



Today, we relaunch *The Hindu's* National Edition in Delhi and Mumbai, specially tailored to the needs of each city. The main edition of the newspaper in Delhi and Mumbai will now include three pages of local news and two pages of news features relating to the unique culture and heritage of the city, from art and culture and showbiz, to the technology and the start-ups that thrive in it. Previously, some of this coverage was offered as Metro supplements. In addition, our news selection will highlight stories that will connect with you as our reader in the political capital and the business capital of India.

Delhi and Mumbai have grown as two distinct microcosms of our country, opening their arms to millions of people from every part of it. With this revamped edition in both cities, we rededicate ourselves to covering their pulsating dynamism, and bringing to you the comprehensive coverage that you have come to expect and demand from *The Hindu*.

Editor

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BJP should consider expelling Pragya: Nitish

‘Her remark on Godse condemnable’

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar on Sunday condemned BJP Bhopal candidate Pragya Thakur's controversial remark referring to Nathuram Godse, assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, as a *deshbhakt* (patriot).

Asked whether Ms. Thakur should be expelled from the BJP, Mr. Kumar said, “it must be considered.” However, he added, “it’s an internal matter of the BJP.”

He was speaking to journalists after casting his vote at a government school near the Raj Bhavan here.

“This is condemnable...

Exit polls predict second term for Modi

‘BJP will retain its strongholds in the north and west and make considerable gains in West Bengal’

VARGHESE K GEORGE
NEW DELHI

All exit polls released at the conclusion of the seven-phase 17th general election predicted a second term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The counting of votes will take place on May 23.

Most polls indicated minor to considerable setback for Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh where it won 71 of 80 seats in 2014, but they were in agreement that the party would firmly hold on to its strongholds in the north and west and make considerable gains in West Bengal.

Trailing in south

In southern States barring Karnataka, the BJP is projected to trail far behind opponents. The Congress and its allies are projected to make significant gains compared to the historic low they hit in 2014, but will end up some



Rosy picture: Narendra Modi during a roadshow in Varanasi, his constituency, on April 25. • REUTERS

distance away from the half-way mark of 272 seats in the 543-strong Lok Sabha, according to these polls.

The polls predicted between 242 to 365 for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and between 77 and 164 for the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Parties that are unattached to either side, which

NDA redux?

Exit polls have overwhelmingly predicted a comfortable majority for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance

Poll Agency	NDA	UPA	OTHERS
Times Now-VMR	306	132	104
Republic-CVoter	287	128	127
NDTV poll of polls	300	127	115
IAN5-CVOTER	287	80	NA
Neta-NewsX	242	164	136
India-News	298	118	127
News 18-Ipsos	336	82	124
ABP Nielsen	267	127	148
India Today - AXIS My India	339-365	77-108	69-95

include the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) whose coalition in Uttar Pradesh is resisting the BJP, could get between 69 and 125 seats, according to various polls.

Exit polls have a long history of going wrong in India. According to Praveen Chakravarty, chairperson of the

Congress Data Analytics Department, who compared exit polls with actual outcomes posted on Twitter: “-80% of exit poll seat predictions for all parties in large state elections since 2014 are wrong.” Exit polls are generally considered more accurate than opinion polls conducted before actual voting. Around the world also,

the credibility of opinion polls and exit polls has taken a beating in recent years.

Almost all polls in the Australian election last week got the outcome wrong, and similar was the fate of polls during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and Brexit. But what is common between these polls that went wrong was that all of them under-reported the support for conservative and ultranationalist positions. Indian exit polls on Sunday uniformly predicted a massive surge in favour of the Hindu nationalist BJP.

The exit poll projections indicate that Mr. Modi's campaign to turn the election into a referendum on his persona rather than the performance of his five-year term has been successful.

