

## BRIEFLY

## 3 arrested for stealing gold, Rs 5 lakh

**New Delhi:** Three persons were arrested for allegedly stealing 5 kg gold and about Rs 5 lakh in cash from a businessman's house in South Delhi's Hauz Khas, police said Wednesday. The theft came to light on May 3 after the businessman, who left for Dubai on April 27, returned home. In a complaint at the Hauz Khas police station, he stated that his driver, the driver's wife and the cook were staying at his Panchsheel Park residence in his absence, police said. Two of them and an associate were eventually arrested.

## Fire breaks out at wedding

**New Delhi:** A fire broke out at a wedding in North West Delhi's Keshav Puram Tuesday. Goods worth several lakhs were reportedly destroyed and the area had to be evacuated. "We sent eight fire tenders to the spot. The fire was doused in 40 minutes," said Chief Fire Officer Atul Garg.

## PIL to restrain AAP, Kejriwal dismissed

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court Wednesday rejected a PIL seeking to restrain CM Arvind Kejriwal and AAP from making "false" electoral promise of full statehood for Delhi in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The petition said AAP and Kejriwal have been advertising the promise, despite knowing that they cannot grant it even if they win.

## 37-year-old DTC driver mowed down

**New Delhi:** A DTC driver was killed after an unidentified vehicle hit his motorcycle in Shalimar Bagh Tuesday, police said. The incident took place at Haiderpur flyover when the driver was on his way to the GTK DTC bus depot, police said. The driver was taken to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival, police said. **ENS**

## Gangster wanted for murder held

**Noida:** A gangster wanted in a 2017 murder and bank robbery was arrested by UP police Tuesday night, police said Wednesday. Suraj, who hails from Pataudi, was allegedly involved in a Rs 50 lakh bank robbery in Gonda district in eastern UP two years ago, police officers said. He was carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest, police added. **PTI**

## SAYS COUNTRY'S SECURITY WAS JEOPARDISED

## Gandhis holidayed on board INS Viraat when Rajiv was PM: Modi

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE GANDHI family went holidaying on an undisclosed island on board INS Viraat when Rajiv Gandhi was at the country's helm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleged Wednesday, days after saying the assassinated leader died as "bhrashtachari number 1".

Addressing an election rally at Ramliila Maidan, Modi said that when "dynasts" seek votes in the name of their ancestors, it is but natural that their records will come under scrutiny.

"Jab inke karnaame khangale jaate hain, toh inhe mirchi lagti hai. When you are seeking votes in someone's name, you will have to be answerable for their activities," Modi said.

The PM alleged that in the list of holidayers were Rajiv Gandhi's in-laws "from Italy". He alleged that the government of India and the Indian Navy looked after them during the "10-day vacation", and accused the Gandhi family of treating the

Armed forces as its personal property.

"Friends, have you ever heard of anyone going on a holiday with his family on a warship? Don't be surprised at this question. This has happened, in our country. The biggest *namdaar* family of the Congress had used INS Viraat, the country's pride, as its personal taxi," he claimed.

"INS Viraat was securing the maritime boundaries at the time. But it was sent to fetch the Gandhi family going on vacation... In the list of holidayers were members of his *sasuraal*. Was the country's security jeopardised or not?" he said, as the crowd cheered.

The rally was in support of the BJP's seven Lok Sabha candidates, who were present on the dais.

Modi further said that Janpath, which houses Sonia Gandhi's official residence among others, used to be frequented by people such as "Quattrocchi mama, Anderson mama and Michel mama".

While he attacked AAP and the Delhi Chief Minister, he did



Prime Minister Modi with Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari. Amit Mehra

not mention either. Modi said Delhi is the only state that has witnessed a new political tradition — "*nakaampanti*". "They broke the trust of crores of youths. They had come to change the country, but have themselves changed. They have become synonymous with disorder and anarchy."

He also took a jibe at the CM for apologising to political oppo-

nents in order to settle defamation cases. "They say baseless things, then kneel and apologise... *Tukde tukde gang ke samarthan mein jaake khade ho gaye*," he said.

He also said the Congress is answerable for injustices faced by the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots: "The person whose name is associated with the riots, you make him a CM. What kind of justice is that?"

