

7 DELHI DECISION 2019



“I congratulate Shri Narendra Modi for this historic win and look forward to working together for betterment of people of Delhi... We fielded very good candidates in Delhi, campaigned very well... We will keep working for people of Delhi” — Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM



“Congress is only reaping benefits of AAP being decimated. Had they tied up, we would have won with a bigger margin because people whose first preference is Congress would have also voted for us in case they tied up with AAP.” — Manoj Tiwari, Delhi BJP chief

SEAT WINNER	CHANDNI CHOWK Harsh Vardhan (BJP) 52.94%	NEW DELHI Meenakshi Lekhi (BJP) 54.77%	EAST Gautam Gambhir (BJP) 55.35%	SOUTH Ramesh Bidhuri (BJP) 56.58%	WEST Parvesh Sahib Singh (BJP) 60.05%	NORTH WEST Hans Raj Hans (BJP) 60.49%	NORTH EAST Manoj Tiwari (BJP) 53.9%
RUNNER-UP	JP Agarwal (Cong) 29.67%	Ajay Maken (Cong) 26.91%	Arvinder S Lovely (Cong) 24.24%	Raghav Chadha (AAP) 26.35%	Mahabal Mishra (Cong) 19.92%	Gugan Singh (AAP) 21.01%	Sheila Dikshit (Cong) 28.85%
THIRD PLACE	Pankaj Gupta (AAP) 14.74%	Brijesh Goyal (AAP) 16.33%	Atishi (AAP) 17.44%	Vijender Singh (Cong) 13.56%	Balbir Jakhar (AAP) 17.47%	Rajesh Liloithia (Cong) 16.88%	Dilip Pandey (AAP) 13.06%

BJP>AAP+Congress

Each of BJP’s seven candidates got more than 50%, suggesting that a tie-up between its rivals would not have mattered; Cong pulls ahead of AAP in five seats

MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

FOR TWO months, conversations — and headlines — around AAP and Congress revolved around whether the two parties will tie up in the capital. Thursday showed it wouldn’t have mattered. With a 56.56% vote share for the party and at least 53% for each individual BJP candidate in the city, no seat combination between AAP and Congress would have worked. With BJP taking pole position in all seven seats, perhaps a bigger worry for AAP turned out to be the Congress, which got 22.5% of votes in Delhi, above AAP’s 18.1%. This is the first time since AAP was formed that Congress secured more votes — be it in Lok Sabha, Assembly or MCD polls. While Congress came in second in five seats, AAP stood second in two — South Delhi and North West Delhi.

Three AAP candidates — Pankaj Gupta from Chandni Chowk, Brijesh Goyal from New Delhi and Dilip Pandey from North East Delhi — lost their deposits as their vote share was less than 16.6%.

In its first-ever Assembly election in 2013, AAP had attracted 29% of all votes polled, as opposed to Congress’s 25%. In the 2014 general elections, BJP’s vote share was 46.63%, AAP’s was 33.07% and Congress’s was 15.22%. “This is a national election and it was amply clear in the minds of voters. The Congress also created a lot of confusion. This, along with what can only be called a Modi wave, sealed the elections,” Deputy Chief Minister and AAP political affairs committee member Manish Sisodia told *The Indian Express*.

For the BJP, what worked was a lack of clear messaging from other parties, a campaign that relied on a door-to-door outreach, booth-level management, and the Prime Minister’s name, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta said. “Our campaign was very well-oiled, with no internal rifts. We fought the election ground up. We took Modi ji’s message to people and they saw how he had taken decisive action on sensitive issues. Others only had an anti-Modi campaign,” he told *The Indian Express*.

Thursday’s closest competition was seen in Chandni Chowk, where BJP’s Dr Harsh Vardhan won, defeating Congress’s JP Agarwal by over 2.28 lakh votes. The biggest margin was in West Delhi, where Parvesh Sahib Singh won by a margin of 5.78 lakh votes.

AAP, which came into existence in 2012, had in the 2015 Assembly elections reduced Congress’s vote share to 9.7%. It had won 67 of 70 seats, while BJP won 3 and Congress 0. In every subsequent election, Congress has inched back while AAP’s vote tally has gone down.

Senior AAP leaders conceded that gains made by Congress could have serious implications for their party as the city heads into Assembly polls in less than nine months.

“During our surveys, we realised people were inclined to vote for Modi in these elections and Kejriwal in Assembly polls.. But the senior leadership has to realise that during 2014 Lok Sabha polls, we were in second place. Nine months is a long time and the resurgence of Congress is troublesome,” said a senior party leader.

Sisodia, however, said the party was confident they would regain the lost vote share next year. “Considerations in Lok Sabha and Assembly polls are different and people in Delhi have shown this in the past. We will bounce back from this,” he said.



Celebrations outside the BJP office after Thursday’s result. Praveen Khanna

Assembly next, Tiwari likely to bag plum role

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

DEFEATING THREE-TIME Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit by over 3 lakh votes, Manoj Tiwari, the Delhi BJP chief, is expected to emerge as the frontrunner for the party’s chief ministerial candidate when the capital goes to Assembly polls next year.

In line with the performance of BJP candidates in the capital, Tiwari got 3.66 lakh votes — more than Dikshit and AAP’s Dilip Pandey combined. This is the second big victory Tiwari has been a central part of — the first being the BJP’s win in the MCD polls, when the party overcame massive anti-incumbency of two terms to leave Congress and AAP behind.

Several senior leaders *The Indian Express* spoke to said Tiwari, who was brought in as Delhi BJP chief in 2016 to consolidate the Purvanchal vote, could be given an even bigger role in the party — perhaps a ministerial berth or being projected as the BJP’s CM face next year. Asked about his chief ministerial ambition, Tiwari told *The Indian Express*: “I have just two ambitions. One, I wanted Modi ji to become PM and second, I want the BJP to win the Delhi Assembly elections. The first has been fulfilled, the second will be fulfilled soon.”

Another senior leader said, “(Arvind) Kejriwal’s acceptance as a mass leader was

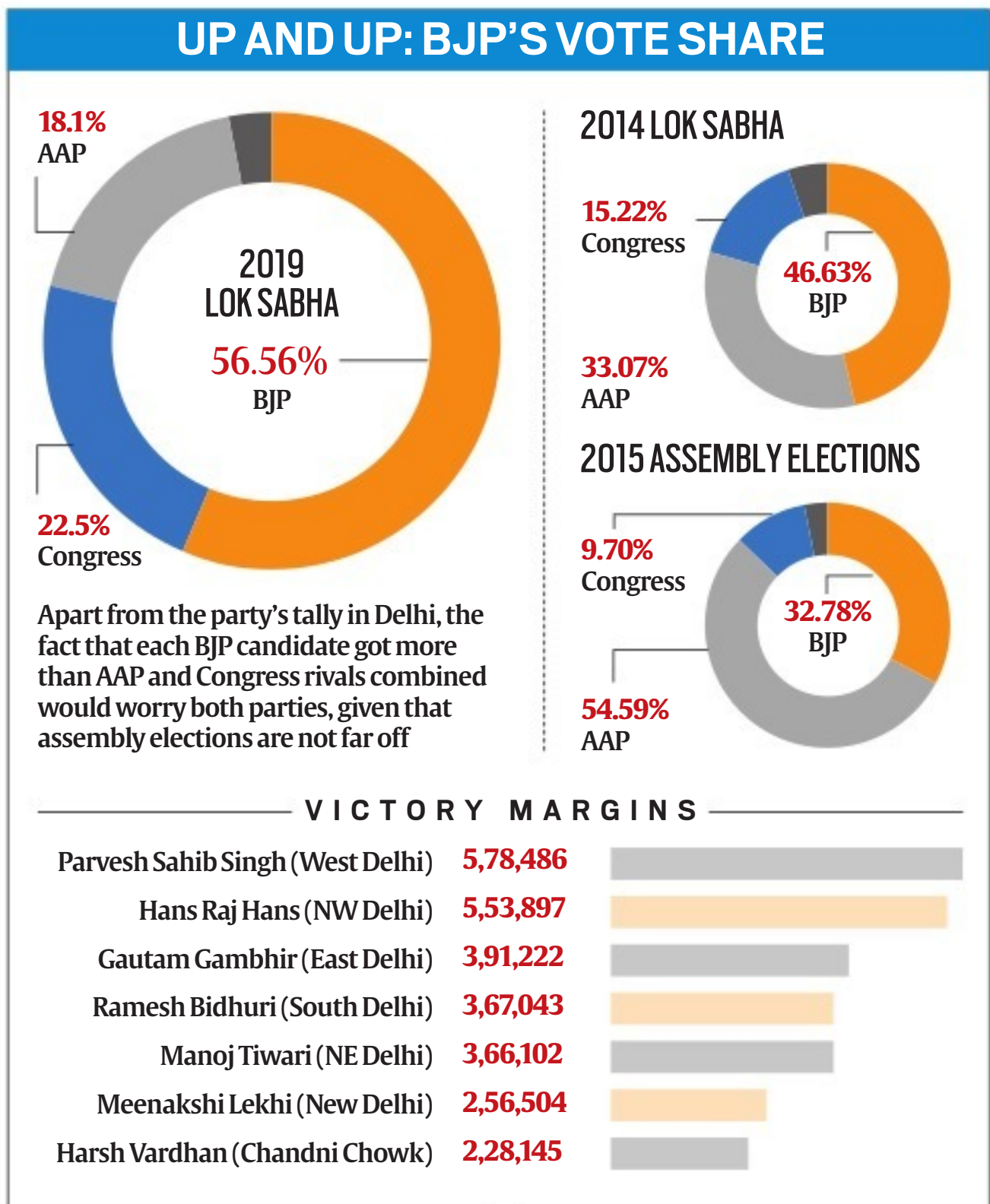


Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari. Abhinav Saha

established after he defeated Dikshit (in 2013). Tiwari has now done the same, and could be projected as someone capable of taking on Kejriwal.”

