

8 DECISION 2019



IN AYODHYA, ONE DECISION VIA THE BALLOT

Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas president Mahant Nritya Gopal Das; Iqbal Ansari, the son of main Babri Masjid petitioner Hashim Ansari, on way to vote Monday. Vishal Srivastav

In villages along UP-MP border, a call for parties to talk about scheme that matters

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
TIKAMGARH/LALITPUR, MAY 6

TWO YEARS ago, Binita Kumar Ahirwar, a resident of Chhaprat village in Uttar Pradesh’s Lalitpur district, got an Aadhaar card made in the hope of availing government schemes. However, this January when the 21-year-old gave birth to a boy, that didn’t help much. Four months on, Ahirwar is yet to receive the Rs 5,000 promised under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) — a safe motherhood programme that provides financial assistance for the first pregnancy. The Aadhaar card, she says, now lies in a suitcase. A few kilometres from Uttar Pradesh’s southern border, Chhaprat lies in the Bundelkand region, spread across UP and Madhya Pradesh. In most villages along the border here, that *The Indian Express* visited, very few women had benefited from the PM-MVY scheme, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 31, 2016. “What women need here is safe delivery options and timely benefits from schemes. But no party talks about it,” says Kamla Yadav, an anganwadi worker. There are 21 pregnant women in the village now, Yadav said. Ahirwar’s husband Rajesh, like several other farmers in Bundelkhand, has been suffering losses in farming due to the droughts. He earns Rs 30,000 in six months. Two huts away, Rachna Ahirwar is nursing her one-year-old daughter. She says she got the PMMVY’s final instalment of Rs 2,000 11 months after her delivery. “I thought I’ll buy food and clothes when she is born. We kept waiting for the money,” the 22-year-old says. In the border villages of Lalitpur (that voted on April 29) and the neighbouring Tikamgarh (that voted on May 6), the election fervour is barely visible, except for a few flags at grocery stores and the occasional Congress and BJP election symbols on walls. Congress candidate Kiran Ahirwar from



Rachna got first instalment of PMMVY 11 months after delivery. Tabassum Barnagarwala

the Tikamgarh seat in northern Madhya Pradesh, admits that “the constituency is too large”, making it difficult to visit all villages. In most villages, Kiran claims, there are delays in Aadhaar-linked schemes such as the PMMVY. “After polls, we will set up camps to resolve such issues,” she adds. Congress party workers say that they have been focusing on the failures of the the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in their campaign so far, and not on maternity schemes. “But we must receive complaints from women to take it up,” Kiran says. PMMVY, a revamped version of the previous Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, provides pregnant women Rs 5,000 for nutritional support in three instalments — Rs 1,000 for registering, Rs 2,000 in the sixth month of pregnancy, and Rs 2,000 after delivery. Aadhaar linkage is mandatory. As per data from the Ministry of Women

and Child Development, till December 2018, 61 lakh beneficiaries had been enrolled under the scheme. Of these, 49.8 lakh women have received the money. Annually, however, the WCD Ministry had estimated to cover 51.6 lakh women under the scheme. In 2017-18, 25 lakh and in 2018-19 (till December) 35.5 lakh beneficiaries were registered. Two kilometres away, along the highway connecting Madhya Pradesh with UP, the 250 residents of Khidkiyadag village in the Sagar Lok Sabha constituency (MP) are yet to see a candidate campaign in their area. Vehicle checks by the Election Commission officials at the nearby toll booth are the only poll marker. The constituency votes on May 12. In the village, Sunita Pal, 21, is the lone beneficiary of PMMVY, says the local ASHA worker. “I went for a check-up at the Public Health Centre but no one told me about any mater-

EXPLAINED

E.