**"Friends, have you ever heard of anyone going on a holiday with his family on a warship? Don't be surprised at this question. This has happened, in our country. The biggest *namdaar* family of the Congress had used INS Viraat, the country's pride, as its personal taxi"**

**"Jab inke karnaame khangale jaate hain, toh inhe mirchi lagti hai (When their actions are discussed, they feel the pinch). When you are seeking votes in someone's name, you will have to be answerable for their activities."**

**NARENDRA MODI**  
PRIME MINISTER

## Priyanka wasting time campaigning in Delhi: CM

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday said Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is only "wasting her time" by campaigning in Delhi. Gandhi held road shows in North East Delhi and South Delhi constituencies on Wednesday.

"I would request Priyanka ji... she is wasting her time in Delhi. All Congress candidates are losing their deposit in Delhi. Her coming here will only result in a few votes of the Aam Aadmi Party going to the Congress. I would like to appeal to her to hold rallies in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where Congress is in direct competition with the BJP," Kejriwal said.

Delhi will vote on Sunday. At a press conference, Kejriwal also attacked the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that if the party comes to power again, they will demolish houses in unauthorised colonies. "I have been made aware of the Modi government's plan to demolish unauthorised colonies of Delhi. Three-four months ago, we started development work in unauthorised colonies on a war footing... When work actually started on the ground, some central government officers had revealed that the Modi government plans to demolish unauthorised colonies in Delhi. The Modi government wants to hand over the land on which unauthorised colonies exist to big private builders, who are rich and powerful," he claimed.

Her second road show, in support of Congress South Delhi candidate Vijender Singh, was held in Dakshinपुरi's Virat Cinema. Guddi (37), a homemaker from Tigr, had come with several other women: "I have come just to see her. She alone can lead the country." Hema Azad (18), a first-time voter, came with her mother and cousin. "I have great hope from her," she said.



**Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.**  
*Tashi Tobgyal*



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with North East Delhi candidate and three-time CM Sheila Dikshit during a road show in the constituency, Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

## 'Dilli ki ladki' Priyanka's jibe at PM: Like a school student, blames others

**ASTHA SAXENA & ARANYA SHANKAR**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

"MODI Ji Dilli aaye 5 saal pehle, mein Dilli me paida hui hoon. 47 saal se maine Dilli ki gali gali dekhi hai. Pahari Kalan se Majnu ka Tila, Mehrauli se lekar Safdarjung, saari galiyon mein ghoom aayi, Dilli walon ke dil ki baat main batati hun." On her first road show in the capital Wednesday, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, sitting cross-legged on a tempo traveller, sought to drive home her identity as a true blue Delhiite.

Accompanied by Congress candidate from North East Delhi Sheila Dikshit, Gandhi smiled her way through the narrow lanes of Brahmapuri as locals came in droves to catch a glimpse on a sweltering afternoon.

"Aapko kya pata Dilli ke dil

**He talks about nationalism, but what about safety of youth? Isn't that nationalism? He promised employment to 2 crore youth every year, has anyone been employed yet?"**

**PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA**  
CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

*mein kya hai. Dilliwalae aapki fi-zool ki baaton se bore ho chuki hain. Ek Dilli ki ladki aapko khuli chunauti de rahi hai. Fight the last two phases on the basis of GST, demonetisation, women's safety and those false promises you had made in the last polls," she said.*

The constituency, witnessing a contest between Dikshit, BJP's Manoj Tiwari and AAP's Dilip Pandey, has a sizeable number of

Muslim voters who the Congress hopes to sway in its favour.

Calling Modi a "school student", she said: "*Jab bhi inse jawab maango, ye bolte hain ki Nehru ji ne mera parcha le liya aur chupa diya, ya fir kehate hain ki main kya karun Indira ji ne kagaz ki kashti bana di aur paani me duba di. These are his excuses for failing to answer the public on work done in the last five years. He has only shown negative politics to you.*"

On Monday, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi held a public meeting at Sadar Bazaar, and is scheduled to address another meeting in Geeta Colony Thursday.

"Modi government has broken the backbone of traders, asked people to show their nationalism by standing in queues during demonetisation. *Aap log toh khade ho gaye apni desh bhakti dikhaane, par koi kaala dhan iss desh me aaya? Ek rupaiya nahin aaya*," Priyanka said.

"He talks about nationalism, but what about safety of youth? Isn't it nationalism? He promised employment to two crore youth every year, has anyone been employed yet? He hasn't done anything to protect our farmers and my sisters, especially in this city. And he calls himself a nationalist? He only believes in advertising during poll season," she said.

Ending her show outside Yamuna Vihar DTC bus depot, she requested voters not to vote for caste-based politics.

Her second road show, in support of Congress South Delhi candidate Vijender Singh, was held in Dakshinपुरi's Virat Cinema. Guddi (37), a homemaker from Tigr, had come with several other women: "I have come just to see her. She alone can lead the country." Hema Azad (18), a first-time voter, came with her mother and cousin. "I have great hope from her," she said.

