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DECISION

2019

## Modi, Shah to meet NDA allies today

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

WITH EXIT polls predicting a clear win for the BJP-led NDA, top leaders of the BJP will meet their allies on Tuesday. Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah are expected to meet the allies over dinner in the national capital. Shah will also meet BJP ministers on Tuesday evening.

Party sources said Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal and Lok Janshakti Party

head Ram Vilas Paswan are likely to attend the meeting.

The meeting, to be held two days before the counting of votes, assumes significance as only three of the nine exit polls have projected the BJP as winning a majority on its own. While Chanakya-News 24, India Today-Axis-My India and NEWS18-IPSOS have shown BJP winning a clear majority on its own, ABP-Nielsen, Neta-NewsX and Republic-CVoter have projected the BJP's tally way below the magic number. However, all the polls were unanimous in projecting Narendra Modi-led NDA's return to power.

The counting is to take place on Thursday.



Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal and other BJP leaders after meeting the EC. Prem Nath Pandey

## BJP moves EC, seeks repolling in seats affected by violence

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

A BJP delegation met the Election Commission on Monday to seek repolling in constituencies where violence took place during polling.

"We have met the Election Commissioners and informed them about the violence that had taken place in all seven phases of the Lok Sabha polls and requested for repolling in all violence-affected constituencies," Union minister Piyush Goyal told reporters after meeting EC officials.

The Goyal-led delegation, which included Nirmala Sitharaman, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Anil Baluni, accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of threatening BJP candidates, poll agents and party sympathisers. "We saw incidents of violence till the last phase of polling. There is possibility of violence even after counting of votes. So, we have requested the Commission to de-

ploy central forces in Electronic Voting Machine strongrooms till the end of counting to allow free and fair counting," Goyal said.

The BJP wanted repolling in Dum Dum, Barasat, Jaynagar, Mathurapur, Basirhat, Jadavpur and Diamond Harbour parliamentary constituencies. They wanted all EVM strongrooms to be guarded by central forces, and state forces not be allowed to come close to the strong rooms. "We also request you that the CAPF continues be deployed in West Bengal until the conclusion of the electoral process and formal notifications of the constitution of the new Parliament," they demanded in the memorandum.

The BJP delegation also wanted the poll panel to ensure the counting process in Odisha, Karnataka, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is done fairly.

"Independent observers must be sent in these states and CCTV cameras be installed in all counting stations in the five states," Goyal said.

### MALEGAON BLAST CASE

## Pragya seeks exemption from court appearance, cites polls

**SADAF MODAK**  
MUMBAI, MAY 20

PRAGYA SINGH Thakur on Monday sought exemption from appearing before the court this week in the 2008 Malegaon blast case trial, stating that she is "busy with Lok Sabha election results".

Thakur, who is contesting on a BJP ticket from Bhopal, is one of the seven accused in the case, whom the court had directed to remain present before it at least once a week in an order passed earlier on Friday.

Through her advocates J P Mishra and Prashant Maggu, Thakur submitted an exemption application before the court stating that as a Lok Sabha candidate, she would have to fulfil certain procedures of the Election Commission of India, including nominating her agents for counting of votes in her constituency on May 23. She submitted that this has to be completed by May 22, and said she would also be busy on the counting day and the next day as well as the counting may continue till late hours.

Thakur sought exemption from appearing before the court

between May 20 and 24.

Sudhakar Chaturvedi, another accused in the case, who is contesting the elections from Mirzapur constituency in Uttar Pradesh as an independent candidate, has also sought exemption for a day.

Lt Col Prasad Purohit also sought exemption citing personal difficulty to appear before the court on Monday.

The court allowed the exemption applications. While directing each of the accused to remain present before it at least once a week, it had earlier said that exemption can be granted if cogent reasons were submitted.

On Monday, the prosecution examined two witnesses, including an advocate, who was among the 101 people injured in the blast, and a daily labourer, whose 24-year-old cousin was among the six killed. The labourer had been handed over his cousin's body from the hospital after post-mortem.

Earlier, Sudhakar Dhar Dwivedi, one of the accused in the case, had denied that there was a blast and had sought for examination of injured and those witnesses pertaining to the post-mortem and other procedures of the deceased, in a bid

# Keeping Oppn in hunt, Naidu meets Mamata

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, NEW DELHI, MAY 20

A DAY after exit polls predicted the return of the BJP-led NDA government, TDP leader and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu held a meeting with TMC chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at her residence in Kolkata Monday.

TMC sources claimed the leaders discussed the possibility of the formation of a non-BJP government at the Centre in case of a hung verdict. Naidu reached Kolkata from Amaravati and the two leaders met for 45 minutes on the future strategies of the "mahagathbandhan", sources said.

