan Jha, directors of Jarvis at the time of its establishment in 2016, and much of the firm's leadership team started out with Citizens for Accountable Governance (CAG), an company founded by Prashant Kishor that worked with the BJP on the party's 2014 victory.

Much before Jarvis was incorporated, towards the end of 2014, Jalan, 30, and Jha, 26, set up an unregistered company named Action for Collective Transformation (ACT). Former employees say the company began work in 2014 with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for the Pune Municipal Corporation polls held in February 2017. They add that the company had about 30 employees in mid-2017 but grew to about 450 people by August 2018 to execute the BJP's campaign plans. The company plans to set up call centres in every state, if not every constituency, for both volunteer and voter outreach, they said.

Jha quit the company in April 2017 and was replaced by Piyush Gupta, a former Oyo employee. Jha was listed as a shareholder in the company with 50 per cent stake, the remaining half being with Jalan, as on March 31, 2018. The company has a paid-up capital of Rs 1 lakh.

When contacted, Jalan declined to comment, citing a "non-disclosure agreement" with the BJP. The party's IT cell chief Amit Malviya did not respond to requests for comments.

In April 2018, the company changed its name from 'Jarvis Technology and Political

Consulting' to 'Jarvis Technology and Strategy Consulting', and in August that year, several employees said they were shifted to one of the two offices in Delhi to begin working for the BJP's 2019 election campaign.

One former Jarvis data analyst in Delhi said their team was given 15 crore data points about applicants and beneficiaries of a specific scheme from each state and tasked with the duty of mapping the individuals to their nearest polling station. The analyst further added that the team also received data on 11 different schemes, including Ujjwala Yojana, Ayushman Bharat and Gram Sadak Yojana. "The task was to identify where these persons would go to vote. This was the target," the former analyst said.

A current Jarvis employee said the company is working on "developing a system where we can monitor how the cadre is performing on the ground". Supporting the claim, a senior staff member of the company said, "It (monitoring the performance of cadres) has never been done before and that is what we were trying to do. You usually see political consultants align with the party system a year before the election. But with Jarvis, we were with Fadnavis for three years."

A former programme manager, who left the firm a year ago, said on condition of anonymity that he had prepared multiple cellphone applications for the company's clients, including one that helped booth level party workers collect data points about voters in Maharashtra, including information about caste, occupation, place of work, earning level, education and voting patterns. "It gave us a clear understanding that we should reach out to a certain number of people and the type of content we should provide them," he said.

The company's financial statement for 2017-18 shows it spent Rs 4.8 crore in operating and direct expenses, of which Rs 20.8 lakh was spent on cloud and social media, and Rs 28 lakh on "Vistarak and Whatsup Mobile Exps". In 2017, the BJP launched the Vistarak initiative in various states which required party workers to educate voters about the schemes launched by the Modi government.

# 'Ticket to Sunny Deol will not translate into votes for BJP'

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
PATIALA, MAY 1

A FORMER three-time MP and Union minister, Preet Kaur had lost Patiala to the Aam Aadmi Party's Dr Dharamvira Gandhi in 2014. Gandhi has since left the party. The wife of Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, Kaur is contesting from the erstwhile royal family's hometown again:

**How do you see this election? As a referendum on the Punjab government or your fight to get the seat back?**

It is a Lok Sabha election, but each election has its peculiarities. This is also an election being fought on the basis of the performance of the state government. The Lok Sabha election is for choosing the Central government, but local issues do matter. It is not a question of taking the seat back, but is a question of winning... There is competition among everybody. The final verdict lies with the people.

**Who is your biggest rival?**

They all are. The Akali Dal has a well-established cadre, Gandhi is a sitting MP, he still has some sort of cadre... they have split. Sukhpal Khaira has his own party... We have a fight with each one.

**The CM had got pinned down in Amritsar in 2014, fighting against BJP leader Arun Jaitley for the Lok Sabha seat, and you had lost. How much will he campaign for you this time?**

He will certainly come for some big meetings... for two-three days. He has to go all over.

**What are the issues in Patiala?**

The main issue pertains to the whole country, and that is unemployment among youth. This can be sorted out by state and Central policies. This was

not done in 10 years (of the Akali government in the state). We have now prepared new policies. We have to make sure that industry, ancillary industry come up. But Central policies are not Punjab-friendly. They have given concessions to neighbouring states, but not even in the border areas.