## At AAP 'war room', focus on WhatsApp, busting fake news

**SHIVAM PATEL**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

"FOUR DAYS left for election" is written on a large white board hanging inside AAP's 'war room' at ITO, Wednesday. Manifestos and laptops crowd a table where party members are at work on logistical and legal matters for the days ahead. Their tasks include planning booth management, schedules of party candidates and social media campaigns.

Maps of the capital's seven constituencies are pasted on walls, alongside banners advocating full statehood for Delhi. "This is a war of ideologies. At the end of every war, there is always one winner. We are confident it will be us this time," said Suresh Kathair (31), AAP's central war room coordinator.

AAP's social media wing, working across eight such war rooms, prepared on how to tackle Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Ramliila Maidan Wednesday evening.

Abhijeet Dipke (22), in-charge of national social media coordination, said they were "hammering out" three questions that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had posed to the PM earlier in the day.

The team already had a small reason to celebrate: Their hashtag for the day, #DelhiWithKejriwal, was trending on Twitter in the af-

ternoon, with over 9,500 tweets. "The idea behind the tag is: *Kejriwal apna banda hai, hamaara aadmi hai. Kejriwal Dilli ka hai, aur Dilli Kejriwal ki hai*," Dipke said.

However, Twitter is third in priority for the social media team, as they have been reaching out to more voters through WhatsApp and Facebook.

Party volunteers on the ground have built a "strong" network on WhatsApp through door-to-door campaigning. Using the messaging service, volunteers have been promoting work done by AAP leaders and the Delhi government.

The party also has 76 moderators who have been following handles of Congress, BJP and leaders of other parties to keep a tab on "fake news".

"Today we are sure Modi will goof up... (and) will misquote something... He is going to attack Kejriwal, but we have deployed a team to keep track of his words and statements," Dipke said.

Party volunteers see the BJP as their main contender in Delhi, and claim the Congress's presence on social media is non-existent. Volunteer Vivek Gupta (27) said, "In the last 20 days, we have changed the game and are winning all seven seats... The BJP spreads fake news, we use accurate news... They have spent crores on Facebook and Google ads. We have put them on the back foot by just spending a few thousand."



AAP's social media wing at work in ITO, Wednesday

## EC seeks report on tweets by Delhi govt spokesperson

**RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE ELECTION Commission has sought a report from the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) on AAP government spokesperson Nagender Sharma's criticism of the BJP on Twitter.

The Delhi CEO has conveyed Sharma's defence as well as the status of his employment with the state government in his report submitted to the EC this week. The final decision rests with the Commission. The EC had sought a report from the Delhi CEO after the Delhi BJP lodged a complaint against Sharma's tweets.

Sharma, according to an official in the Delhi CEO office, has denied any violation of the Model Code of Conduct on the ground that his tweets are his personal opinion and are posted from his personal Twitter handle.

To ensure a level-playing field for all parties and candidates, the MCC forbids the use of "government transport including official aircraft, vehicles, machinery and personnel" for furthering the interest of the party in power, which is AAP in Delhi.

The Delhi CEO is learnt to have also informed the EC that Sharma is employed with the Delhi government on a contractual basis. The Commission will now consider whether he, despite his contractual employment status, will be considered a public servant and if his tweets amount to misuse of official machinery to benefit AAP.

The incumbent Commission could draw from its experience in handling the complaint against NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar for his criticism of Congress president Rahul Gandhi's announcement on minimum basic income guarantee as a poll promise.

Kumar had dismissed Congress's promise of minimum income of Rs 6,000 to the poorest 20% households, saying the party can "say and do anything to win elections". The proposed Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY), he had told news agency ANI, would increase fiscal deficit.

Although Kumar had also defended his statement as his personal opinion as an economist, the Commission had expressed displeasure and asked him to be more careful in the future.

## CONGRESS'S MAHABAL MISHRA CAMPAIGNS IN WEST DELHI

## A former MP returns to take on current one, runs into tough questions

**ANAND MOHAN J**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

IT'S BEEN five years since former Congress MP Mahabal Mishra held power in West Delhi. Last Saturday, he returned to the villages of Najafgarh, pitting his achievements against that of sitting BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh and branding him as a "park and bench *waala* MP", who "plays badminton and spends time on Facebook". In contrast, Mishra said

he was the "son of the soil", who gave the area Metro and hospitals.