The meeting also discussed possibilities of forming a non-BJP government including regional parties with the support of the Congress. "It was decided at today's meeting that a detailed discussion will be held among other



Chandrababu Naidu and Mamata Banerjee on Monday. Express

political players of the mahagathbandhan in the event of a hung verdict after the poll results are declared on May 23, sources said.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav called Banerjee during the day and discussed the proposed strategy of the "mahagathbandhan", sources said.

The decision on Banerjee go-

ing to New Delhi would also be taken after May 23, sources said. Naidu, who is making efforts to bring together Opposition leaders against the BJP, left for New Delhi after the meeting.

After the meet, Naidu reiterated his demand for at least 50 per cent verification of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) votes through voter-verified paper au-

dit trail (VVPAT). He said former Chief Election Commissioners of India, Navin Chawla and S Y Quraishi, also support the demand.

In a series of tweets, Naidu said, "Those who respect democracy are disappointed with how the EC conducted elections. Our fight to save democracy will continue. BJP candidates including the PM himself violated the Model Code of Conduct several times. A recent example being his over-publicized pompous holiday in Kedarnath. Why is the EC giving clean chits to BJP? One incident after other the EC has failed this democracy like never before."

The previous day, Naidu had attacked both the exit polls and the EC. "We reiterate our demand to the ECI to count VVPATs in at least 50% of polling stations. VVPATs should be counted in 5 polling stations in each Assembly Constituency at the beginning of counting process. In case of discrepancy, all VVPATs

of Assembly Constituency shall be counted," he tweeted.

On Sunday, Naidu had called on NCP chief Sharad Pawar and had also met CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury. A day earlier, he had met BSP chief Mayawati and Yadav. During his meeting with Banerjee, the TDP chief spoke about the meetings, TMC sources said.

Exit polls have predicted the return of the BJP at Centre which Banerjee dismissed as "gossip". She said she does not trust such surveys as the "game plan" is to use them for "manipulation" of EVMs.

Tweeting about the exit polls on Sunday, Naidu had said, "Time and again exit polls have failed to catch the People's pulse. Exit polls have proved to be incorrect and far from ground reality in many instances. While undoubtedly TDP govt will be formed in AP, we are confident that non-BJP parties will form a non-BJP govt at the center."

— WITH PTI

## Akhilesh and Maya meet, hold hour-long talks

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
LUCKNOW, MAY 20

BSP CHIEF Mayawati and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav met here on Monday after exit polls indicated gains for their alliance in Uttar Pradesh.

Akhilesh, who had formed a coalition with the BSP and the RLD to take on the BJP, drove to Mayawati's residence and the closed-door talks lasted almost an hour. Details of what transpired between the two leaders was not known immediately.

On Saturday, TDP president Chandrababu Naidu had met both Akhilesh and Mayawati in the UP capital separately to discuss the possibility of non-BJP parties coming together in the event of a fractured verdict.

## When exit polls convey same message, results in consonance, writes Jaitley

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

A DAY after exit polls predicted return of the BJP-led NDA to power, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Monday said that when multiple exit polls convey the same message, the direction of the results would be broadly in consonance with that message.

"Many of us may continue to squabble over correctness and accuracy of the Exit Polls. The hard reality is that when multiple Exit Polls convey the same message, the direction of the result broadly would be in consonance with the message," Jaitley said in a blogpost titled *The Message of Exit Polls*.

All exit polls have forecast another term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with some of them projecting that BJP-led NDA will get more than 300 seats to comfortably cross the majority mark of 272 in the Lok Sabha.

Targeting the Congress, Jaitley said the Gandhi family has become a liability for the party. "...in the Congress the first family is no longer an asset but an albatross around neck of the Party. Without the family, they don't get the crowd, with it they don't get the votes," he said.

He said voters are no longer willing to trust "Coalition of Rivals" as their alliances are untenable. "Fake issues only satisfy the 'manufacturers of fakery'. The voters don't buy them," Jaitley added.

## Exit polls not final but hint at BJP's win, says Gadkari

**VIVEK DESHPANDE**  
NAGPUR, MAY 20

UNION MINISTER Nitin Gadkari on Monday said the exit polls are not the "final decision" but indicate that the NDA will once again come to power riding on the good work done by the Narendra Modi-led government.

"Exit poll results are not final. They are only an indicator. The results will come on May 23. But results are, by and large, in tune with exit poll outcome... (and) all polls indicate that the NDA government is returning to power under Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The senior BJP leader was speaking at the launch of a poster of *PM Narendra Modi*, a biopic on the Prime Minister,



Nitin Gadkari

which will be released on May 24.

Earlier in the day, rebuffing speculation about being an alternative for Modi, Gadkari said: "I have been saying this for long now that there is no such thing. But the media has continued to speculate." He also added that it was a "privilege of the PM to decide" if Gadkari would continue as Union Surface Transport Minister or take up any other ministry.

EXPRESS

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