Maternity benefits: missing its target

THE PRADHAN MANTRI Matru Vandana Yojana aims to improve the nutrition of pregnant women in rural and tribal areas, to reduce maternal, neo-natal and infant deaths. As per NITI Aayog data from 2016, infant deaths in UP stand at 43 per 1,000 live births, and in MP at 47, making the two states among worst five in the country.

nity scheme,” says Rani Ahirwar, 20, who is five months pregnant, when ASHA Rambati Adivasi visits her home. Adivasi too complains that most men in the village only discuss the PM Awas Yojana. “We need ambulance service during emergency. Sometimes the ambulance is far away attending to another patient and the delivery happens at home,” she adds. However, deeper into Sagar, the coverage of the scheme improves. In Bina, anganwadi worker Chanda Mishra says she has helped all women in the village get Aadhaar cards and bank accounts to avail the PMMVY. BJP vice-president in Sagar, Gaurav Sirothiya, says that while there may be a delay in implementation, the scheme eventually reaches beneficiaries. Adds Raj Bahadur, the BJP candidate from Sagar, “Since the Congress has come to power in MP, implementation has worsened.”

In Bellary, a class divide between BJP and Congress base; Congress holds on to its

JOHNSON T A
BELLARY, MAY 6

THE SHADE of Gulmohar trees at Hotel Mayura, in the heart of Bellary city, offers respite from the sweltering sun. It also offers a chance to pick up on some political gossip from the locals, who gather under the trees for a cup of coffee or *masala dosa*. Opinions are strongly divided in Bellary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains a positive factor despite the BJP being linked to the destruction of the region’s thriving iron ore mining industry. But the fact that incumbent Congress MP V S Ugrappa, who won the bypoll in November last year, after the BJP’s B Sreeramulu resigned following his victory in the 2018 Karnataka Assembly polls, has served for only five months also weighs on voters’ minds. A fellow passenger in the auto-rickshaw ride to Hotel Mayura, Rekha Reddy, says that Modi is a decisive factor among the educated and middle-class in Bellary but not the poor. “Modi is going to have an impact. In my locality, everybody favours him,” she says. After she leaves, driver Mallikarjuna, who

belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, says, “The Congress has done a lot for the poor. Otherwise, we would not have been able to survive... Under the Siddaramaiah government (2013-18), we were given free rice, given land rights.” On whether there is a Modi wave in Bellary, he says, “There is no Modi factor... The Modi government killed the money supply line with demonetisation. Our earnings have been halved since.” In Bellary, the Congress has always enjoyed a strong base among the SCs, STs, backward classes and minorities. It was only after the wealth from the iron ore mining boom in the region began flooding the political system in 2004 that the BJP gained control. Several supporters of former Congress Rajya Sabha MP and Bellary MLA Anil Lad, a mining baron, are camping at Hotel Maurya. Also present is Janata Dal (United)’s candidate in the 2018 polls Tapal Ganesh and civil society members, who are campaigning for Ugrappa. Of the eight Assembly segments in Bellary Lok Sabha constituency, Congress won six in the 2018 polls. The miner-turned-politician Tapal Ganesh — among the first to raise concerns over illegal mining in Bellary a decade ago — in a dis-

SEAT WATCH PHULPUR, VOTING ON MAY 12

In seat where SP, BSP first tested their caste maths, BJP in -ve again

LALMANI VERMA
PHULPUR, MAY 6

A YEAR after it lost the bypolls to Phulpur Lok Sabha seat — in the first inkling that a Samajwadi Party-BSP alliance could work in Uttar Pradesh — the contest looks tough for the BJP, again due to caste alignment. While the BJP has been trying to pitch nationalism and action against terror, this doesn’t seem to be making a dent in the core bases of either the SP (Yadavs) or the BSP (Jatav Dalits). The gathbandhan candidate, the SP’s Pandhari Yadav, will also benefit from votes of Phulpur’s substantial Muslim population, while the Congress’s Pankaj Patel, a Kurmi, is expected to cut into the non-Yadav OBC votes the BJP is eyeing. The BJP’s candidate is a Kurmi too, Keshari Devi Patel. The party doesn’t seem to be enjoying any fringe benefits from the Ardh Kumbh organised by the state BJP government in January this year either. The Sangam area, where the Mela was held, falls in Phulpur.