He was armed with a two-page pamphlet, carrying news clippings of the Metro link to Najafgarh and photos of him with Manmohan Singh, Sheila Dikshit and Pranab Mukherjee.

Around 40-odd men gathered at Dichao Kalan village, while three youngsters stood at the back. Once notorious for property-related disputes that spiralled into gang-related killings, the village has shed its

violent tag of late and yearns for basic facilities — including roads and last-mile connectivity.

"In 2009, you chose me. I met Pranab Mukherjee and Delhi Metro officials to bring the Metro closer to you," Mishra said.

When he started talking about the work he did in Janakpuri, Mishra was interrupted by a youth. "What have you done for the village? We don't want to hear about the big city," he shouted. The boy was shouted down by Mishra's sup-



Congress's West Delhi candidate Mahabal Mishra. Amit Mehra

porters, and the former MP promptly wrapped up his visit, saying: "*Mahabal Mishra tumhara dost tha, hai, aur rahega*."

Ten minutes from Dichao Kalan, Mishra stood atop stairs of a temple in Jharoda Kalan. "Compare my achievements with that of Parvesh... What infrastructure has he given to this village?" he asked. This time, too, the crowd of 30 barely had any youth. The village has a largely Jat population, and Mishra spoke about how Jats got placed in the Delhi

Police and got government jobs during Dikshit's tenure as CM.

He never mentioned his AAP competitor, Balbir Jakhar. "He is no competition. This is a fight between a former MP who did work and the 'bench *waala* MP'. There is a North and South campus (in DU); I will make a West campus," he told *The Indian Express*.

Mishra's cavalcade then made its way to Surakhpur, known as Delhi's first digital payment-enabled village. This time, some youngsters stood behind,

as older men sat next to Mishra. "Your MP has not come even once and I have come more than 10 times to your village. Is this not true?" *Sukh dukh ka saathi hoon main*," Mishra told them.

He said he is seeking votes for his work, unlike Singh who is invoking the PM's name. But DU student Jai Singh said: "This is a digital village, but it takes two hours to get to college. West campus is good... but if we have to depend on water tankers in this day and age, then what can be said."



NO ARREST YET

# Police deployed in Trilokpuri as 2 cow carcasses are found near lake

SOMYA LAKHANI  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

DAYS BEFORE Delhi goes to polls, two cow carcasses were found near East Delhi's Sanjay Gandhi lake, prompting Delhi Police to deploy around 70 personnel in Trilokpuri's Kotla village Wednesday.

APCR call about severed parts of two cows strewn across the ground next to the lake was made around 6.30 am. "It's a sensitive situation. Things were under control by 9.30 am. Around 70 police personnel have been deployed. We are alert and patrolling is on," said DCP (East) Jasmeet Singh.

A case under IPC section 429 (mischief by killing or maiming cattle) and Section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has been registered against unknown persons at Pandav Nagar police station.

The cows belonged to dairy owner Rai Singh (55), who last counted his cattle at 11.30 pm Tuesday. "All 15 cows were in the cowshed at night. When I woke up at 3.50 am, a log which works as a stopper at the shed's entrance was removed, and the shed was open. I saw two cows were missing. I raised an alarm and began looking. One was pregnant and



Rai Singh, who owned the cows, with his family

due to deliver next month. I saw their carcasses at Sanjay Gandhi lake and called police," said Singh.

For over six decades, his family has been in the dairy business. "I don't know who's done this. I don't suspect anyone from another community... A neighbour could be behind this, as he has issues with us using the plot as a shed," said Rajesh Devi (50), Singh's wife. No one is named in the complaint, police said.

Trilokpuri is a resettlement colony which came up in 1976 after Sanjay Gandhi's slum-clearance drive during the Emergency.

Muslims, Valmikis and Sikhs inhabit the area, and over 400 people died there during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. In 2014, communal fires were stoked again when a riot broke out, and since then Trilokpuri has occasionally sim-

mered over rumours, petty issues and during festivals.

In 2017 and 2018, several instances of stone-pelting between two communities were reported from Trilokpuri. "We have learnt from the past and decided to douse rumours before they spread. Police presence ensured there was no possibility of violence between two communities," said Singh.

At the village market opposite the lake, Harun Gory, who runs an e-rickshaw business, said: "Things could have escalated but it thankfully didn't. This is just mischief to turn Kotla village into Block 27 of Trilokpuri, where communal incidents usually take place," he said. Shopkeeper Tushar Goel said, "It hurts to see our religion being insulted... no one knows who's behind this."