A BITTER BATTLE ▶ PAGE 12

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COUNT ON DEMOCRACY

▶ EDITORIAL

64.23% turnout in last phase of voting

Sporadic violence reported in Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The fate of political parties and their candidates for the 542 Lok Sabha seats was sealed on Sunday, with the conclusion of the last phase of polling in 59 constituencies across seven States and one Union Territory, which recorded a tentative turnout of 64.23%, compared with 64.63% in 2014.

An almost 9 percentage points jump, from the previous figure of 66.87%, was registered in the eight constituencies of Madhya Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh too, it went up from 65.06% to 71.24%. However, there was a significant decrease in West Bengal's nine constituencies, from 79.15% to 73.51%. Yet again, the State witnessed sporadic incidents of violence.

The vehicle of Nilanjan



Mamata Banerjee arriving to cast her vote in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

Ray, BJP candidate in Diamond Harbour, was attacked at Budge Budge. Fuad Halim, CPI(M) candidate from the same seat, alleged that his agents were driven out of several booths. Anupam Hazra, BJP candidate from Jadavpur, and a party leader accompanying him, were attacked.

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VIOLENCE IN BENGAL ▶ PAGE 12

Naidu meets Rahul, Sonia in bid to forge non-BJP coalition

Mayawati to fly down to Delhi for talks with Cong. leaders

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Stepping up his efforts to form a non-BJP government at the Centre in case of a hung verdict, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday met Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi.

Following his meetings with the Congress leadership, there were reports that Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati would meet Ms. Gandhi and the Congress chief on Monday.

Though there was no official confirmation of the Mayawati-Sonia meeting, sources confirmed to *The Hindu* the BSP chief's plan to fly down to Delhi.

However, with exit polls giving a clear verdict in favour of the BJP and Mr. Modi's leadership, Opposition leaders may change their plans and prefer to wait for the results on May 23. But if Ms. Gandhi and Ms. Mayawati do meet on Monday, it would be seen as a big boost to the Opposition.

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Jobs were less of a concern during elections

Rafale controversy did not register with voters, finds post-election survey

LOKNITI TEAM

Economic issues, including “unemployment”, were less salient in determining voter choice over the course of the election, Lokniti's post-poll survey found in comparison to its pre-poll results published jointly by *The Hindu* in the run-up to the election.

Those who mentioned “economic issues” related to unemployment, the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), price rise and poverty as key con-

cerns fell from a high of 38% in the pre-poll to 25% in the post-poll survey. Only 12% of the respondents identified unemployment as the most important issue, a drop of nine percentage points from the pre-poll survey.

Significant drop

The drop in these numbers are significant as the bulk of those who reported economic issues as key concerns were more likely to support the Opposition and

THE HINDU
CSDS-LOKNITI
Post-poll Survey 2019

the United Progressive Alliance.

The post-poll survey also found that while awareness of the Congress's flagship minimum income promise, the NYAY scheme, had increased over the course of the election, a significant section of the poor – the targeted recipients – had yet to learn

about it. The Congress's attempt to bring “corruption” as a key plank in relation to the Rafale deal also did not quite register, the survey found. While only half of the respondents had heard of the controversy, less than half among them felt that there was wrongdoing by the government. In other words, the Rafale controversy did not quite have an impact as the Congress expected.

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On polling day, Amarinder hits out at Navjot Sidhu

Punjab CM accuses Cabinet colleague of eyeing his post

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday hit out at his Cabinet colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu, criticising him for “damaging” the Congress with his “ill-timed” comments against the party leadership in the State.

“If he (Sidhu) is a real Congressman, he should have chosen a better time to air his grievances instead of just ahead of voting in Punjab. It is not his election but that of the entire Congress. Sidhu is harming the party with such irresponsible actions,” the CM said in Patiala.

Tensions had been simmering between the two in the run-up to polling day in Punjab after Mr. Sidhu accused the Chief Minister of being responsible for his wife, Navjot Kaur, not getting the Congress ticket for Chandigarh Lok Sabha seat.