The seat, which votes on May 12, and was once represented by Jawaharlal Nehru, has around 3 lakh Patels, 1 lakh Jatav Dalits, around 1.5 lakh non-Jatavs, around 2 lakh Yadavs and Brahmins each, plus two lakh Muslims. In the March 2018 by-election, the SP’s Nagendra Pratap Singh Patel had won with 3.42 lakh votes, while the BJP’s Kaushlendra Singh Patel had got 2.83 lakh votes. Don-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed (currently in jail on murder charge), who had contested as an Independent, stood third with 48,094 votes, with the Congress getting only 19,353 votes. The by-election was held after the BJP’s Keshav Prasad Maurya, named UP Deputy Chief Minister, resigned from the seat. “Caste is the main factor here,” says Ram Singh Patel, a farmer of Ramapur village. “I don’t know much about Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s achievements, except his recent air strikes. I am voting for the BJP because they have fielded a leader from my caste.” Apart from sharing the same Kurmi links, Congress candidate Pankaj Patel has the added advantage of political lineage — his father-in-law, the late Sonelal Patel, was a prominent Kurmi leader, while his mother-in-law, Krishna Patel, is the Congress candidate from Gonda. Congress district president Anil Dwivedi said the party is “in a good fight” in Phulpur. However, the Sonelal Patel legacy is caught in a family fight, with Krishna’s younger daughter Anupriya Patel’s Apna Dal (S) a BJP

2018 LS BYPOLLS VOTE SHARE	
SP-BSP’s Nagendra Singh Patel	46.95%
BJP	38.81%
Atiq Ahmed (Independent)	6.58%
2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BJP’s Keshav Prasad Maurya	52.43%
SP	20.33 %
BSP	17.05%

ally, Anupriya is contesting from Mirzapur, 90 km away, which votes on May 19. Among the other castes, such as OBCs, the BJP is riding high on the Modi government’s popularity. Umapati Kushwaha, a labourer in Habibpur village, said, “Construction of a road in the village was pending for over two decades because of a local dispute. That road was developed when Keshav Prasad Maurya became Deputy CM.” He also attributes the highway connecting Allahabad with Jaunpur via Phulpur to BJP rule. However, Shyam Lal Vishwakarma, who belongs to another OBC caste, says “BJP leaders forget the public after winning”. “SP leaders are not like that. In the 2018 bypolls and 2004 general elections, I had voted for Atiq Ahmed because he is very helpful.” He says he will vote for the SP-BSP again. Ahmed is contesting as an Independent candidate from Varanasi. Manish Yadav, employed in Sahsahan’s Power Department, said that as Yadavs, their vote was for the SP. “This alliance is based on caste calculations and I have to strengthen it.” Ashfaq Ansari, a farmer in Azad Nagar, said as there was no Muslim candidate, the community would support the SP-BSP. He said the Congress didn’t seem to be in a position to win. Kamlesh Kumar, a Jatav Dalit, and an employee in a hardware shop in Phulpur market, agreed, adding that he wants BSP chief Mayawati to be PM. “If she gets more than 30 seats and the BJP’s numbers decrease, opposition parties will back her,” Kumar said. However, Lokesh Nishad, a boatman in Sangam area in Jhoonsi, said he would vote for the BJP again as he trusted the Modi government’s claims on national security. Bhupesh Nishad, who will vote for the BJP too, said the 2018 bypoll results were no indicator as many had stayed away because of it being a by-election.



Sunny Deol campaigning for the BJP Phulpur candidate on Saturday. PTI

SEAT WATCH VAISHALI, VOTING ON MAY 12

Ex-aide, caste trouble senior RJD leader in his bastion

SANTOSH SINGH
VAISHALI, MAY 6

THE RIGHT man in the wrong party. That is the refrain in this seat for RJD leader and former Union minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh. Singh is up against Veena Devi, the wife of powerful JD(U) MLC Dinesh Singh, who is contesting on a Lok Janashakti Party (LJP) ticket. The general feeling is that with both being Rajputs, Veena Devi will cut into Singh’s votes. Having won Vaishali continuously from 1996 till 2014, when the same caste factor plus Modi wave caused Singh to lose, the RJD leader this time starts with the added disadvantage of Dinesh Singh being in the opposite camp. For 13 years, Dinesh Singh used to be the RJD leader’s poll manager. Veena Devi is seen to be a stand-in for her influential husband. Singh is counting on getting a share of the Rajput votes, the RJD’s Muslim-Yadav votes, as well as support from EBC Sahnis, OBC Kushwahas and other OBC groups. However, most of these seem to be still behind the BJP. There are approximately 3 lakh Rajputs, 2.5 lakh Yadavs, 1.5 lakh Muslims, 1.25 lakh Kushwahas and 1 lakh Bhumihars in Vaishali. In the Rajput-dominated Beraua village, people talk of “Raghuvansh *babu*” getting them transformers from his MPLAD funds in the late 1990s. While he is criticised for not visiting his seat, Beraua up-mukhiya Vijay Kuwar, said the reason for their support to the BJP was “all about Modi”. His bike sporting stickers of Veena Devi, Kumar said, “We do not know much about her.”