## Hit by sealing, dairy business had resumed after 3-month break

SOMYA LAKHANI  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

"I EARN my bread and butter because of these cows... and today I found them in a pool of blood. They were killed with such cruelty," said Rai Singh (55), with tears in his eyes.

Owner of a dairy in Trilokpuri area, Singh had 15 cows before the incident.

"I bought them (the two cows) for Rs 20,000-Rs 25,000 each less than a year ago. One was called Chaiwali because I got her from a tea seller; she was pregnant. The other was called Peeli because of its colour," said Singh.

It was on Monday that Singh resumed his dairy business after three months. He claimed the dairy, which has been around for over five decades, had been "sealed by the civic body", and business only resumed two days before two of



The spot where the cow carcasses were found

his 15 cows were found dead.

Early Wednesday morning, when Singh woke up to milk the cows, he realised two were missing and went looking for them. Police have filed an FIR against unknown persons.

Even as the family refused to stoke communal fires, a group of men and women protested outside Pandav Nagar police station, raising slogans against the minority community.

## Will throw Amrapali out and give property ownership to Noida, Greater Noida: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE SUPREME Court Wednesday said it may give ownership rights of all 15 prime residential properties of the embattled Amrapali group to Noida and Greater Noida authorities, as it has failed to fulfill its obligations towards 42,000 hassled home buyers.

The top court said Amrapali, by its own admission, took Rs 11,652 crore from homebuyers and invested only Rs 10,630 crore from it for construction of the residential projects. It questioned the group as to how it could mortgage entire projects and secure loans worth thousands of crores of rupees from banks, when it was only an agent to develop property.

A bench of Justice Arun Mishra and Justice U U Lalit said it would protect the rights of



Amrapali's Dream Valley project in Noida Extension

thousands of home buyers and push the group out of the projects. "We see that entire Amrapali Group has failed to discharge its duties towards home buyers, authorities (Noida and Greater Noida) and banks. You have neither completed any projects nor invested any money in the projects. We think, you are the one who should be thrown out of these properties. We will vest the rights of these properties with Noida and Greater Noida," the bench said, posting the matter for further hearing on May 10.

### Supreme Court slams 'manipulation of order'

Shocked by the "unfortunate" manipulation of its order in the Amrapali case, the Supreme Court Wednesday issued a stern warning to errant Registry staffers and said some more heads will roll for destroying the institution. Taking serious cognizance of the "sorry state of affairs", the apex court said: "People are trying to change orders by influencing and manipulating court staff, which would not be tolerated at any cost."

The incident came to light when the court pointed out that the forensic auditor's name in its order was changed. In February, the SC had sacked two staffers for allegedly tampering with an order, which created an impression that industrialist Anil Ambani had been exempted from personal appearance in a contempt case.

## HC pulls up Haryana over insufficient water supply to Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE DELHI High Court Wednesday expressed displeasure over the Haryana government's "conduct" of asking the Delhi government to withdraw petitions for protecting water supply from the state as a precondition, in return for it releasing water to the capital.

The court said there should be "no disruption or reduction" in the amount of water being supplied, as per an undertaking given by Haryana before it in 2014.

The Delhi government's counsel said that in the Upper Yamuna River Board meeting on April 18, Haryana asked it to withdraw all cases on the water issue from courts here, for it to consider releasing water to Delhi.

The bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice AJ Bhambhani said, "Your (Haryana) conduct is reflected in the minutes. Why did you ask for withdrawal of the plea?"

As per the 2014 undertaking, Haryana must release 719 and 330 cusecs of water per day into the Munak canal and Delhi Sub Branch Canal respectively. The bench formed a committee, headed by retired HC judge Justice Indermeet Kaur with amicus curiae Rakesh Khanna, to inspect if 'bunds' are in place in

### EXPLAINED E. Water wars

CLOSE TO 70% of Delhi's water needs are met by the Yamuna, which flows into Delhi through Haryana. A water-stressed state with more farmers and agricultural land compared to Delhi, Haryana and the capital are locked perpetually in court battles over the release of water. These have become more urgent as summer approaches, as Delhi's water demand and population keep growing. The fight over maintaining environmental flow in the river also becomes crucial, keeping in mind that the Yamuna in Delhi had all but dried up in summer months last year.

canals carrying water meant for the Wazirabad plant, as claimed by the Delhi Jal Board in its plea.

The committee was asked to submit its report before the next date of hearing, May 20.



## 6 DECISION 2019



# SP, BSP rally forces, say don't fall to bids to 'confuse'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 8

ADDRESSING A joint rally in Azamgarh, leaders of the gathbandhan of the Samajwadi Party-BSP-RLD Wednesday said their prospects were improving daily, dismissing the BJP's claims.