**How do you rate the Amarinder Singh government?**

I give 10 out of 10. They inherited a bankrupt state... a badly administered state. And despite that, they are beginning to put things right. I am not saying that everything is alright... You cannot undo in three years what was done in 10 years. We have given farm loan waivers. If you go to any village, at least 30-40 farmers have got Rs 2 lakh. Dalits have been given Rs 50,000 each as waiver. It is a major achieve-



ment. Every village... municipality has got a grant.

**Are the Balakot airstrikes and Pulwama**

**attack electoral issues in Patiala?**

No, we did not have any martyrs from Patiala. But all of us feel very strongly about it and are with our armed forces.

**How was the last election different?**

There is a great difference. I did win Patiala Town (Assembly) by-election in 2014, but the margin was 7,000. Usually we get a margin of 30,000 to 35,000 votes. The CM later won the seat (in the Assembly elections) by 50,000 votes. But there has been a sea change... Support is more visible now.

**Is actor Sunny Deol going to whip up the campaign for the BJP in Punjab?**

Fielding him will not translate into votes (for the BJP). I do not think there will be any effect of Sunny Deol here.

**Is the Bargari sacrilege (of the Guru Granth Sahib) still an issue in Patiala?**

Bargari is an issue in the whole of Punjab. It is an emotive issue.

**Would you like Navjot Singh Sidhu to campaign for you?**

I would be delighted. I have had him earlier. He is from Patiala, he is a great orator.





# 7 DECISION 2019



## RJD base intact but Modi message pushes Lalu legacy to margins

VANDITA MISHRA  
CHHAPRA, MAY 1

IN THIS election of many moving parts, in which constituency-level social engineering plays a vital role, two leaders, two personas, are the centrepieces of their respective campaigns in Bihar. If the BJP-led NDA has Narendra Modi, the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan is anchored by Lalu Yadav in the state.

Yet the multi-media all-out projection of Modi is not at all comparable to Lalu's waning presence. The difference is unmistakable, even in Chhapra, where Lalu fought and won his first election to the Lok Sabha in 1977, and which became his political nurturing ground even though his home lies in adjoining Gopalganj.

On a blazing morning, on the town's main road, Nandan Path, on which traffic moves in all directions at once, the RJD office seems unmoved while songs with a chorus of "Har Har Modi", "Ghar Ghar Modi", sprinkled with references to "desh ke jawan (soldiers)" and their "maan samman (prestige)", blare loudly from the BJP office across the road.

Inside the RJD office, Jitendra Kumar Rai, MLA from Marhaura, holds court: "Those who chant 'Modi, Modi' are paid while we have our people who are motivated and speak the local language. As for Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp — now our kids come to us and say, 'bhaiyya, hum kar dete hain (let us help you with social media)'."

The Mahagathbandhan campaign misses Lalu's physical presence, admits Lalbabu Yadav, retired professor at JP university, and now the election agent for the RJD candidate from Chhapra, Chandrika Rai (also the father-in-law of Lalu's son, Tej Pratap): "Laluji has such a sharp memory, he remembers names, strikes up relationships, makes people feel valued. He would coordinate and steer the campaign."

In the Assembly election of 2015, in which a different Mahagathbandhan, made up of Lalu-Nitish-Congress, spectacularly defeated the Modi-led NDA, it was Lalu who picked on RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's statement on the need for a review of the reservation policy and used it to amplify backward caste anxieties against the BJP. In this election, the RJD slogan, even as it takes on Modi, seems to concede to him: "Modi nahin Mudda (It's the issue, not Modi)."

But by all accounts, in Chhapra and elsewhere, the RJD still hasn't woken up to, or continues to be in denial of, the BJP's potent weapon in this election — its narrative dominance.

The NDA, which includes the incumbent chief minister Nitish Kumar's JD-U and Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP as second-order players, is using its considerable resources at the Centre and in the state, to make the Modi message inescapable. The BJP's social media teams are aided and abetted by the RSS network which seems to have cast aside its stated reservations about the personality cult and is going from home to home, as one RSS footsoldier describes it, with both "samagri (material)" and "agraha (persuasion)".