2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
LJP’s Ramakishore Singh	32.99%
RJD	22.17%
JD(U)	15.71%
2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
RJD’s R P Singh	45.53%
JD(U)	41.96%
Cong	1.91%

The BJP is also gaining from the 10% quota to economically weaker sections from upper castes. “V P Singh implemented the Mandal Commission’s recommendations, Modi gave 10 per cent reservations for us,” said Kuwar. Pramod Singh, who is from Beraua but lives in Pune, said caste was the predominant factor. “Had the RJD fielded a non-Rajput, we would have supported Raghuvansh,” he said. Basudev Bhagat, a Kushwaha of Bangra village, said most Kushwahas too were still with the NDA, despite leader Upendra Kushwaha having joined the Mahagathbandhan. Similarly, while Mukesh Sahni of the Vikassheel Insaan Party has gone with the grand alliance, at Sahni (boatmen)-dominated Hirapur village, Bholi Sahni said, “We have not seen Sahni. Modi has given us LPG gas.” Shivdulari Devi, a Mallah, said their fish catch had been falling since 2007, with no flood waters reaching their village, and that no leader had helped. However, she said, she had heard only good things about Modi. “Mukesh Sahni should have chosen the NDA.”

ACROSS A NATION

LENGTH &

✦ KARGIL ✦ KANYAKUMARI

BREADTH

✦ PORBANDAR ✦ PASIGHAT

2 LINES, OVER 7000 KM

30 DATELINES, 15 STATES



Cong candidate V S Ugrappa had won seat in bypoll last year. Johnson T A

cussion with social activist Jagadish K says that the Modi wave in 2014 was “all hype”. “Last time, there was a strong anti-incumbency wave against the Congress and this was seen as a Modi wave... Now an artificial hype is being created about the Modi wave,” he says, adding, “The Congress is lagging behind in the media and social media race... but there is an anti-incumbency factor against Modi also.” According to Ganesh, in spite of Modi campaigning in 2018 in Bellary, the BJP lost the Assembly polls due to its association with illegal mining and the Reddy brothers (G Somashekara Reddy, G Janardhana Reddy and G Karunakara Reddy), which led to a “lot of

negative publicity”. “Since illegal mining was brought under control there is no flow of big money into elections,” he adds. The conversation then shifts to the new BJP candidate, Y Devendrappa (67), who is relatively unknown to voters. Says a bystander: “His (Devendrappa’s) son-in-law is an excise department official and he may be able to spend money since the flow of money from the mining industry has almost dried up”. “People are tired of the one-man show... we are hearing that BJP workers may not support the party candidate. They feel that they need a change because no leaders have value in the present set-up,” says Jagadish K. Comparing policies of the BJP and the Congress, Ganesh says, “Modi’s allocation of Rs 6,000 for farmers per year is only Rs 2.50 per day”. Jagdish adds that “there are no takers for NYAY either... because people have stopped believing in promises after the Rs 15 lakh promise by Modi was not fulfilled.” In the Congress camp, supporters of Anil Lad allege that leaders like B Nagendra (Kudligi MLA) and Anand Singh are not campaigning for Ugrappa. “The amount of campaigning the Congress needs to do to win is only 40 per cent of what the BJP needs. This is because the Congress’s base in the region is intact and there has been no major change on the ground since the 2018 bypoll, which the party won by a two lakh margin. But such a big win looks impossible now,” says B Krishna, a panchayat member. Around noon, the crowd at Hotel Mayura starts to dissipate. “It is too hot to be outside now,” says a member of Lad’s entourage.