“His weight in the party has increased because he will also be seen as someone who held road shows for several candidates across India, wherever Purvanchalis are in large numbers. He also staged a road show for (South Delhi candidate) Ramesh Bidhuri, who wasn’t particularly popular among the Purvanchali voters,” the leader said.

Before Tiwari’s appointment as Delhi BJP chief, the unit was dominated by Punjabis, Baniyas, Jats and Gurjars. But as the population of migrants increased over the past decades — they are estimated to comprise a third of the city’s over two crore population — the party felt the need to get a leader to tap that base.



Outsider to trump card: How BJP’s Hans won big

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

FIELDED AT the last minute from the reserved North West Delhi seat, questioned over his religion and given the outsider tag — BJP’s Hans Raj Hans managed to overcome several obstacles to secure the highest vote share, 60.5%, leaving AAP’s Gugan Singh and Congress’s Rajesh Liloithia far behind.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, the singer-turned-politician from Punjab credited his victory to the “Modi phenomenon”. “I was not expecting the margin to be this high. I was a stranger to this constituency but people heard what I had to say and accepted me as one of their own. I told them I am an artist following Modi’s orders, and that I would do everything to make them feel that I was born here.”

Hans said his opponents’ vote share fell because their party leaders — Congress’s Rahul Gandhi and AAP’s Arvind Kejriwal — “would lie quite often”. Earlier this month, AAP MLA Rajendra Pal Gautam had alleged Hans had converted to Islam and did not belong to the reserved category, so he cannot contest from the seat. CM Arvind Kejriwal had also tweeted that the BJP candidate was “ineligible to fight from a reserved seat (North West Delhi)”.

AAP’s Singh conceded defeat, but claimed he was “absolutely certain” that EVMs had been tampered with in some areas. “(BJP chief) Amit Shah and Hans had struggled to assemble a crowd at their rallies. How can they get over 60% votes?..,” he said. Singh also alleged that booths in areas with a large Muslim population, such as Meer Vihar in the Mundka Assembly constituency, recorded “100% voting” for the BJP, which was “unusual”.

Similar allegations were made by supporters of Congress’s Liloithia. His brother Parvesh said, “The reason behind the result today is EVM setting... If it wasn’t for (the alleged tampering), we would have won by a margin of at least one lakh votes.”

AAP’s sitting MLA from Bawana, Ram Chander, said the party could have won one to three seats if they had tied up with Congress. “We had confidence in Singh, but (Bawana and nearby) areas have nearly 80% people from UP and Bihar, and if we had fielded a candidate from these two communities, we may have won this seat,” he said.

Cong hope for boxer boost fails, Vijender loses deposit

ARANYA SHANKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

THE CONGRESS’S attempt at garnering votes through star power, by fielding boxer Vijender Singh from the South Delhi constituency, yielded no returns, as he lost his deposit, securing 13.56% of the total votes.

Singh came third on the seat, which incumbent BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri won with a huge margin of over 3.7 lakh votes. Singh, who got 1.64 lakh votes, trailed behind AAP’s Raghav Chadha, who got 3.19 lakh votes. In 2014, Bidhuri secured 45.15% of the total votes polled. Singh did not respond to calls seeking a comment by *The Indian Express*.

Flashing a victory sign, Bidhuri said: “The trends are in my favour and will continue to



Cong’s Vijender after the result. ANI

be so. Who will accept people who say ‘Bharat tere tukde honge?’”

Chadha tweeted: “We respect the people’s mandate with all humility. Lost we may have, but there is honour and joy in fighting for what one believes to be right.”

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

A *DUGGA* from Nashik, a *chenda* from Kollam and a *nagaada* from Palwal — BJP’s resounding victory Thursday found crescendo at the party’s headquarters at Delhi’s DDU Marg, hours before the final count was in. By noon, the office was swathed in saffron, dancing had begun, and the premises was swarming with party workers, volunteers and cardboard cut-outs of the PM and BJP chief.

Also in attendance were supporters such as 12-year-old Lakshya Joshi, who reached the office at 7.30 am with a BJP flag, to 90-year-old Charan Das, who took a bus from

Karnal. “*Modi bete ko aashirwad dene aaya hoon...* I am here alone, despite my family’s hesitation,” said Das.

Inside the sprawling media room sat supporters dressed in ‘Chowkidar Phir Se’ t-shirts and sleeveless jackets with Modi’s face, around a single TV.

The crowd broke into ‘Modi! Modi’ chants and impromptu dance every time the NDA count went up. Deepak Sharma (58), a guard at Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Medical College in Rohini, said, “The day he gave respect to chowkidars, I was on his side.”

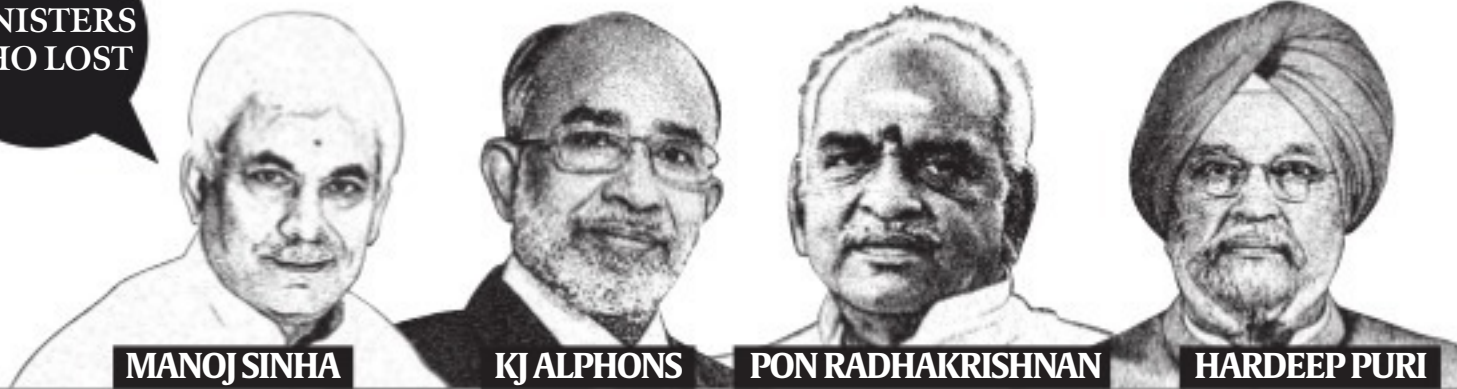
Among senior BJP leaders who turned up were the party’s behind-the-scenes organisation man Ram Lal, who was thronged by workers eager to take a selfie. Also present were BJP’s national general secretaries

Kailash Vijayvargiya, Ram Madhav, Bhupender Yadav and Muralidhar Rao.

Slogans such as ‘*Ghar ghar bhagwa chhaa gaya, Modi vaapis aa gaya*’ to ‘*Sher aaya, sher aaya, Modi aaya Modi*’ resonated as a woman danced atop the parapet, ignoring warnings.

“We’ve been here since 6 am with our *dugga*, drum and *taashe*. People can’t stop dancing, it’s getting tiring,” said Bhola Master (46) of the Nashik Band. As he took a break, members of BJP’s South Indian Cell took over with a *chenda* and *elathalam* — musical instruments from Kerala.

Around 3.30 pm, Amit Shah arrived to a welcome of *gulaal*, rose petals and firecrackers. Four hours later came the Prime Minister, flashing the victory sign.



Rise and rise of Modi

As countdown to 2019 began, he was already being seen as strong and decisive leader, a disruptor seeking change

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

IN FIVE years, Brand Modi has transcended religious, caste and class divisions. That, in a nutshell, is Decision 2019.

From the time he was first named prime ministerial candidate in September 2013, Modi has never looked back. He has built on his strengths, charting the course the country will take, and also his party. In election after election, in state after state.

So when the countdown to 2019 began, he was already being seen as a strong and decisive leader, a disruptor seeking change, the poster boy of millions being tapped by the BJP.

Home and abroad

Since the time he led the BJP to power in 2014, Modi has shown an eye for the visual. His oath-taking ceremony was held in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the glow of the setting sun as a backdrop, and eight foreign heads of government in attendance. His first Republic Day appearance had US President Barack Obama as chief guest. His public meeting at the Madison Square Garden was a rockstar-like event.

At major events and meetings, he has bonded with global leaders. Overseen by a team of the BJP, led initially by general secretary Ram Madhav and later by Vijay Chauthaiwala, these foreign visits have also helped the party build a fervent base among the Indian diaspora.

If technology has helped him connect with party workers down to the booth level, his Mann Ki Baat addresses have helped him reach the common man. Today, Brand Modi is big. Yet five years in power have not changed his image of an "outsider" working hard to "set things right".

He has been under constant attack from the Opposition but the mandate indicates that Modi's message and campaign — of Good Governance, Nation First, raising India's stature, fighting corruption, teaching Pakistan a lesson — have worked on the ground.

The initiatives

The promise of Achhe Din was an integral part of Modi's 2014 campaign. Promising to change the nation, he announced the launch of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan on Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. Critics called it a modification of the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan of the UPA, but this did not cut any ice. In fact, this initiative helped the party appropriate the Mahatma.