## Behind BJP's poll flight, a former pilot and his Saarthi

LIZ MATHEW  
& PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

HE STARTED by leasing a helicopter to the makers of the Ajay-Devgn-starrer "Kachche Dhaage" in 1999. Today, Gulab Singh Tanwar is an integral part of the BJP's election campaign — his Saarthi Airways provides aircraft and helicopters to the party's top leaders, including BJP chief Amit Shah and Home Minister Rajnath Singh, on the poll trail.

Tanwar, a former Indian Airlines pilot, says he has been with the BJP since the days of Kushabbau Thakre and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, and does not lease his fleet to any other political party. "Loyalty matters in this business, it is your biggest asset," he says.

Tanwar says his fleet has been utilised by BJP leaders in all elections since 2004 — he owns two helicopters, a Bell 206 and a Falcon that will be inducted by May-end. "There are 10 other aircraft, which have been taken on lease from others," he says.

According to Tanwar, the rentals for his helicopters start from Rs 65,000 to Rs 70,000 per hour — for a small Bell 206D model — and up to Rs 2.7 lakh to Rs 3 lakh per hour for larger and executive helicopters, such as Bell 412, Agusta 139 and Eurocopter EC155. "The rates attract a 5-10 per cent premium during elections due to the increased demand, but are still half of those in some of the more developed markets because of internal competition," he says.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data show that the chartered aircraft market has grown from 11 non-scheduled operators in 1993, with 27 aircraft, to 109 operators with 349 aircraft, which transported



RJD candidate Chandrika Rai campaigns in Chhapra. *Express*

Then, there is the Modi message of muscular nationalism which aims to stanch the visible discontents on unemployment, after-effects of demonetisation, farm distress by relentlessly framing and communicating a political inversion: "Agar desh surakshit hai toh (Only if the country is secure)."

On the other side, Lalu's alliance consists of a Congress still scrambling to recover some of its lost ground in a state it once ruled, and three relatively new and small caste-outfits, Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM, Upendra Kushwaha's RLP and Mukesh Sahani's VIP, which are still to be tested for their hold on their caste group and ability to transfer votes. The Mahagathbandhan must mostly rely on the public memory of a leader who played a pivotal role in shaping the state's narratives of social justice — but who also became a symbol of their limits.

The RJD has apparently held on to its core base — even in the Modi wave election of 2014, its vote share seemed to hold, even showing a marginal increase from 19.30 in 2009 to 20.1 per cent. Yet that small increase masked a larger and longer shrinking — the party which at one time gathered within its fold a wide coalition of the disprivileged in a state of raging inequalities, has come to be seen, in large sections of the same people, as a party of, by and for the Yadavs, ruled by one Yadav family.

Today, Lalu's politics of social justice must compete with the vaulting Modi message and machine and also with longtime rival in

the state, and now Modi's ally, Nitish Kumar. Nitish has made inroads into the same vote bank of the historically disprivileged castes, especially the EBCs, and has added governance to his repertoire. Unlike Lalu, in government, Nitish has also weaned sections of the upper castes to his side, attempted a coalition of extremes. The carrier of the Lalu message is an organisation, which like most regional outfits, lacks a second line of leadership — an especially conspicuous absence with Lalu in jail — is overrun by his family and now led by his son, Tejashwi, trying to emerge as his political heir amid an unpleasant family drama in full public view.

The Lalu message itself counts heavily on his past achievements apart from anti-incumbency against the Modi-Nitish regime — it shows no signs of having been re-imagined or updated. In the Dalit village of Radhanagar, in Musahari block, where JP camped and worked among the most disprivileged Dalit castes, Meera Devi recalls: "We used to toil in the fields of the Bhumihars, be paid a pittance, and couldn't wear chappals (footwear). It is Lalu ji's gift

to us that we can ask for higher wages today, wear chappals." Many talk about the "double standard" that keeps Lalu in jail, even as another former chief minister, Jagannath Mishra, implicated in the same case, but who belongs to the upper caste, is out on bail.

Yet, among young and first time voters, even in Chhapra, Lalu is a presence less vivid, his Mahagathbandhan overtaken by the Modi-led NDA.