9 DECISION 2019



THE TURNOUT



JMM leader Hemant Soren with his family at a booth in Ranchi. *PTI*

OVERALL TURNOUT

63.5%

8.75 crore
ELECTORS

96,000

BOOTHS

674

CANDIDATES

7

STATES

51

SEATS

State (seats in phase-5)	Poll %
Uttar Pradesh (14/80)	57.9%
Rajasthan (12/25)	63.7%
West Bengal (7/42)	74.4%
Madhya Pradesh (7/29)	65.2%
Bihar (5/40)	57.7%
Jharkhand (4/14)	64.6%
Jammu & Kashmir* (2/6)	18.2%

(All figures till 8.30 pm)

*Polling for Anantnag constituency, held over three phases, ended on Monday

PHASE-VI VOTE ON MAY 12

7

STATES

59

SEATS

POLLING IN ANANTNAG

40 poll officials airlifted, those on ground say toughest after forces withdraw

BASHAARAT MASOOD
PULWAMA, SHOPIAN, MAY 6

“I KNEW the situation is bad. But I never expected it to be so bad,” said a polling official who was airlifted along with 39 others to a security camp in Shopian’s Zainapora in an unprecedented move ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

When the polling official had arrived at the district police lines at Shopian for poll duty, he was worried about the road ahead — a 19-km stretch from Shopian to Zainapora passing through dense apple orchards and a cluster of villages.

However, his heart sank when he and his colleagues were informed that they would be airlifted on Sunday. “I was terrified that if we can’t even travel to the place by road, how can we survive there for 24 hours,” he said.

Later in the night after the airlift, protesters threw stones at their vehicles when the team was being transported to their polling booth.

Monday’s election in Shopian and Pulwama districts was a nightmare for polling staff.

Bashir Ahmad, an employee of Jammu & Kashmir’s Agriculture department, was posted at Government Higher Secondary School Pinglena in Pulwama. He said he is getting regular calls from home about his safety. “Since I left home on Sunday, I get a call after every hour,” said Ahmad, a resident of Tral. “Somehow, we have spent the night but we are worried about what will happen in the evening.”

While the government arranged for the transport of polling staff to the polling booth, they have to make their own arrangements to reach home after they deposit the EVMs at the collection centre set up at the district headquarters.

“The most difficult time is the evening when the forces withdraw and the stone-throwers come out on the streets,” said an employee from Srinagar, who is posted at Pulwama.

“How do we reach home then? It is a shutdown and there are no vehicles plying on the roads. It is also very dangerous to move in the evening because of the frequent stone-throwing protests. The government has virtually left us to die.”

At Pinglena village in Pulwama, 20 polling staff members were cramped in a 12x12 room for the night. And with minimal facilities and a hostile environment, they could hardly sleep through the night. “We were up most of the time during the night,” said a polling officer. “While it was already tense, an occasional stone was hurled towards us. The sound of the stone hitting the tin roof terrified us.”

FIFTH PHASE ENDS

BJP alleges assault in Bengal, Trinamool slams central forces

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & SWEETY KUMARI
BARRACKPUR, MAY 6

SPORADIC INCIDENTS of violence, including assault on journalists and damage to vehicles, were reported from the seven constituencies of West Bengal that went to polls in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections on Monday.

Though clashes between supporters of the ruling Trinamool Congress and BJP were reported from Bongaon, Howrah and Hooghly, West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ariz Aftab said polling was peaceful. “Fifth phase has been more or less peaceful. With central forces in all booths, we were successful in conducting a peaceful vote with stray incidents,” he said.

“Altogether 42 people were arrested, out of which three have been held in specific cases and others as a preventive measure. Twelve people were injured in 14 incidents. Five vehicles were damaged,” Siddhi Nath Gupta, ADG (Law and Order), said.

Five FIRs were lodged, including one against BJP’s Barrackpore candidate Arjun Singh and another against its Hooghly candidate Locket Chatterjee. The EC received three complaints against the central forces. “We are looking into it,” said an official.

Trinamool workers allegedly assaulted BJP’s Arjun Singh at Mohanpur in Barrackpore. The scuffle broke out when Singh visited a polling booth. While he alleged that his party agent was heckled, Trinamool workers accused Singh of trying to instigate violence.