His government followed this up with the National Mission for Clean Ganga, reiterating its commitment to the river millions consider holy; Mudra Yojana for affordable credit to micro and small enterprises; Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for the girl child; and legislative initiatives like banning instant triple talaq — all directed towards its goal of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas.

Critics countered this by questioning the BJP's silence on issues such as lynchings, cow vigilantism and attacks on Dalits. Each time, Modi stepped in to express his "displeasure". And succeeded.

The risk-taker

Be it the choice of candidates, chief ministers, economic initiatives or national security decisions, Modi has gone against the grind. The selection of CMs for Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand ignored caste conventions. Devendra Fadnavis, a Brahmin, was picked for



Narendra Modi and Amit Shah at BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Thursday. Tashi Tobgyal

People are chanting Modi, Modi. But this is not a victory of Modi, it is the victory of people who are desperate for honesty in the system... it is a win of people's hope and aspirations

We have to move ahead. We have to take everyone with us, even our opponents. We have to work for benefit of the country. You have filled this fakir's bag with a lot of hope

I will not do anything for myself. I will devote every moment of my time and every fibre of my being for my countrymen. Whenever you judge me, judge me on these three parameters

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Maharashtra where Marathas have dominated the political scene, non-tribal Raghubar Das was chosen to lead the team in Jharkhand, and Manohar Lal Khattar, who is not a Jat, was asked to lead Haryana.

Known to take decisions on his own — even while he was CM in Gujarat — Modi gave further proof of this in charting foreign policy, especially in dealing with Pakistan. The surgical strike of 2016 and the Balakot air strike this year endeared him to the masses.

On the economic front, one of his most disruptive moves was demonetisation. Many called it a huge political risk, given that elections in Uttar Pradesh were approaching. But Modi and the BJP survived the fallout of the noteban. He told the people that demonetisation was good for the country and a blow to corruption.

The rollout of the GST was seen as another move that would antagonise traders who constitute a core support base of the BJP. "Be it taxes on fuel, GST or demonetisation, many advised Modi to step back; he was told of big political calamity or threat to his position," BJP leader and author of 'Narendra Modi — Creative Disruptor: The Maker of New India' R Balashankar wrote in his book.



BJP supporters celebrate in Varanasi on Thursday. Anand Singh

Modi told the country he was able to do things his predecessors could not since he was "an ordinary" man with "raw wisdom". And that this had helped him lift

India out of its "debt crisis" and "economic mess" created by the Congress-led UPA. The sharp jump of India's rank in the Ease of Doing Business Survey helped burnish

that image. Good rankings by international rating agencies and appreciation from global institutions helped build a positive narrative for Modi. Critics continue to raise

At 25, two more Muslim MPs likely: none from BJP, ally LJP sends one

SHALINI NAIR
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

ALTHOUGH STILL very low, representation of Muslim Parliamentarians in 17th Lok Sabha may go up slightly over the last term. At last count, 25 MPs are likely to be elected, against 23 in the outgoing Lok Sabha.

Muslim representation in the Lower House comes to less than 5 per cent of its total composition, way below the community's 14-per cent share in total population.

The BJP, leading in 303 of 542 seats, is again the only winning party in general elections to not have a single Muslim MP. The party had given tickets to two Muslim candidates in West Bengal, where the community accounts for about 27 per cent of the state's population; one in Lakshadweep, which has over 95 per cent Muslim population; and three in Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley. None of the six candidates have won or are in the lead.

In Uttar Pradesh, the BSP and Samajwadi Party alliance will have three Muslim MPs each in the House: BSP's Kunwar Danish Ali (Amroha), Afzal Ansari (Ghazipur), Haji Fazlur Rehman (Saharanpur), and the SP's S T Hassan (Moradabad), Shafique Rehman Barq (Sambhal), and Azam Khan (Rampur).

The next highest number is likely to come

MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN PARLIAMENT

2019	25* (5%)
2014	23 (4.5%)
2009	28 (4.6%)
2004	35 (6.69%)
1999	32 (6.11%)
1996	27 (4.9%)
1991	29 (5.4%)
1989	33 (6.2%)
1984	45 (8.3%)
1980	49 (9.2%)
1977	32 (5.2%)
1971	28 (5.4%)
1967	28 (5.4%)
1962	26 (5.1%)
1957	23 (4.6%)
1952	25 (5%)

*Some leading at time of publication

from West Bengal, with five of six of them from TMC, and one from the Congress.

THE NEXT STEPS

CABINET MEETING

Scheduled for 5 pm Friday when a Cabinet note is expected to be moved for dissolution of 16th Lok Sabha

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEET

Home Minister Rajnath Singh at 5.30 pm Friday is expected to read out a resolution thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will join the meeting only after it is passed

PRIME MINISTER MODI

Will tender his resignation to President Ram Nath Kovind likely Friday evening

BJP PARLIAMENTARY PARTY MEET

This will set the ball rolling for the new government after the party elects Modi as its leader. The BJP and its allies will then meet President Kovind to request him to invite Modi to form the government.

ELECTION COMMISSION

After winners are officially declared, the EC is likely to present the list of newly-elected members to President Kovind Saturday.

questions but this election has seen voter after voter giving the PM the benefit of doubt: "How much can one man do?"

Outreach to Dalits, poor

Seen as a party of the upper castes, the Modi-led BJP made a concerted push to bring the 16.6 per cent Scheduled Caste population under its umbrella, and had 40 Dalit MPs. One of its master-strokes was picking Ram Nath Kovind, a Dalit leader from Uttar Pradesh, as the President. The BJP has also assiduously celebrated Dalit icon B R Ambedkar -- from a series of programmes on his 125th birth anniversary, social harmony feasts on Ambedkar Jayanti to setting up of Ambedkar international centres, holding of special Parliament sessions and celebration of November 26 as Constitution Day.

The other outreach was to the poor. Projecting the Congress's programmes to eliminate poverty as total failures, the Modi government overhauled many schemes. The BJP succeeded in convincing people that insurance schemes announced by the Modi government had secured lives, the Jan Dhan Yojana had financially empowered them; Ujjwala scheme for LPG connections to the poor had provided a clean cooking medium; the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana had made affordable housing possible; Ayushman Bharat had ensured quality healthcare; and PM-KISAN would take care of small and marginal farmers. His emphasis on open-defecation-free villages and toilets made him a Prime Minister concerned with the health of the poor. The message consistently hammered home was that the total beneficiaries of these schemes numbered 22 crore.

Long ago, Modi had said: "I have the ability to pick stones thrown at me to build a staircase to climb up." Decision 2019 has shown just that.

World leaders congratulate Modi on 'big', 'enormous' victory

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

"NARENDRA, MY friend, Congratulations. What an enormous victory.... You don't need a coalition, but I do. And that's a big difference," Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said when he called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday to congratulate him on the Lok Sabha election victory.

Late at night, US President Donald Trump congratulated Modi on his "big" victory and said that great things are in store for bilateral partnership between the countries.

"Congratulations to Prime Minister @NarendraModi and his BJP party on their BIG election victory! Great things are in store for the US-India partnership with the return of PM Modi at the helm. I look forward to continuing our important work together!" Trump tweeted. In his reply, Modi tweeted, "Thank you @realDonaldTrump! This victory represents the aspirations of a nation of 1.3 billion people. I too am looking forward to working closely with you for closer bilateral ties, which also augur well for global peace and prosperity."

Several other world leaders congratulated



Narendra Modi welcomes Benjamin Netanyahu in New Delhi. Express file

lated Modi, including Pakistan PM Imran Khan, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Japanese PM Abe Shinzo, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina, among others.

Japanese PM Abe was the first world leader to call up Modi and congratulate him, according to that country's diplomats.

China's President Xi extended "heartfelt" congratulations to Modi and vowed to work with him to take bilateral ties to a new high.

"I attach great importance to the development of China-India relations and would like to work with you to guide the development directions of the bilateral relations, enhance mutual political trust, expand pragmatic co-operation and promote the closer developmental partnership between the two countries to a new height," Xi wrote to Modi.

Xi's message congratulating Modi even before the official announcement of results came as a surprise as normally, by practice and protocol, the Chinese leadership greets leaders of other countries after results are declared officially.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "I am convinced that, as the Prime Minister of India, you will further strengthen the centuries-old friendship between our peoples and the all-round development of a particularly privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India."

Pakistan's Imran Khan tweeted, in both English and Urdu, "I congratulate Prime Minister Modi on the electoral victory of BJP and allies. Look forward to working with him for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com



“Crores of people of Bharat are fortunate to once again have a stable government. This is the triumph of the national forces. Many compliments to each and everyone who have contributed to this victory of democracy...”
BHAIYAJI JOSHI, RSS general secretary



Celebrations at the BJP office in New Delhi on Thursday. Praveen Khanna

BJP’s heartland surge flattens identity politics in UP, Bihar

RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

TURNING CASTE calculations on its head, and upending the formidable arithmetic of the Mandal formula’s main protagonists in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the BJP-led NDA has virtually flattened the politics of identity by winning 103 of the 120 Lok Sabha seats in the two states.

The BJP’s surge in the Hindi heartland pushed to the wayside the biggest political realignment of Muslim-Yadav-Dalit-Jat communities attempted by the SP-BSP-RLD alliance in UP, and the rainbow coalition of Muslim-Yadav-Mushahar-Koeri-Nishad groups put together by the RJD-led initiative in Bihar.