In a classroom in Chhapra's JP University, students speak about the pervasive joblessness and of how delayed sessions take an unbearable toll — the first semester result of the session of 2016-2018 is not yet out. Yet, "national security is most important," says Ketan Kumar. "Earlier any and every country would stare us down. No more," says Bittoo Kumar Singh. "Lalu ji was a leader of his time, but that time is past," says Ketan.

Of course, in Bihar, that time is not fully past. The classroom still has a disproportionate presence of upper castes, the caste divide in which Lalu framed his radical politics in the 1990s is still entrenched.

It is a function of the divide's resilience — but also of Lalu's own inability and unwillingness, unlike Nitish, to soften the edges of his politics and build bridges — that he is still the politician the upper castes love to disparage. Non-Yadav support for the Lalu-led Mahagathbandhan seems strong and urgent primarily in the two sections where he may no longer be the first choice as leader but which feel alienated by the Modi government — the Scheduled Castes and Muslims.

The Modi message fumbles visibly among the Scheduled Castes still fighting basic fights for land and water who also bear the brunt of the economic distress. The Muslims, part of the fabled M-Y combination that Lalu stitched, are backing the Mahagathbandhan with added determination — and helplessness.

In Manjhi Mianpatti on the edge of Saran, Mohammad Hashim speaks for many: "This is our country, we will die here. We are party of the Indian army too. And you say to us, go to Pakistan! Why do you come to our doorstep and chant 'Jai Shri Ram'? Why do you call us unpatriotic? Why does the PM call himself chowkidar, who is he guarding, from whom? We don't want jobs, we'll make our own living, but at least let us live in peace."

## Rahul: Controller of Maya, Akhilesh in Modi's hand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, BHOPAL, MAY 1

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said BSP supremo Mayawati and SP president Akhilesh Yadav were controlled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Canvassing for Congress MP P L Punia's son, Tanuj, who is the party's candidate from Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh, Rahul said, "In the past five years, did the SP or BSP take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi directly? Did you hear any statement from Mayawati or Mulayam Singh Yadav? See, I am not scared of Narendra Modi. I don't care. If someone is scared, it is Narendra Modi. But the controller of Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav is in the hands of Narendra Modi."

The Congress president further said the Prime Minister can put pressure on the SP and BSP because "they have a history".

"Remember, Modi can't put pressure on me, but he can put pressure on BSP and SP. They have a history, I don't. He never said SP-mukt India or BSP-mukt India. He said Congress-mukt India. There is a reason. Because only the Congress can compete with Narendra Modi," Rahul said.

The BJP has fielded Upendra Rawat from Barabanki and the SP has fielded Ram Sagar Rawat. Barabanki, a reserved seat, will vote on May 6 in the fifth phase.

At another rally at Pipariya in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, the Congress chief targeted the Prime Minister over the killing of 15 commandos in an ambush by Maoists in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Wednesday.

Rahul said, "Narendra Modiji, you talk about national security. Who was in power at the time of the Pulwama blast? Whose government is it now when CRPF personnel

## PM: Why do people in Cong hate me so much that they dream of my death

'Terror factories in region waiting for weak govt'

MILIND GHATWAI  
& MAULSHREE SETH  
BHOPAL, LUCKNOW, MAY 1

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Wednesday asked why Congress leaders hate him so much that they have "started dreaming of his death" and added that the opposition party has forgotten that the whole country is with him.

Addressing a rally at Itarsi in Madhya Pradesh, he asked, "Congresswalonko apke Modi se itni nafrat kyu hai ki Modi ke marne tak ke sapne dekhne lage hai (Why do Congress leaders hate your Modi so much that they are dreaming about his death)." Saying that the entire country is with him, he added, "The Congress should make it clear which team it's playing for: India or guardians of Pakistan?"

At another rally in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, Modi cited the recent blasts in Sri Lanka and recalled the terror attack in Ayodhya in 2005 to say that "terror factories in the neighbourhood are waiting for a weak government" in India and asked people to vote for the BJP's "lotus" symbol to end "terrorism".