“It was peaceful here till he arrived. He is disturbing peace,” said Rumpa Das, a Trinamool worker at a booth in Naihati.

At Tetulia in Aamdanga, Singh alleged that he was not allowed to enter the village by Trinamool workers. BJP and Trinamool workers had a face-off at the spot. The Trinamool workers also attacked journalists shooting pic-



Paramilitary personnel remove a miscreant from a polling station in Bangaon. *PTI*

tures, leaving four journalists injured.

“TMC goons were not allowing people to vote in some booths. I went to check and was attacked,” said Singh. Singh is pitted against sitting Trinamool MP Dinesh Trivedi. He joined the BJP recently after he was denied a ticket by the Trinamool.

Accusing the Trinamool of unleashing violence on its voters, the BJP has demanded a repoll in Barrackpore. “The Trinamool wants to win elections by rigging as it can’t win by votes. We demand a repoll in the entire Barrackpore constituency,” said Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, alleging that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was behind the violence.

In Howrah, Trinamool candidate Prasun Banerjee got into a scuffle with the central forces. He was allegedly forced out of a booth. The incident took place at Howrah’s Litikuri

School and Trinamool workers alleged that central forces personnel are working for the BJP. “I was not allowed to enter the booth by central forces. They pushed and lathicharged me. They are working for the BJP. We have lodged a complaint with EC,” he said.

At Dhanekhali in Sreerampur, BJP candidate Locket Chatterjee alleged that she was manhandled by Trinamool workers and her car was ransacked. The Trinamool alleged that Chatterjee tried to damage an EVM.

“At Dhanekhali, 90 per cent of the booths were rigged by Trinamool workers. When I went in one of the booths, I was manhandled and my vehicle was vandalised. I demand repoll in all the booths in Dhanekhali,” Chatterjee said. At Belmuri in Hooghly, Chatterjee was videographed threatening a polling officer and a few Trinamool supporters. The EC has sought a report in this regard.



People outside a polling booth in Lucknow on Monday. *Vishal Srivastav*

Irani accuses Rahul of booth capturing bid

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AZAMGARH, MAY 6

Union Minister and BJP candidate from Amethi Lok Sabha seat Smriti Irani on Monday alleged that Congress president and the party’s candidate Rahul Gandhi was encouraging “booth capturing”.

She tweeted a video of an elderly woman alleging that the polling officer forced her to press the “panje (hand) wala button” when she wanted to press button of “kamal”, the BJP symbol. The video was widely shared on

social media. Irani also tagged the Election Commission in her Twitter post and demanded action.

Asked to comment, state Chief Electoral Officer L Venkateshwarlu said, according to PTI, “It was examined thoroughly and found baseless”.

Following Irani’s allegation, the District Magistrate had ordered an inquiry and replaced the polling officer. “The complaint came from booth number 316 and I immediately sent Sub-Divisional Magistrate and additional District Magistrate to the spot. We changed the polling officer concerned,” said

Ram Manohar Mishra, District Magistrate, Amethi.

Targeting the Congress president, Irani told reporters, “Booth capturing kame Rahul Gandhi padhare hain. Rahul Gandhi ko jawab dena parega, chori to pehle se karte hi they... ab vote ki chori kame aye hain... (Rahul Gandhi has come here for booth capturing. Rahul Gandhi will have to reply... he used to steal earlier, now he is stealing votes as well)”

Later in the day, Congress workers also shared videos where local residents were heard accusing polling officers of forcing them to press the “lotus button”.

Electricity was provided on Eid, but not on Diwali in UP earlier: Adityanath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MAY 6

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday targeted the previous state governments, alleging that they supplied electricity to people on the basis of caste and religion.

Speaking at a rally in Dumariyaganj Lok Sabha constituency of Uttar Pradesh, he said, “There is no caste [basis] for electricity supply in Uttar Pradesh anymore. It is not provided on the basis of ideology or religion anymore. Earlier, only four-five districts used to get electricity and the other 70-71 faced crisis. During Eid, electricity was provided and during Diwali, it was not. During Muharram, electricity would be there but it disappeared at the time of Holi. We said no to this. Prime Minister Modi said ‘Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas’ and therefore if there is power supply on Eid, it is provided during Holi too. If there is power supply on Muharram, it is provided during Diwali too,” said Adityanath.