Speaking first, BSP chief Mayawati said, "Our prospects are improving... The prospects will further improve in the remaining two phases of the Lok Sabha polls."

SP president Akhilesh Yadav and RLD chief Ajit Singh also addressed the rally, held at the Azamgarh Muslim Education and Welfare Trust ground. In his speech, Akhilesh claimed it had been a "rain of votes" for the gathbandhan so far, and this would continue.

Asking the crowd to ensure a "historic win" for Akhilesh, the gathbandhan candidate from Azamgarh, Mayawati said they should vote thinking she herself was in the race. She said their alliance had caused "BJP leaders to lose sleep" and slammed Narendra Modi's description of them as "mahami-lawati". "It is the Prime Minister who is mahamilawati (highly adulterated)."

Noting that both Modi and BJP president Amit Shah were scheduled to address rallies in eastern UP, Mayawati said, "I feel after they get to know that such a big gathering has happened here of the alliance, they might cancel the programme. And even if they come, they may go back after getting entertained by the BJP candidate (referring to BJP candidate and Bhojpuri actor Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua')." Mayawati said.

With Modi's speeches in Uttar Pradesh seen as trying to drive a wedge between the SP and BSP, Mayawati said Akhilesh considers her "his elder", and warned voters that the PM might try to "create more confusion in the days to come". "Modi's good days are over and bad days are staring him in the face," she said, while also accusing the Congress of having the same "chaal charan (nature and character)" as the BJP.

Akhilesh, who also asked for a win by a large margin, said Modi had become a 'chowkidar', and voters should snatch away his 'chowki (pedestal)'.

Ajit Singh appealed to people to vote out "the government of liars".

In her speech, Mayawati also accused the BJP of "carrying out a dacoity" in Akhilesh's home and creating a division between Akhilesh and his uncle Shivpal Yadav to cut the SP's votes. "This saazish (conspiracy) won't work," she said.

With the BJP wooing caste leaders ahead of polls, the BSP chief said the BJP and Congress couldn't stand it that she had made a government in UP bringing together Dalits, Adivasis, other backwards, and poor among the upper castes in 2007. She said the BJP was roping in "selfish people" of different communities and using them to divide people and cut votes of other parties. "Somewhere they have roped in Rajbhars, somewhere Loniya Chauhans, somewhere Nishads, somewhere Mauriyas," she said, adding that the BJP would dump them all if it wins.

with PTI, AZAMGARH

EXPLAINED  
E.

## Trying to remove alliance doubts

HOPING TO play on the decades-old bad blood between SP and BSP, PM Modi and CM Adityanath have been saying the alliance would not last long. Having spotted an opportunity in the gathbandhan, Akhilesh and Maya have been fighting back, with the BSP chief declaring Tuesday that they would be together for the Assembly polls in the state as well.



Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati, Ajit Singh and other party leaders at the SP-BSP-RLD joint rally in Azamgarh on Wednesday. Express

## SEAT WATCH VOTING ON MAY 12

## Maya's chosen seat is warm for alliance

ASAD REHMAN  
AMBEDKARNAGAR, MAY 8

THE DISCUSSION in Ambedkarnagar's Akbarpur area is all about Mayawati's subtle implication that she may contest the Lok Sabha polls from this constituency "if need to", after the results.

Returning from the rally on May 5 where the BSP chief said this, a group of five Dalit farmers, who have all come from Daudpur village around 5 km away, take a break at a dhaba. The eldest, Rakesh (62), says, "If Behenji has said this, it is right. Yahaan se nahin ladengi toh kahaan se ladengi? Yeh unka gadh hai (If she will not contest from here, where she contest from? This is her stronghold)."

Nodding in agreement like the others, Hari Narayan, 46, adds that Ambedkarnagar is also special for another reason: for being the birthplace of Ram Manohar Lohia. Given the Samajwadi Party's allegiance to Lohia, what better place to illustrate the strength of the gathbandhan with the BSP than here, he says.

While Ravindra Kumar Yadav, 41, who is also among the group, and an SP supporter, doesn't seem as enthusiastic about the alliance, he adds, "What's done is done. It's not wise to question the orders from above."

Ambedkarnagar constituency is seeing a two-way battle between the BJP's Mukut Bihari Verma and the gathbandhan's Ritesh Pandey, who is the BSP's sitting MLA from Jalalpur and the son of former Ambedkarnagar BSP MP Rakesh Pandey (2009 to 2014). While Verma belongs to the Kurmi OBC caste, Pandey is a Brahmin.