At the Itarsi rally, Modi accused the Congress of projecting Islamic preacher Zakir Naik as an apostle of peace. Referring to the recent blasts in Sri Lanka, he said the island nation banned Naik's TV channel because of his provocative speeches. "He is the same Zakir Naik who Diggy Raja (Congress leader Digvijaya Singh) would never tire of praising. You will be startled to know that the Congress government invited Naik to address police officers on the issue of terrorism," he said. "People like Diggy Raja carry Naik, whose words provoke terror blasts in Sri Lanka, on their shoulders and dance. The Congress should die of shame. It's the height of vote bank (politics)," he said.

"Congress ke darbari aur rag darbari Naik ko shanti ka doot dikhane ka prayas kar rahe hai (Congress courtiers are trying to project Naik as an apostle of peace)," Modi added.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan was still bleeding from the air strikes that were discussed worldwide. "Terrorists used to train openly in Pakistan but now they have no option but to hide underground," he said.

"Pakistan has been robbed of sleep because of Modi. Guardians of terrorism are praying that Modi should be stopped or removed. People are confident that Modi will come back to power," he said.

The Prime Minister alleged that the Congress was not "bowling down the wrong length or bowling no ball" but working according to a strategy. He then referred to the Congress manifesto and its promise to amend the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. "The Congress is standing with those who want a separate Prime Minister for J&K," he said,



PM Narendra Modi with UP CM Yogi Adityanath at a rally in Ayodhya on Wednesday. *Vishal Srivastav*

adding, "The party that ruled the country for so long has resorted to anti-national activities."

Referring to the recent income tax raids and recovery of cash in Madhya Pradesh, the Prime Minister said the Congress was honest only in perpetuating dynastic politics and corruption.

At the Ayodhya rally, the Prime Minister targeted the Congress, the SP and the BSP, alleging that their record shows that they have been "soft" on terrorism. Referring to the blasts in churches in Sri Lanka, Modi said, "Faith and tourism are most affected by terrorism. Recently, we saw what happened in Sri Lanka. A somewhat similar situation was in India before 2014. The kind of bomb blasts that happened in Ayodhya and Faizabad, can we forget them?"

"Atank ki factoryyan jo humare pados mein abhi bhi chal rahi hai, wahan toh ek hi udyog hai, atank ko export karna, atankwadion ko export karna. Humare pados mein yahi karobar chalta hai. Yeh atanki desh mein ek kamzor sarkar ke intezaar mein hain. (The factories of terror, which are still operating in our neighbourhood, have only one industry, and that is to export terror and terrorists. This is the only industry in our neighbourhood. These terrorists are waiting for a weak government in the country)," he said.

Asking the gathering to vote with caution, Modi said: "SP-BSP-Congress ka, mahamila-wati ka, atank par narmi ka inka purana record raha hai (SP-BSP-Congress, the adulterated, have a record of being soft on terrorism)."

He said that earlier, security forces nabbed terrorists and governments released them. Now, he said, "be it within or outside the border, new India will enter their (terrorists') homes and kill them, reply to bullets with bullets".

The Prime Minister did not raise the Ram temple issue but said that the "pride" of the "land of Ram" has increased in the last five years.



Congress president Rahul Gandhi at a rally in Sitapur Wednesday. *PPT*

were martyred in Maharashtra? Is it the Congress's? The BJP is in power in both Maharashtra and Delhi."

Addressing another rally in Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh, Rahul termed the NDAY scheme as an answer to the "wrong policies" of the BJP government which have "annihilated" the country's economy.

Meanwhile, Congress general secretary in charge of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on Wednesday said the Congress has fielded candidates to eat into the BJP's votes and not into the votes of the SP-BSP-RLD alliance in Uttar Pradesh.

Asked in Amethi about the Congress's prospects in Uttar Pradesh, she said, "Politics is not just about winning... We need to remove the BJP from here in 2019. They will suffer a heavy defeat in Uttar Pradesh."

She further said, "We will win where our candidates are strong and in places where our candidates are lightweights, we will eat into the BJP's votes."

Asked whether she was afraid of contesting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi, the Congress general secretary said, "If Priyanka Gandhi gets scared, she will sit at home and not be in politics. I am in politics for good and will be there," she said.

Reacting to her comments, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "The Congress party is not contesting elections to win but to eat into votes of the BJP. Today the grand old party has become a vote katua party." "Vote katua" is a term used for candidates who may not win but may tilt the electoral balance in the favour of one of the two main contestants. **WITH PPT INPUTS**