“*Ek bhi vote na ghatne paye, ek bhi vote na batne paye* (Not a single vote should go waste, not a single vote should be split),” was the war cry that was sounded at the first joint campaign rally of the BSP-SP-RLD in Deoband on April 7, just five days before the first phase.

This slogan summed up the coalition’s ambitions, but also exposed the limita-

tions of such a formulation in a politically crucial state. It was a call for the mutual transfer of votes among their core support base but it was also seen as a veiled suggestion to other communities that they were not needed in this arithmetic.

“*Meri ginti nahin hogi na usmein* (I will not be counted among them),” was the theme pushed by the core supporters of SP and BSP over the last couple of decades, since the advent of Mandal politics, to justify voting against “non-social justice parties”. This time, however, the gath-bandhan’s slogan virtually signalled to other communities that they would not be counted.

This left the field open for the BJP to consolidate non-Yadav and non-Jatav votes behind it. These communities had shifted to the BJP in droves during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and stuck with the party during the 2017 assembly elections. Until as late as the 2012 assembly elections, many of these communities used to vote for the SP or BSP.

EXPLAINED
E.

The results, in essence, reflect how identity-based arithmetic fell flat against the chemistry of BJP. While the BJP increased its vote share from 42.63 per cent (2014) to 49.55 per cent, the combined BSP-SP-RLD vote share slipped from 42.98 per cent (2014) to 38.92 per cent. That the gath-

bandhan didn’t cause much of a dent is obvious from the final NDA tally of 64, including two alliance partners, as against 73 in 2014.

In Bihar, too, the politics of identity was a key factor as recent as in the 2015 assembly elections, when the Opposition RJD tied up with the JD(U) to defeat the BJP. This time, after the JD(U) switched sides to join hands with the BJP, the Opposition sought to replicate the model with other parties.

The RJD weaned away the BJP’s partners — Upendra Kushwaha (RLSP) and Jitan Ram Manjhi (HAM) — and added Mukesh Sahni (VIP) to forge a rainbow coalition that drew its core support from the Muslim-Yadav-Keori-Mushahars-Nishad combination, along with the Congress.

This tie-up, however, fell flat against the NDA’s BJP-JDU-LJP alliance that rode the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The alliance together polled about 53.25 per cent votes, winning every seat except one in the state.

The results also appear to have called the bluff of politically organised peasant communities across UP, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra. These communities — Yadavs (UP and Bihar), Jats (Haryana), Patidars (Gujarat) and Marathas (Maharashtra) — had taken a dominant position in state politics until this setback.

While the Yadavs experimented with coalitions, the Jats, Patidars and Marathas have staged violent agitations against the BJP governments in these states since 2014. Their demands for quotas in jobs and educational institutions were seen as attempts to further consolidate the politics of identity.

While the BJP tried to pander to these demands at the administrative level, the results suggest that other communities have not displayed much sympathy. This time, the association of dominant communities with Opposition parties appears to have isolated them politically.

How BJP marketed to a new voting bloc: the 22 crore beneficiaries

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

SINCE LAST year, BJP president Amit Shah has emphasised one number: 22 crore. A voting bloc of 22 crore beneficiaries of at least one scheme of the Narendra Modi government in the past five years will take the party past the 300 mark, Shah said.

“With this foundation, we have done the work of a huge beneficiary outreach campaign,” he said at a press meet marking the end of campaigning.

This beneficiary outreach campaign connected the party to 18 crore beneficiaries through 161 call centres and 15,600 callers. Shah announced that the party had reached out to 24.81 crore people through this.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that 6 crore of these people were women, and 20 per cent of them were in the South. The seats that saw the most beneficiary outreach were 19 seats in Uttar Pradesh and four in Maharashtra, amounting to eight lakh beneficiaries, said sources.

A total of 14 crore people were contacted on the ground and 6 crore were reached through SMS and interactive phone calling.

The work began right after the 2014 victory, when Shah’s National Membership Drive collected over 11 crore missed calls by May 2015 and reached out to them.

This database was topped up with data of beneficiaries collected by party workers at Shah’s behest.

Sources claim that the initial collection

of beneficiaries data was to the tune of 3 crore beneficiaries and later rose to 18 crore, with added numbers from gas companies and repeated on the ground campaigns to collect more missed calls.

Closer to the elections, in July 2018, Shah tasked party general secretary Bhopendra Yadav to reconnect to this database. The team set up one call centre for every three Lok Sabha constituencies with an average of 30 callers who were locally drawn and trained in political communication.

In the last few months of campaigning, the 2015 missed call dialers and the party workers reached out afresh to the beneficiaries’ homes in two BJP campaigns. In February, Mera Parivar BJP Parivar had workers and sympathisers visit the benefi-

ciaries, get a missed call from them, and raise a flag in front of their home. In Kamal Jyoti Sankalp, workers asked beneficiaries to introduce them to more beneficiaries, adding another 8 crore phone numbers to the already collected 10 crore missed calls.

The BJP used services of a company called Jarvis Technologies to map the numbers to booths so that the call centers could conduct targeted campaigning. The call centre operations began in December and were monitored from 11 Ashoka Road.

“The soft message to the workers was you have to say two lines. Go there and say look, Modi has given schemes to this many families in only five years. Give him another five and you can make that number even more,” a senior core member of Jarvis told *The Indian Express*.



Celebrations in Bengaluru. PTI

spent Rs 21 crore on Facebook and Google and the Congress Rs 4.5 crore, but the major polit-

The man, his machine, and the 2019 blueprint

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

AFTER THE BJP’s stunning victory in 2014, many compared Amit Shah to the late BJP leader Pramod Mahajan, who was known for his strategising skills. But someone who knew Shah from his early years in politics said, “Pramod could be indulgent while dealing with a request for a seat from someone he loved or respected, even if he knew he would not be able to win it. But with Shah, it’s impossible to make him oblige if he is not sure you can win that seat.”

In 2014, not many knew the real Shah. What Indian politics has witnessed thereafter is a man who has often been called the modern-age Chanakya, someone who has unveiled his own version of the political treatise Arthashastra. By now, no one in the BJP seems to have any doubt about Shah. His determination to accomplish anything he sets his mind on, his meticulous planning and the ruthlessness with which he takes on political rivals have made him the most successful party chief.

From stitching up new social coalitions to choosing the right leaders for election management to keeping out senior leaders from the election fray — Shah’s is arguably the last word in organisational matters.

Reviving party

Soon after the BJP came to power, Shah set aside the first year — 2014-15 — to “revitalise” the party. On November 1, six months after the BJP won a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, Shah launched his party’s membership drive with the slogan ‘*Saath Aaye, Desh Banaye*’ (Come together, build the nation’).

By July, the membership, registered through a simple process of missed calls, rose from 3.5 crore to 11 crore. Shah then launched the Maha Sampark Abhiyan or the mass contact programme to familiarise new members with the organisation and its ideology.

He then kicked off ‘Mera Booth Sabse Mazboor’, another campaign to take the party ideology to the booth level. Next, he launched Deendayal Upadhyaya Vistarak Yojana from Naxalbari in West Bengal, setting off on a 95-day all-India tour to strategise on ways to win the 2019 Lok Sabha election with a clear focus on 120 seats where the party had lost in the last election. “The BJP’s booth-level management is superhuman. No other party has the management ability of the BJP,” said a party general secretary.

The effect of Shah’s plan to expand the party was first on display in Tripura, where the party overthrew the decades-old Communist government. As early as September 2016, Shah had started a contingency plan for the 2019 elections — in case the party failed to retain the seats it won in 2014. For that, he planned to zoom in on states where the party had not made deep inroads, including southern and eastern states. A core committee meeting chaired by Shah had identified around 115 seats as the party’s “new catchment area”. In these seats, across Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Northeast, general secretaries and other office bearers were given charge.

He brought about changes within the

This is a victory of true nationalism over parties supporting the ideology of the tukde-tukde gang. The politics of casteism, dynasty and appeasement politics has been buried in this massive mandate to the BJP

It is the victory of people, it is a victory of Modi’s Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas policy. Modi is the superhero of BJP’s super victory

Today’s result is India’s mandate against opposition’s propaganda, lies, personal insinuations and baseless politics. It is also the people’s mandate who have chosen development and nationalism, and rejected casteism, dynasty and appeasement

AMIT SHAH
BJP PRESIDENT

party too. Shah dismantled existing cells within the party and carved out 19 new departments. Besides, Shah identified 10 focus areas — among them, setting up of district-wise party offices, office modernisation, setting up of libraries, the membership campaign and government schemes such as Namami Ganga and Swachh Bharat.

Picking right

When it comes to choosing people to do the job, nothing comes in Shah’s way except the candidate’s ability to accomplish the mission. “There’s no lobby in the BJP. If Shah is convinced that you can do the job, you are in,” said the leader.

He had picked Sunil Bansal, a low-profile organisation person who had worked in Rajasthan and Delhi, to oversee the implementation of his blueprint for the Uttar Pradesh mission ahead of 2014. He chose P Muralidhar Rao, a general secretary who was working with Swadeshi Jagaran Manch before he came into the BJP, for the training programme. What impressed Shah about Rao was his ideological background and his ability to spread the party ideology among the cadre.

The technology push

Call-centres, GPS-fitted raths, video and hologram addresses, and tracking of booths and volunteers — the BJP’s campaign over the last five years has been infused with technology. For the 2019 election, the party had 168 call centres with 12,662 karyakartas who would contact people on telephone or through social media. Shah has incorporated high-tech designers and consultants in his team.