He also reiterated that alliance between the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) would not last after the Lok Sabha election results are out.

He alleged that the ongoing election was a contest between the BJP, which was fighting against terrorism, Naxalism and crime, and the alliance of the Congress, the SP and the BSP which “support terrorism”.

Later in the day, addressing another rally at Shrawasti in support of party candidate and local MP Daddan Mishra, Adityanath targeted Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Without naming her, he said she was a “bigger liar than her brother” [Congress president Rahul Gandhi].

“You must have read the statement of Congress *Shehzadi* (princess) and the point she made is important. She said the Congress would cut into the votes of BJP. Which means that the Congress which once was a national

Maya: BJP frustrated because alliance candidates ahead

Lucknow: Claiming that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were attempting to create differences between her party and the SP, BSP chief Mayawati Monday claimed that the BJP was frustrated as the alliance candidates are way ahead in the four phases of polling so far.

Addressing a rally in Basti, Mayawati attacked both the Congress and the BJP, alleging that the two ruined the country. “Congress ruled at the Centre and most of the states for a long time but poverty and unemployment wasn’t curbed,” said Mayawati. Attacking the BJP, she alleged that the party promoted casteism and capitalism. **ENS**

party is now just a vote katuwa (meaning a a party that splits votes) party,” Adityanath said.

“Defeat such parties in such a way that they are not in a condition to fight polls again,” he told the gathering.

Targeting the SP-BSP alliance, he said, “The biggest problem is with this alliance because people are unable to understand how there is a bond between them. Shivalp Yadav (SP president Akhilesh Yadav’s uncle) is thinking that I do not have a sister then where did this *bua* come from... there is this new relation of bua, bhatija, brother and sister but remember that all these relations are just a way to cheat the people and loot them,” he said. “This friendship of *bua* and *babua* and this alliance is just till May 23. I feel that between the final polling phase and the results, I might have to issue an advisory to avoid a fight between them, the police should be alert,” he added.

VIDEO OF EX-BSF MAN ‘ASKING FOR Rs 50 CR TO KILL MODI’

BJP expresses shock, BSF man says clip doctored

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

THE BJP on Monday expressed shock over a video in which Tej Bahadur Yadav, the dismissed BSF constable whose nomination as the SP’s Varanasi candidate was rejected by Election Commission (EC) last week, is purportedly heard asking for Rs 50 crore to allegedly assassinate Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

When contacted, Tej Bahadur admitted that he is the man in the video but claimed that the clip was doctored as he never spoke of any conspiracy to assassinate the Prime Minister. He said the video was shot by a Delhi Police constable in 2017 when he was staging a dharna at Jantar Mantar in Delhi after his dismissal from the BSF.

BJP spokesperson G V L Narasimha Rao said Maharashtra Police had last year unearthed a conspiracy by “urban Naxals” to kill PM Modi. “It is very shocking that yet another conspiracy to assassinate the Prime Minister has come to light by someone who was drafted as a Lok Sabha candidate against the PM in Varanasi by the Samajwadi Party... Tej Bahadur Yadav is heard asking for Rs 50 crore to assassinate Modi,” Rao alleged. Rao said all democratically-spirited individuals and parties should condemn such violent plans.

Tej Bahadur said, “I have seen that video.

Yadav moves SC against EC decision

New Delhi: Former BSF man Tej Bahadur Yadav, whose nomination from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat was rejected by the Election Commission, moved the Supreme Court on Monday challenging the poll panel’s decision. The SP had fielded Yadav, who was dismissed from the BSF in 2017 after he posted a video about food served to the troops, as its candidate from Varanasi, where PM Narendra Modi is the BJP candidate. **ENS**

This video was shot in 2017 without my knowledge. I had spoken to that person on several issues related to soldiers. But I never spoke about any plot of assassination of Prime Minister. The video is doctored.”

He alleged that the constable shot the video after he denied his offer to get involved in financial irregularities through Fauzi Ekta Nyay Kalyan Manch — a trust he formed in 2017. Tej Bahadur said the constable has made 30 such doctored videos. “He approached me two weeks ago demanding Rs 50 lakh. He threatened to circulate the videos. I refused to give him money.”