The constituency has a substantial number of Muslims (16% of the population), while among the Hindus, OBCs are estimated to comprise 48% of the numbers, and SCs 31%.

Earlier called Akbarpur, the seat was held by the BSP from 1981 to 2007, with Mayawati herself winning thrice (1998, 1999 and 2004). It was won by the SP in a bypoll in 2007, but in 2009, the BSP got Akbarpur back again (in an election where BJP candidate Vinay Katiyar came third). In 2014, the BJP wrested it amidst the Modi wave.

On paper, the caste numbers seem tilted towards the SP-BSP candidate, who is expected to get Muslim, OBC plus SC votes, and



Ritesh Pandey, the BSP candidate

AMBEDKARNAGAR	
2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BJP's Hari Om Pandey	41.77%
BSP	28.29%
SP	22.67%
2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BSP's Rakesh Pandey	32%
SP	29.2%
BJP	27.88%

given that the BSP has fielded a Pandey, even a few of the Brahmin votes. All eyes, in fact, are on how many upper castes vote for the BSP's Ritesh Pandey.

Several people, including BJP workers, question the party's decision to drop sitting MP Hari Om Pandey. "Hari Om is at least a kshetriya (local) and is respected by all," says a BJP worker, refusing to be named.

At the same time, some OBC vote will also get divided, in favour of Verma. "I am not happy with the BJP, but have to vote for bi-raadari," says Ram Palat Verma (56), a fellow Kurmi. A farmer who owns 12 bighas of land in Angrooli village in Jalalpur, Ram Palat accuses the BJP of mismanaging affairs in the last five years, repeating the common refrain

of crops lost to "chutta saandh (stray bulls)".

In Tanda, Chachapur area, behind Bhooran Shah's mazaar, a group of Muslim men are watching an IPL game on their phones and having a heated discussion at a tea shop. A major chunk of Tanda's population comprises Muslims, mostly employed in the power loom sector.

Mukhtar Ahmed, who owns a small power loom, says, "Ek taraf kuan, ek taraf khai. Hum jaayi toh kahaan jayi, haathi par mohar lagai (One side there is a well, the other side there is an abyss. Where will we go, but vote on the elephant (BSP's symbol))."

As the group breaks into a laugh, Mohd Akhtar, 41, pulls out an old newspaper with Adityanath's 'Ali, Bajragbali' remark in the headline and says, "Will we vote for them? Never. We have to vote for whoever can stop these communal forces." Akhtar claims he lost 50% of his business due to GST. "We don't understand the technicalities. If we did, we would have become chartered accountants and not run a power loom."

The local lassi shop owner, Om Prakash Yadav, 53, says the gathbandhan has got it right. An ardent supporter of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav, he says he likes his son Akhilesh as well as the alliance he has forged with Mayawati. "Laathi, haathi aur 786," he notes, referring to the slogan the gathbandhan has been repeating, with the lathi symbolising the Yadavs who traditionally handle cattle, the elephant the BSP, and 786 a number considered auspicious for the Muslim community.

However, among those more well-off, the BJP hold is clear. R.S. Pandey, a physician who has his own clinic in Tanda, says, "The BSP has fielded a Brahmin, but we need to vote to save the country from Pakistan." Agreeing that voting will happen along caste lines, he adds, "The fight would have been closer if the BJP had fielded a kshetriya (local)."

At the BSP office in Jalalpur, Ritesh Pandey underlines his "son-of-the-soil" credentials. Surrounded by both SP and BSP workers, he says, "I know this place very well, main issi dharti ka beta hoon."

About Mayawati's statement that she may stand from Ambedkarnagar, Ritesh says, "She is our leader and whatever she decides will be followed by all."

## As local 'zero se hero' woos Azamgarh, Akhilesh promises a grand finale



At the election office of Akhilesh in Azamgarh. Maulshree Seth

MAULSHREE SETH  
AZAMGARH, MAY 8

"Bhaiya ko abhineta se neta banana ba. Kamal ka batan dabana ba (Make bhaiya a leader from an actor. Choose the lotus)," a song blares as a crowd waits in Sagari area, about 40 km from Azamgarh city, for the arrival of Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua', a Bhojpuri film star and the BJP's Azamgarh candidate.

When Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav decided to contest Lok Sabha elections from this seat represented by his father Mulayam Singh Yadav and successive Yadavs in the past few decades, he may not have expected himself in a fight with the actor, whom he had once conferred with the "Yash Bharti" award as Chief Minister.