Multi-pronged approach

Ahead of the election, efforts were made to track beneficiaries of welfare schemes initiated by the Central government and mobilise them as the party’s core support base.



Amit Shah at the BJP office in New Delhi on Thursday. Praveen Khanna

After 2014 digital debut, 2019 push came from BJP cadre

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

THE 2014 Lok Sabha election was deemed India’s first “digital election”, in which technology brought in an unprecedented factor. In 2019, the novelty had faded. From a competition of followers and likes on the Internet, the narrative battle shifted to the ground as the ruling party leveraged its cadre to spread its message further.

“The top BJP leadership was not focusing on digital this time. Digital was a weapon taken care of by the IT cell independently,” a top political consultant hired by the BJP central leadership said. “But booth worker activation had ripple effects.”

The BJP war room shifted its focus to data collection and analysis to strengthen the party volunteer base and map potential vot-

ers. While the Congress also understood that mobile communication required a networked internal party structure, the BJP’s numbers, robust organisation and centralised decision-making proved unmatched.

The BJP had a digital head start in 2014. By mid-2013, then Gujarat CM Narendra Modi had become the Indian politician with the most Twitter followers. Congress president Rahul Gandhi did not have a Twitter account at that time, and only one in four Indians had internet access. Now, in the wake of Jio’s ultra-cheap data plan, India has nearly twice as many Internet users — almost half the population — and all political parties are in the digital fold.

Paid advertising was a basic investment for guaranteed eyeballs. Congress sources said that one YouTube masthead advertisement deal can promise 100 million unique users and 1 billion views. The BJP officially

ical spending supporting the BJP was not officially linked to the party.

Even as the Election Commission entered the digital fray for the first time, with a Voluntary Code of Ethics directing social media companies to address valid takedown requests in a timely manner, the BJP’s cadre strength concentrated on encrypted political content that could percolate out on WhatsApp. The booth-level workers, essentially the BJP’s WhatsApp nerve endings, were directed to integrate into non-BJP-affiliated WhatsApp groups in their neighborhood and circulate content beyond the party.

BJP’s IT cell head Amit Malviya said the party had roughly 1.2 million social media volunteers while a Congress spokesperson put their numbers at roughly 9 lakh.

In mid-2018, BJP chief Amit Shah went on a nationwide tour and spoke exclusively to social media volunteers and galvanised them.

“The large technology-friendly cadre and massive volunteer network that stood in support of Modi gave us an edge,” Malviya told *The Indian Express*.

The BJP had accumulated data from multiple phases of missed call campaigns starting from 2013. This led to a 25-crore strong database mapped to the booth level, focused on beneficiary outreach.

In March 2018, the Congress also began to build a database of 65 lakh workers, a dashboard to communicate with them, and an application to facilitate door-to-door campaigns. “Big data is not new. What’s new are the tools to digitise and analyse it,” said Congress’s data analytics head Praveen Chakravarty. “Today everybody has a device through which I can reach them. I just need to know more about that device or how to reach that device and more about the owner of that device. That’s what we do.”

While the BJP’s strength in numbers far surpassed the Congress, internal discord in the Congress’ publicity committee significantly stalled the selection of a company for campaigning. While the party chose Dentsu in 2014, the committee chose four firms — Silverpush, DesignBoxed, Percept, and Niksun — by the end of March 2019. In contrast, the BJP has been working with Jarvis Technologies to reach out to beneficiaries since mid-2018 and continued to work with Association of Billion Minds since the previous state elections.

Some central Congress social media heads attributed their defeat to a lack of funds. “It was primarily an issue of money. Even if you had imperfect communication, with enough money you can whitewash imperfection,” one of them said. This social media head said he was already gearing up to take back the narrative.

10 OPPOSITION DECISION 2019



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE
The CPI(M) has suffered a severe setback in these elections. We shall introspect the reasons for this and draw proper lessons for the future...
SITARAM YECHURY, CPI(M) general secretary



“We had not contemplated that the alliance will fare so badly. People are not able to digest the poll results. It is against their sentiment and aspirations,”
— **Mayawati**, *BSP president*



“We will analyse the poll results and brace for the great battles that lie ahead while remaining steadfast in the principles of Gandhi, Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan and Karpoori Thakur”
— **Tejashwi Yadav**, *RJD leader*

LS polls won, BJP may target Opp govts in Karnataka, MP

MANOJ CGG & JOHNSON T A
NEW DELHI, BENGALURU, MAY 23

THE BJP sweep in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan — the two key heartland states which the Congress won just five months ago — and in Karnataka, where it trounced the Congress-JD(S) alliance, may have implications for the stability of the governments in these states.

Soon after winning 25 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, state BJP chief and former chief minister B S Yeddyurappa — who has consistently claimed to have the tacit support of 20 Congress MLAs — said the “future of the coalition will be sealed in a few days”. BJP leader D V Sadananda Gowda has also claimed that JDS leader H D Kumaraswamy will not be the chief minister for long.

The BJP, which won 104 seats in the Assembly polls last year, was kept out of power by a post-poll coalition forged by the Congress, which won 80 seats, and the JDS, which won 37 seats, in the 224-member Assembly.

The BJP managed to increase its tally to 105 on Thursday by winning the Chincholi assembly bypoll, although the party lost the Kundgol bypoll to the Congress.

Besides, Congress leaders, many owing allegiance to former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, have been making noises about replacing Kumaraswamy. Some of them have already gone on record to slam the national leadership. Congress leader Siddaramaiah, however, said on Thursday that no party MLA would quit the party to join the BJP.

Meanwhile in Rajasthan, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, whose son Vaibhav Gehlot has lost from Jodhpur, may face demands for his

Karnataka Congress leaders, many owing allegiance to former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, have been making noises about replacing Kumaraswamy. Some of them have already gone on record to slam the national leadership

replacement.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, on the other hand, may not face that problem, as his main detractor, Jyotiraditya Scindia, veteran Digvijaya Singh and Arjun Singh's son Ajay Singh have all lost. The only seat the Congress won in Madhya Pradesh was Chhindwara, where Nath's son, Nakul, was the candidate.

But the Congress has a razor thin majority in Madhya Pradesh.

The party has 114 of the 230 seats and has formed the government with the support of two BSP, one SP and four Independent MLAs. The BJP has 109 members, including MLA Gumansingh Damor, who contested the Lok Sabha polls from Ratlam-Jhabua constituency.

The BJP has already turned the heat on the Congress, with Leader of the Opposition Gopal Bhargava calling for a special session to discuss important issues.

“Once the discussion is over, depending on the developments and consultation with the leadership and organisation, we may ask the Speaker to conduct a floor test,” Bhargava had told *The Indian Express* earlier this week.



FALLING SHORT

Congress president Rahul Gandhi and eastern UP in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in New Delhi on Thursday. *Anil Sharma*

Priyanka a non-starter, Cong loses most seats where she campaigned

MANOJ CGG
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

THE CONGRESS party lost all the seats, barring Sonia Gandhi's Rae Bareilly and Rahul Gandhi's Wayanad, where Priyanka Gandhi campaigned. The Congress bucked the national trend in Punjab, winning eight of the 13 seats but among the five seats it lost include Bathinda and Gurdaspur — the two seats where she had campaigned.

Along with Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka was among the few leaders who campaigned in more than one state. And the massive defeat that the Congress has suffered has sent a message loud and clear — that the Priyanka factor failed to make any impact.

Priyanka campaigned in 12 seats outside UP. And the Congress lost in 11, among them Silchar in Assam, Ambala, Hisar and Rohtak in Haryana, North East Delhi and South Delhi, Ratlam and Indore in Madhya Pradesh, and Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

In eastern UP, of which she was in charge, the party lost even Amethi, the traditional bastion of the Nehru-Gandhi family. The drubbing in Uttar Pradesh is a severe setback for the Congress as Rahul had more than once maintained that he wanted Priyanka to focus on the next Assembly elections in 2022.

Among the UP seats where Priyanka campaigned are Dauraha, Kushi Nagar, Barabanki, Unnao and Kanpur, besides constituencies such as Fatehpur, Jhansi, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur and Sultanpur, Dumariaganj, Basti, Sant Kabirnagar and Bhadohi to name a few.

Left's worst show: Zero in West Bengal, five in all

MANOJ CGG
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

THIS IS the worst performance for the Left, which drew a blank in its one-time bastion of West Bengal and won just one seat in Kerala, where it is in power. Its overall tally was five, down from 10 in 2014.

The Left has seen a steady decline since 2009, after recording its best performance in 2004, when it won 59 seats and emerged as a major political force and the architect of the UPA-I government. It slumped to 24 in 2009, 10 in 2014 and now 5. The CPI(M) fell from 44 seats in 2009 to 16 in 2009, 9 in 2014, and 3 — Alappuzha in Kerala and Coimbatore and Madurai in Tamil Nadu — this time. The CPI won two seats — Nagapattinam and Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu.

Four of the five Left's seats came from Tamil Nadu, where it is a fringe player, riding on the pro-DMK wave. In West Bengal, its sitting MPs — Politburo member Mohammad Salim in Raiganj and Badaruddoza Khan in Murshidabad — came third and fourth respectively. In Kerala, the Sabarimala controversy and Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad had their impact. The Left's poster boy, Kanhaiya Kumar, came second in Begusarai.

In a clear indication that the Left votes have shifted to the BJP in West Bengal, the CPI(M) saw its vote share drop from 22.96% in 2014 to only 6.3%. The CPI vote share was down from 2.36% in 2014 to 0.39%.