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Battle of the faces: Hooda buzz but Modi refrain

Choudhary of the village says the issue of Jat reservation is still on his mind but he does not believe there is a leader that has proved trustworthy. Not party, but leader: “Bhupinder Singh Hooda came, he tried to do something half-heartedly, and nothing happened. Om Prakash Chautala could do nothing in his time. Manohar Lal Khattar is the same. But this election is about Narendra Modi against everybody else,” he says.

The group Choudhary is sitting with has been quiet so far, engrossed in their game of cards. But Modi’s name is enough to begin a conversation. Shankar Singh is a 20-year-old first-year student of a college in Gohana, 40 km away, set to vote on May 12 for the second time in his life. “Everyone in my college is a Modi fan. There is nobody else that has ever answered Pakistan in their own coin like him,” he says.

An elder is quick to respond, his voice tinged with irritation. “These young boys. They know no history. Have you heard of Indira Gandhi? She broke Pakistan into two parts. They had to kneel before her. She was a real leader.” But there is silence as Singh asks: “Apart from Modi, is there anyone else like that now?”

Jind is part of the Sonipat Lok Sabha constituency which, less than three months ago, saw a high voltage bypoll in its assembly seat. The Congress fielded national spokesperson



Roadshow of Congress’s Sonipat nominee Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Jind. *Manoj Dhaka*

Randeep Singh Surjewala but finished third behind the eventual winner Krishna Middha of the BJP and a spirited Digvijay Chautala of the Jannayak Janata Party. Today, in Sonipat at least, there is still talk of the Congress. Not because of the party, but the candidate it has put up — former Chief Minister Hooda.

Sube Singh Redhu lives in Nuran Khera right next to the highway that connects Jind and Sonapat. Both sides of the road are lined with tall eucalyptus trees and fields of wheat. The road itself though, is potholed, and under construction. “Hooda can fix this. He took Rohtak under his wing, and have you seen it today?

Wide roads, street lights,” Redhu says.

There are, of course, various factors that a Hooda victory will depend on, primarily the question of whether the Jat votes get divided between the Congress, the JJP and the INLD. “Nobody was talking about the Congress. But people are talking about Hooda. Digvijay is fighting again but people gave him votes because he is a young Jat leader. But now there is Hooda and people might consolidate behind him,” he says. And what of the BJP candidate, sitting MP Ramesh Kaushik. “Lots of the non-Jat are with him. But not really with him. If he fought without the BJP, he would forfeit his deposit. Every candidate in the BJP is Modi,” Redhu says.

What aids the growing battle of personalities in Haryana is the lack of any discernible differences in ideology, or policy that is being communicated on the ground. The wheat is being cut in the fields of Jind, and one in every ten vehicles on the road seem to be a wheat thresher. But there are also fields, where the wheat is bundled into bunches, waiting to be sold.

“Those bunches that you see, is because more people now are cutting their crop by hand. A thresher might be more efficient. But the costs are higher now, because the costs of diesel are up. The price we get for our paddy is Rs 1,800 per quintal, which is far from enough.

We approach every party to help us bring the price up, or regulate the diesel price. There is rural distress. But is there any one party that has a better plan than the other?” asks Ramvir Chautala of Butana.

Chautala has heard of the Congress’s Nyay plan of Rs 6,000 a month to 20 per cent of the country’s poorest. “But Modi is also giving Rs 6,000 every year. And part of that has come into people’s bank accounts,” he says.

Kandela village has for long been the epicentre of Jind’s rural politics, home to the powerful Kandela khap, the largest in the region. In the village with 4,700 voters, social media is the new political theatre where the personality battle is a no-contest. Suresh Singh is a Valmiki, one of the 450 dalit voters in Kandela. For decades, he says, they voted for the Congress. But he scrolls through his phone, and displays a set of messages. Some are videos of speeches by Modi, others are memes on Rahul Gandhi and the Congress. “Look at these messages. Only Modi works for the poor. Even the Valmiki basti will vote for him this time,” Singh says.

He lingers on a message, that has a picture of a young boy selling tea at a railway station. “I am a carpenter, and I was a tea seller. He understands what I feel even though he may not have delivered on anything,” he says.