Capt. Amarinder hinted at political ambition as a possible motive behind Mr. Sidhu's accusation. “I personally do not have any differences with Sidhu, whom I have known since he was a child. Perhaps he is ambitious and wants to be Chief Minister,” he said.

The Chief Minister got im-

mediate support from Health Minister Brahm Mohindra, who termed Mr. Sidhu's statements “untimely outbursts against the party leadership”.

‘Passing the buck’

The opposition Shiromani Akali Dal was quick to take a dig at the Congress over the tussle between the two leaders. Former Minister and Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia said the war of words between the Punjab Chief Minister and Mr. Sidhu was an attempt at passing the buck ahead of the impending defeat in the polls.

LoP accuses Delhi CM, Dy. CM of bid to falsely implicate him

Files police complaint a day after Arvind Kejriwal alleged that BJP was out to get him assassinated

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Vijender Gupta, filed a complaint on Sunday at the Parliament Street police station against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia for “hatching a larger conspiracy against him to falsely implicate him in criminal cases”.

Mr. Gupta's claim comes a day after Mr. Kejriwal had alleged that the BJP would get him assassinated by his own personal security officer, the

way Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was killed.

In the complaint, Mr. Gupta said that Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Sisodia were spreading information through social media to implicate him in a criminal conspiracy with the intention to put him behind bars.

‘Scripted attack’

Mr. Gupta said that on May 18, Mr. Sisodia – replying to his tweet claiming that Mr. Kejriwal had scripted an attack on himself during a roadshow during the Lok Sabha campaign – said the



Vijender Gupta

tweet proved that the CM's security report reaches the BJP every day and the party was using the information to

hatch a conspiracy to eliminate the CM.

Mr. Gupta had claimed in his tweet that the Chief Minister himself told the liaison officer to remove the security cover of his vehicle in order to orchestrate the ‘Slapgate’ episode.

Security review sought

In a letter to Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik, BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said Mr. Kejriwal's statement was “damaging” for the morale of his security staff as well as the entire police force in the

national capital.

“All security staff deployed around Kejriwal should be given psychological counselling and Delhi police should immediately review his security cover,” Mr. Kapoor said.

Eish Singhal, Additional DCP (New Delhi), admitted receiving a complaint against Mr. Kejriwal filed by Mr. Gupta. The police are going through the nature of the complaint but prima facie it doesn't qualify under any section of the IPC, he said.

(With inputs from PTI)



An aircraft preparing to land at Mumbai airport. ■ REUTERS

16.8% more expensive compared with last year.

The sharp rise in airfares comes at a time when there is a huge demand for travel during the summer vacation season as well as for school and college admissions, but there is a deficit in capacity due to the grounding of Jet Airways' 123 planes. While the government has asked other airlines to speed up induction of new planes, it will take several months to bridge the gap.

Passengers planning overseas travel will also have to dig deeper into their pockets. Airfares for Mumbai-Dubai were nearly three times higher at ₹22,913 for a booking made 30 days before travel when compared with ₹7,167 last year.

Delhi-London, too, was nearly three times costlier than last year (₹75,731 instead of ₹25,488). However, some sectors, where passengers have a plethora of low-cost airlines to choose from, such as Delhi-Bangkok and Delhi-Singapore, saw a dip of

ticket cost of 61% and 78%, respectively.

Delhi and Mumbai together account for 42.6% of outbound travel by Indian citizens, according to government data. Spiralling airfares have resulted in foreign carriers like Qatar Airways proposing a temporary increase in seats between the two countries.

“Without our contingency plan, Indian travellers will be forced to either choose expensive last-minute tickets or complicated and burdensome re-routings,” said an airline spokesperson.

Plan in advance

Yatra.com's COO Sharat Dhall's advice to travellers is to “plan in advance and not to book at the last moment to avoid the unprecedented hikes in airfares.” But there is no escaping high airfares this summer as it's advance airfares that have been bumped up the most.

(Additional inputs from Aditya Anand; Lalatendu Mishra)