In the past, the Left did well whenever there was a pro-Congress wave — it won 54 seats in 1980, when Indira Gandhi stormed back to power, and 33 seats in 1984, in the



The CPI(M) party office in Kolkata on Thursday. *Shashi Ghosh*

wake of her assassination. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, it won 56 seats.

“In West Bengal, we were expecting 3-4 four seats for the CPI(M). There was massive rigging in constituencies that we were expecting to win. Also, it seems that in the wake of the anger against the ruling TMC, a section of Left supporters may have voted for the BJP,” said CPI general secretary S Sudhakar Reddy.

Asked if the Left has lost relevance in the wake of a right-wing surge, he said: “Yes, it is

an advantage for the right wing. And going ahead, there will be more anti-people, anti-worker, anti-public sector policies.” Asked about the Left's future, he replied, “We have to review”.

“It is the worst-ever defeat for the Left. This is not the end of all,” said his party colleague D Raja. He said the verdict “shows the failure of secular, democratic Opposition parties, who could not provide a credible, viable alternative in every state by coming together and having proper seat-sharing arrangements by being accommodative to each other.”

‘Naamdars’ lose, across non-NDA parties, across states

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

AMONG THE slogans coined by the BJP for the 2019 elections was the oft-repeated ‘Naamdar vs Kaamdar’. PM Narendra Modi himself repeatedly raised the slogan, starting from the Assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in December.

While Modi used the slogan primarily to attack Congress president Rahul Gandhi — framing it as a battle between Naamdars known for their last names, and Kaamdars defined by their work — in the results declared on Thursday, several dynasts were licked.

A total of 38 candidates belonging to political families, particularly regional, were in the fray. Of these, 22 were trailing at 7 pm. What will make this more bitter for the Opposition is that even in this, the voters appeared to reserve their contempt for the non-NDA parties. All the 22 trailing belonged to non-BJP parties — 10 from the Congress, three the SP, two the RLD, two the JD(S) and one each the TRS, TDP, NCP, RJD and Jannayak Janata Party (JJP). The eight NDA candidates (six BJP, two JJP) with political lineage all appeared to be winning by comfortable margins.

Apart from them, two candidates from the Congress, two from the SP and one each from JDS and NCP families were also winning.

The top of the pack among dynasts to fall was Congress president Rahul Gandhi, defeated from the family pocketborough of Amethi.

In Tumkur, Karnataka, JD(S) supremo and former PM H D Deve Gowda trailed behind BJP candidate G S Basavaraj, in what would be his first ever election loss. His grandson Nikhil Kumaraswamy, son of Karnataka CM HD Kumaraswamy, was staring at a loss in Mandya against Independent candidate Sumalata Ambareesh, said to be backed by the BJP. Only his other grandson, Prajwal Revanna, appeared to be winning from Hasan.

In Telangana, powerful TRS chief and state CM Chandrasekhara Rao's daughter K Kavitha was way behind the BJP's Arvind Dharmapuri in Nizamabad.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, at the forefront of cobbling up Opposition alliance for months, was not only routed in the Andhra Assembly elections by the YSRCP (Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party) but even his son Nara Lokesh trailed by a significant margin in Mangalgi. He was losing to the YSRCP's A R Krishna Reddy.

In UP, the story was no different. Dharmendra Yadav (Badaun) and Akshay Yadav (Ferozabad), nephews of former state CM Mulayam Singh Yadav, both trailed behind BJP candidates. Even SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple trailed from Kannauj behind the BJP's Subrat Pathak. Only Akhilesh and Mulayam led from their seats of Azamgarh and Mainpuri.

In 2014, the SP had won five seats in UP, all by Mulayam family members. Both RLD chief Ajit Singh and his son Jayant Chaudhary lost, from Muzaffarnagar and Baghpat respectively. Congress's Jitin Prasada lost from Dhaurahra, behind the BJP and BSP candidates.

In the state, the other winning dynasts belonged to the BJP. Union minister Maneka Gandhi was in tough fight against the BSP's Chandra Bhadra Singh in Sultanpur, leading by a slender margin. Her son Varun Gandhi though was comfortably placed in Pilibhit, with almost 60% votes in his favour.

In neighbouring Bihar, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti trailed behind the BJP's Ram Kripal Yadav by a significant margin in Patliputra. Ram Kripal had won the seat against Misa in 2014 as well.

The IJP's Ram Vilas Paswan, another state satrap, however, found himself on the right side of the dynastic divide. Both his son Chirag Paswan and brother Paras Kumar were winning from their respective con-



H D Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil



Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple



Bhupinder Hooda's son Deepender

situencies of Jamui and Hajipur.

In Madhya Pradesh, among the shock losers was top Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia from Guna, trailing by a significant margin behind the BJP's Krishnapal Singh.

State CM Kamal Nath's son Nakul seemed comfortably placed in his bastion Chhindwara, in what could be the Congress's only win in MP.

In Maharashtra too, dynasties saw mixed results. While NCP chief Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule seemed to be winning her seat (Baramati) by a comfortable margin, his grandson Parth Pawar was trailing from Maval.

In Mumbai South, Milind Deora, the son of former Union minister Murli Deora, was way behind the Shiv Sena's Arvind Sawant. In Mumbai North Central, with two dynasts in the fray, the BJP's Poonam Mahajan, daughter of late Pramod Mahajan, was leading the Congress's Priya Dutt, daughter of former sports minister Sunil Dutt.

From Nanded, Ashok Chavan, the son of former Congress leader Shankarrao Chavan, was also losing. He had won the seat in 2014.

In Haryana, candidates from top political families stared at defeat. Both former state CM Bhupender Hooda (Sonapat) and son Deepender (Rohtak) trailed by a large margin. In Hisar, the contest between two dynasts appears to have gone in favour of the BJP. Union minister Chaudhary Birendra Singh's son Brijendra Singh was leading JJP candidate and grandson of former state CM Om Prakash Chautala by more than 2 lakh votes.

In Rajasthan, while Congress CM Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav appeared to be losing from Jodhpur, former state CM Vasundhara Rajee's son was in a position to win from Jhalawar.

In West Bengal, former president Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijeet was staring at a severe drubbing in Jangipur while state CM Mamata Bannerjee's nephew Abhishek looked headed for a comfortable victory.

In Assam, while former CM Tarun Gogoi's son won by a comfortable margin from Kaliabor, the Congress's Sushmita Dev trailed far behind the BJP in Silchar.

BIG LOSERS

SALMAN KHURSHID (CONG)
Comes in third in UP's Farrukhabad behind BJP's Mukesh Rajput, BSP's Manoj Agarwal



ASHOK GAJAPATHI RAJU (TDP)
Loses to YSRCP's Bellana Chandra Sekhar in Vizianagaram by 4,80,36 votes



JITAN RAM MANJHI (HAM-S)
Loses to JD(U)'s Vijay Kumar in Bihar's Gaya by 1,52,426 votes



KIRTI AZAD (CONG)
Trails BJP's Pashupati Nath Singh in Dhanbad by over 4.8 lakh votes



ARJUN CHAUTALA (INLD)
Comes in fifth in Haryana's Kurukshetra, with BJP's Nayab Singh winning the seat



BABULAL MARANDI (JVM-P)
Loses to BJP's Annapurna Devi in Jharkhand's Kodarma by 4,55,600 votes





“This is for the first time in India that nationalism was put first in general elections.”

— SUMITRA MAHAJAN, BJP leader and former Indore MP

MADHYA PRADESH 29 SEATS



RAJASTHAN 25 SEATS



Leads/results till 1 am

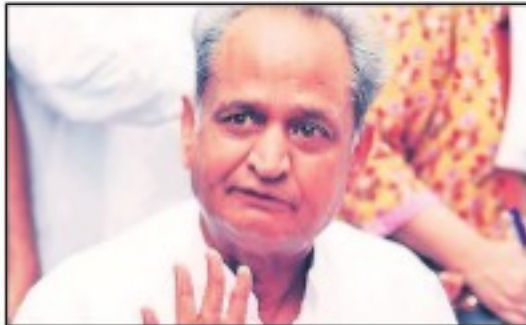


THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Bhopal candidates — Congress's Digvijaya Singh and BJP's Pragya Singh Thakur — during the counting of votes. Pragya won by a margin of 3,64,822 votes. *Hitesh Bajpai*

5 QUESTIONS RAJASTHAN CM ASHOK GEHLOT

CONGRESS LEADER SPEAKS TO MANOJ CG ABOUT THE RESULTS IN RAJASTHAN



The Congress drew a blank in Rajasthan and could manage to win only 51 seats. What went wrong?
BJP did not frame the election based on issue or ideology, programme or policies. They only harped on communalism and converted the election into one on nationalism as if they are the only custodians of it. Pakistan, Pulwama, Balakot...they took the election into that mode. So the people also started thinking about Modi or no Modi. There was no other reason.

And the Congress could not counter it?
In Congress, Rahul Gandhi fought a remarkable fight... Modi could not reply to any of the allegations. He made the people sentimental... He won by misleading and confusing the people.

Were their any shortcomings organisationally?
There were no shortcomings... the campaign of the Congress was spectacular...They (BJP) polarised the election in a different way... They misled and provoked the younger generation using social media.

Many people believe Rahul Gandhi should step down. It is all nonsense... Everybody has confidence that only he can fight.

What changes should the Congress carry out organisationally and in its messaging to the people?
The Congress Working Committee will discuss all this.

Months after voting Vasundhara out, Rajasthan throws weight behind Modi

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, MAY 23

THE BJP not only won all the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan, but also increased its margin in 20 seats — including one contested by an ally — and its overall vote share in the state. The BJP increased its vote share from 55.61 per cent in 2014 to over 58 per cent. This was also an increase over its voteshare of 38.8 per cent in the Assembly elections late last year. The Congress, which won zero seats in 2014, had received 30.73 of the vote share then; this time it slightly improved it to 34.2 per cent. In the Assembly elections last year, it got 39.3 per cent of the total votes. Among the prominent Congress candidates who suffered a defeat are Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot in Jodhpur, Olympian Krishna Poonia in Jaipur Rural, Jitendra Singh in Alwar and Manvendra Singh in Barmer. Congress insiders said the party expected to win at least seven seats, including Dausa, Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, Barmer, Karauli Dholpur, Sikar, Barmer and Jodhpur.

What worked for the BJP was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focussed campaign around national security, terrorism, Pakistan and the cross border strikes. It was only towards the end of his speeches that the Prime Minister would list his government's achievements in Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya Yojana, Jan Dhan, MUDRA, PM Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Soil Health Cards and Ayushman Bharat, etc. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said, "While Congress president Rahul Gandhi contested the elections on the issue of development, Narendra Modi blew the model code of conduct to smithereens and contested the polls on religion, caste, and army's valour." For the Congress, Rahul's campaign around the alleged corruption in Rafale deal and the NYAY scheme for farmers did not yield dividends. The party had hit the ground running after forming the government in the state and announced farm loan waiver, unemployment dole, etc. but these seem to have been unsuccessful in swaying the voters. The friction between the Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot camps also affected party's prospects. The results epitomised the slogan doing the rounds during Assembly elections last year: 'Modi tujh se bair nahin, Rani teri khair nahin' (Nothing against Modi, but the queen has had it). Five months after voting out Raje, the electorate threw its full weight behind Modi.



Vasundhara Raje with BJP state chief Madan Lal Saini in Jaipur. *Rohit Jain Paras*

Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, Barmer, Karauli Dholpur, Sikar, Barmer and Jodhpur. What worked for the BJP was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focussed campaign around national security, terrorism, Pakistan and the cross border strikes. It was only towards the end of his speeches that the Prime Minister would list his government's achievements in Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya

Yojana, Jan Dhan, MUDRA, PM Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Soil Health Cards and Ayushman Bharat, etc. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said, "While Congress president Rahul Gandhi contested the elections on the issue of development, Narendra Modi blew the model code of conduct to smithereens and contested the polls on religion, caste, and army's valour." For the Congress, Rahul's campaign around the alleged corruption in Rafale deal and the NYAY scheme for farmers did not yield dividends. The party had hit the ground running after forming the government in the state and announced farm loan waiver, unemployment dole, etc. but these seem to have been unsuccessful in swaying the voters. The friction between the Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot camps also affected party's prospects. The results epitomised the slogan doing the rounds during Assembly elections last year: 'Modi tujh se bair nahin, Rani teri khair nahin' (Nothing against Modi, but the queen has had it). Five months after voting out Raje, the electorate threw its full weight behind Modi.

Modi factor, ‘mistakes’ by Baghel govt behind Cong defeat in Chhattisgarh

DIPANKAR GHOSE
RAIPUR, MAY 23

AS THE BJP swept to power, the Congress was reduced to binary scores across the country and performed poorly in Chhattisgarh too, winning only two of the 11 seats. While the Prime Minister's image was certainly a factor in a state where the BJP changed all 10 of its sitting MPs, many within and outside the Congress believe that five months of party rule have seen a series of mistakes that have exacerbated the problem. Five months ago, the Congress barely scraped through in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, but in Chhattisgarh it won 68 of 90 seats. In all three previous elections, the party which won the Vidhan sabha elections in December, won the Lok Sabha elections in May. All three times it was the BJP. The Congress lost with the highest margin — of over four lakh — in Durg, which is

CHHATTISGARH 11 SEATS



home to three ministers, including CM Bhupesh Baghel. "That is actually the reason why Durg, and even Surguja have been lost. All three were CM candidates, and since then, no relationship building has taken place. Everyone is pulling in solitary directions and

there is no sign of collective leadership. In Durg, this margin means neither the Kurmis, with Baghel being a Kurmi leader, or the Sahus voted," said a senior Congress leader. If the BJP campaign in the state was single-minded, replacing its old guard with 11 new faces to concentrate on Modi during the campaign, the Congress failed to show political clarity. Its flagship scheme Narwa Gurwa Gharwa Baari has failed to show immediate results, and while the loan waiver may have assuaged some farmers, many believed in a clear national alternative. "On top of that, there were administrative lapses. Despite them being because of administrative reasons, the BJP used the stoppage of subsidised chana and salt to their advantage in tribal areas... This is clear government laxity," a senior Congress leader said. While former CM Raman Singh said this was a vote for Modi, other BJP leaders said that there was a clear two prong strategy. "One was Modi... The other was to highlight... what the Congress has done wrong," a BJP leader said.

Pragya wins ‘ideological battle’ against Digvijaya

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, MAY 23

BILLED AS an ideological battle, the emphatic victory of political novice Pragya Singh Thakur from Bhopal has demolished former chief minister Digvijaya Singh's plans of returning to active politics in Madhya Pradesh. After the debacle of the Congress in the 2003 Assembly polls, the senior Congress leader had vowed not to contest any election for 10 years. When he finally decided to take the plunge again, with the Lok Sabha, he wanted to contest from Rajgarh, his home turf, but in clever manoeuvring by Chief Minister Kamal Nath, a rival in state politics, Digvijaya found himself in contest from Bhopal, one of the safest BJP seats in the state. "Even an ordinary worker can defeat Singh in Bhopal," former CM Uma Bharti had said before the BJP announced the candida-

ture of the Malegaon blast case accused. Her remark that Godse is, was, and will be a patriot got the Prime Minister to say that he "could not forgive her from his heart". But that hardly helped Digvijaya. He probably visited more temples than Pragya, fed roti to a cow, and was escorted by sadhus during a march. His campaign also appeared to be organised and systematic unlike the chaos surrounding Pragya's initial efforts, before the RSS took over the reins. In between, she had to endure a 72-hour ban on campaigning due to her controversial statements. She used the break to visit temples and sing bhajans in the glare of TV cameras. Just three days before the campaign ended, she released a patchy vision document in stark contrast to the one unveiled by the Congress leader. None of this appears to have helped Digvijaya live down the BJP's projection of him as anti-Hindu and pro-minority.

5 QUESTIONS | VINAY SAHASRABUDDHE

BJP VICE-PRESIDENT AND MADHYA PRADESH IN-CHARGE TALKS TO MILIND GHATWAI ABOUT PRAGYA SINGH THAKUR'S VICTORY AND WHAT WORKED IN THE PARTY'S FAVOUR

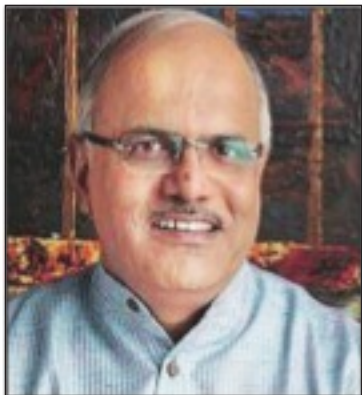
Was there a Modi wave and did you expect such an outcome?

More than a wave it was an undercurrent... But honestly, 28 (out of 29) was more than our expectations.

What worked in the BJP's favour?

Three clear factors. First, overwhelming support for Modi as PM... People were repentant (about Assembly poll results) after unseating the BJP government... people were frustrated because the government did not keep its word on loan waiver and unemployment dole.

There is a general feeling that BJP will destabilise the Congress government. It will get destabilised under the weight



of its own contradictions...

Is there a message in Pragya Singh Thakur's victory?

We were clear that her candidature is our 'satyagrah' against the vote bank politics of the Congress... Digvijaya Singh symbolised the pervert vote bank politics...

Did the BJP have any special campaign plan against Scindia?
I will draw a parallel between Amethi and Guna. For political dynasties, the constituencies gave a very clear message... Generations who voted in this election do not have an emotional connect with monarchies...

After Assembly win, the defeat

WHILE the Congress fared badly nationally, its drubbing in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh — three states where it had won five months ago — compounded its defeat. All the three states had announced waiver of farm loans, as promised by Rahul Gandhi during the election campaign. There

EXPLAINED

E.

were other sops which were on the anvil. There were seasoned and experienced leaders at the helm in at least two states — Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The verdict, despite all this, underlines the challenges ahead, especially in Madhya Pradesh where the Congress does not have majority on its own.

RAJYAVARDHAN SINGH RATHORE (BJP)
wins Jaipur Rural, defeats Congress's Krishna Poonia by a margin of 3,93,171 votes



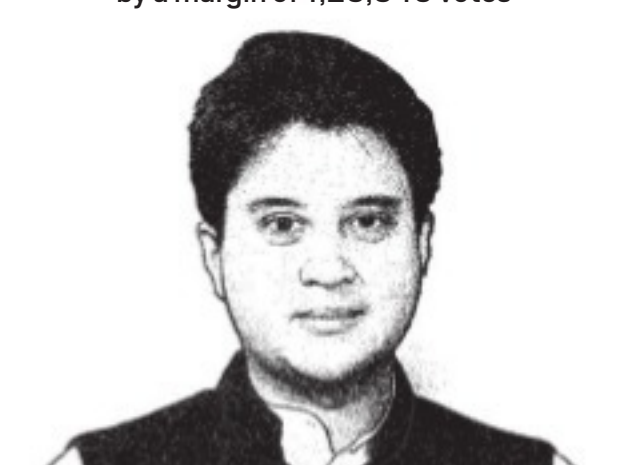
VAIBHAV GEHLOT (CONGRESS)
loses Jodhpur to BJP's Gajendra Singh Shekhawat by a margin of 2,74,440 votes



NAKUL NATH (CONGRESS)
wins Chhindwara, defeats BJP's Nathansaha Kawreti by a margin of 37,536 votes



JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA (CONGRESS)
defeated in Guna by BJP's Krishna Pal Singh by a margin of 1,25,549 votes



“It is high time for the opposition to introspect and shun politics of negativity...”

— YOGI ADITYANATH,
BJP leader and UP chief minister

UTTAR PRADESH 80 SEATS



BJP
62

2014
71



BSP
10

2014
0



SP
5

2014
5



CONG
1

2014
2

OTHERS
2

Leads/results till 1 am

In alliance dark cloud, BSP gets silver lining

BSP set to get 10, saffron party's tally down but vote share rises, as SP and Cong both see a dip in votes polled

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, MAY 23

WHILE THE alliance between the BSP and the SP managed to make some dent in the mandate that the BJP got in Uttar Pradesh in 2014 — 71 seats — the BSP emerged to be the major gainer.

The BJP lost numbers compared to 2014 but gained in terms of vote-share. The SP got around the same number of seats but lost in terms of vote-share. The BSP, which led on 10 seats, maintained its vote-share.

As of late Thursday, the BJP led in 62 out of UP's 80 seats, reflecting the Congress's inability in giving a strong fight even in its bastion of Amethi. The grand old party appeared to the biggest loser, with even its vote-share dipping in the state. This comes even after the party launched Priyanka Gandhi as general secretary in charge of eastern UP who extensively campaigned in the region.

Despite losing about 15 seats to the alliance, the BJP's vote share increased in the state from 42.63 per cent in 2014 to approximately 49.5 per cent this time. The BSP maintained the same vote-share (around 19.27), while the SP's share dipped from 22 per cent in 2014 to about 18 per cent.

The Congress's vote-share came down from 7.53 per cent to about 6.3 per cent. The party got a major shock in Amethi, where AICC president Rahul Gandhi lost to Union minister Smriti Irani of BJP by about 55,000 votes. Irani maintained her lead against Rahul through all the rounds of counting.

In Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke his previous record of 3.71-lakh margin, winning by about 4.79 lakh votes. The Congress chose to repeat local leader Ajai Rai against Modi, but the SP's Shalini Yadav finished second.

Among other surprising results were Union minister Manoj Sinha of the BJP losing to BSP's Afzal Ansari in Ghazipur by a margin of over 1 lakh votes, and BSP candidate Atul Kumar Singh, absconding in an alleged rape case, winning from Ghosi.

The BSP was leading from Ambedkar Nagar, Amroha, Ghazipur, Ghosi, Bijnor, Jaunpur, Lalganj, Nagina, Saharanpur and Sharavasti.

The SP failed to retain some of the constituencies it had won in 2014, including Kannauj, where Dimple Yadav, wife of party chief Akhilesh Yadav, was trailing by 12,000 votes. Akhilesh won from Azamgarh by over 2.5 lakh votes against Bhojpuri actor Dinesh Lal Nirahua of BJP. Party patriarch Mulayam Yadav won from Mainpuri by about 94,000 votes. Two sitting SP MPs — Akshay Yadav in Firozabad and Dharmendra Yadav in Badaun — were trailing to BJP candidates. In Rampur, Azam Khan of SP was leading by a margin of about 94,000 votes against Jaya Prada of the BJP.

RAWAT CLAIMS POSSIBILITY OF EVM TAMPERING

BJP retains all five seats in Uttarakhand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, MAY 23

THE BJP won all five Lok Sabha seats in Uttarakhand, dealing a blow to the Congress, which has failed to revive itself despite two of its big faces — former chief minister Harish Rawat and Pradesh Congress Committee president Pritam Singh — contesting the polls.

While the BJP contested the polls in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, national security was a prominent poll theme for the party in a state which has a significant population of defence personnel and ex-servicemen. The Congress found itself on the backfoot on both their factors.

UTTARAKHAND 5 SEATS



BJP
5

2014
5



CONG
0

2014
0

In Haridwar seat, former CM and sitting BJP MP Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank drubbed Ambrish Kumar of Congress by 2,58,729 votes.

BJP national secretary Tirath Singh Rawat won the Pauri (Garhwal) seat defeating Congress's Manish Khanduri, the son of his political mentor and sitting MP BC Khanduri,

by 3,02,669 votes.

Erstwhile royal Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah defeated Pradesh Congress president Pritam Singh by 3,00,586 votes in Tehri Garhwal. BJP's Ajay Tamta defeated Congress's Pradeep Tamata by 2,32,986 votes in Almora.

The biggest setback for the party is the de-

feat of Harish Rawat at the hands of Uttarakhand BJP chief Ajay Bhatt from Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar by a margin of 3,39,096 votes. Rawat said, "I will have to now reposition myself as a political leader... I may not contest an election after this."

Alleging tampering of EVMs, Rawat said, "The BJP has won even in places where there are traditional Congress voters. This shows that tampering of EVMs might be a possibility."

Dismissing Rawat's allegation of EVM tampering, Ajay Bhatt said, "Our party workers worked very hard, so I will not accept these allegations."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

CM Trivendra Singh Rawat, who headed the BJP's campaign in the state, said, "I feel happy and vindicated."

EXPLAINED

Gathbandhan loses UP-hill battle

THE OPPOSITION'S efforts to hold back the BJP suffered the biggest setback in Uttar Pradesh, where the SP-BSP-RLD gathbandhan was the biggest political realignment in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. But the attempt to consolidate their respective vote-banks was countered by the consolidation of the non-Yadav, non-Jatav communities behind the BJP. Consequently, the BJP improved its vote share, even as it lost a few seats to the alliance. The gathbandhan failed to make any substantial dent to the BJP's tally in the state. Within the alliance, while the BSP emerged as the bigger beneficiary, several members of both the SP and RLD first families lost.

No gains for SP, party leaders say must check if BSP votes transferred

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

WITH THE Samajwadi Party (SP) leading in only five seats in Uttar Pradesh despite its much-hyped alliance with the BSP, senior SP leaders have expressed concern and said the party should check if the BSP's votes were adequately transferred to the party.

Besides Moradabad and Sambhal, where SP candidates are leading, SP national president Akhilesh Yadav is leading from Azamgarh, party patron Mulayam Singh Yadav from Mainpuri and MLA Azam Khan from Rampur.

If the SP wins all these five seats, its tally will be the same as in 2014. But the party is trailing in its bastions of Kannauj, Firozabad and Badaun. In Kannauj, Akhilesh's wife Dimple Yadav is trailing behind the BJP candidate by a small margin. In Firozabad, Mulayam's younger brother and SP rebel Shivpal Singh Yadav has hurt the party's official candidate - while Shivpal has scored more than 91,000 votes, SP candidate Akshay Yadav is trailing behind the BJP by 28,364 votes.

The BSP, which drew a blank in the 2014 elections, has already won four seats and is leading in six other seats.

SP leader and Rajya Sabha member Chandrapal Singh Yadav said, "The results are surprising. We will review the results from each polling station and find out whether the vote were transferred (BSP's to SP). Another reason could be polarisation of votes because of the alliance."

Chandrapal Yadav, however, insisted that the alliance had been fruitful. "We have got the votes. There was no loss. Earlier, SP had five seats and BSP zero. Today we have 17-18 seats. So, we cannot call it a loss. The situation would have probably been worse if there was no alliance," he said.

SP founder and Rajya Sabha member leader Beni Prasad Verma said, "Modi ki aandhi hai to kya kiya jae (what can be done if there is a Modi storm)." On the alliance with the BSP, Verma said, "The alliance was okay but the results went contrary to our expectations."

Javed Ali Khan, another Rajya Sabha member of the SP, too said the SP and BSP would have been worse off had they not come together. Khan said the alliance failed to sense the impact of the BJP's nationalism agenda.

5 QUESTIONS

HARISH RAWAT, FORMER UTTARAKHAND CM

SPEAKS TO **KAVITA UPADHYAY** AFTER THE CONGRESS'S DEBACLE IN ALL FIVE SEATS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HIS OWN DEFEAT FROM NAINITAL-UDHAM SINGH NAGAR SEAT

What does this defeat mean for the Congress in Uttarakhand?

It is a big defeat for the party, but we will work together and ensure that we become stronger in future.

What does it mean to you, considering you lost the 2017 Assembly polls from two seats — Kichha and Haridwar Rural — and the BJP is claiming this is the end of your political career?

I am 71. Before these elections I had to ask myself whether I was ready for this, and I thought I was. But now I don't think I will be able to contest another election. I will work for the party and help build party's future leadership.

What do you think went wrong?

No one knows what may have gone wrong. No one has been able to make sense of the fact that people voted for a myth named (Narendra) Modi. But this myth will not last long. They (BJP) will eventually realise that adhering to promises is essential to win elections.

Do you feel your decision to contest from Nainital, instead of Haridwar, which you have earlier represented, was a wrong decision?

How will the Congress revive itself in Uttarakhand?

We will have to work on people's issues. There is no other way to revive the party.

I do feel I took a wrong decision. There was anti-incumbency against the BJP in Haridwar. Had I contested from there, it would have been a close contest. I may even have won.