That Nirahua, belonging to neighbouring Ghazipur district, is popular, there is no doubt. Crowds are coming to his rallies drawn by his speeches, songs, and dance. He is also seen as a symbol of aspirations by local village boys wanting to make it big.

Youths in their 20s crowd his SUV, urging him to watch "the comedy of Chintu-Mintu", or to give them "a chance", or to hear them sing, or to click a selfie. At one point, a father puts his seven-month-old boy into Nirahua's lap, saying "lete jaab... kuchh bana deba (take him... make him something)".

The 40-year-old actor keeps reassuring, "Milega-milega (You will all get something)".

Nirahua's glamour apart, the Azamgarh election is also a star test of the alliance forged by Akhilesh-led SP with the BSP. In the heart of Azamgarh city, flags of both parties adorn the gathbandhan's election office. People are here from Etawah, Kannauj, Mainpuri, the strongholds of Akhilesh's extended family. Party flags have been also put on a bicycle, the SP's symbol. As an elephant, the BSP's symbol, proves more difficult to control, an SP worker watches nervously.

A few metres away, at her tea stall, Rita Yadav says she did consider Nirahua, as "he is a Yadav, has come for the first time". But then she thought "why waste my vote". Being a singer is one thing, but the fight in Azamgarh, Rita says, is Akhilesh against "Modi".

Rita also fondly remembers the Rs 500 pension scheme for women in Akhilesh's term as CM, and laments, "Yadavan ki ab pooch naahi (No one cares for the Yadavs now)."

With the Congress not fielding any candidate, the Muslims are clearly behind Akhilesh. However, the OBCs and Dalits are both weighing their options.

Of the 17.70 lakh voters in this constituency, Muslims, OBCs, especially Yadavs,

AZAMGARH

2014 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
SP's Mulayam Singh Yadav	35%
BJP	28%
BSP	27%
2009 LS POLLS VOTE SHARE	
BJP's Ramakant Yadav	35%
BSP	28%
SP	25.17%

and Dalits make up more than 50%.

So far, more than the party, personalities have mattered on this seat. While in 1996, Ramakant Yadav won from the seat as SP candidate, in 1998, the BSP's Akbar Ahmed did. In 1999, Ramakant won again on an SP ticket, and then in 2004, on a BSP ticket. In 2009, the seat again went to Ramakant but as BJP candidate. In 2014, Mulayam won, getting nearly 70,000 votes more than Ramakant (again BJP).

Pandhari Yadav, who hails from the neighbouring Uncha Gaon city, says, "In the Modi wave, when a local leader like Ramakant could not dent Mulayam's votes, what can a singer or actor like Nirahua do?"

Holding 10-15 nukkad sabhas (corner meetings) a day, Nirahua keeps invoking his story of "Zero se Hero", talking about his local links and how he "used to rear buffaloes". He refers to Akhilesh as "barke bhaiya (elder brother), and says the latter is "confused", as neither does he want to be prime minister himself nor wants Narendra Modi to remain one. Nirahua argues that he would have supported Akhilesh if he had been in the PM race.

Moving from one venue to another, the Bhojpuri actor tells The Indian Express why actors are good politicians. "We might be called 'nachaniya' (dancer), but the fact is actors are called by politicians spending huge amounts to gather crowds. When actors enter into polls, they directly spread the message about the party's promises at less cost."

Nirahua also talks about the schemes of the NDA government, and reminds people of Modi's rally in Azamgarh on May 9.

Akhilesh too has brought out the artillery. Apart from the joint rally with BSP supremo Mayawati on Wednesday, he will address public meetings in every Assembly constituency of Azamgarh till the last day of the campaign, May 10, while SP MLAs, MLCs and former ministers are camping in the region.

SP leaders say the fight is not about win or loss but the "victory margin". "The margin cannot fall."

# 'Capt sits inside his palace, never comes out... His own MLAs, ministers not able to meet him'

RAAKHI JAGGA

LEADING THE Akali Dal campaign as father Parkash Singh Badal gradually takes the backseat, president Sukhbir Singh Badal had faced an embarrassing defeat in the 2017 Assembly elections, finishing even behind debutant Aam Aadmi Party. Seeking to revive SAD, which had won five of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in 2014 in alliance with the BJP, Badal Jr is this time contesting from Ferozepur. Wife and former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal is in the race from Bathinda.

You are active in state politics, so what was the need to fight the Lok Sabha elections?

In order to take the party forward, this decision was taken by the core committee. When the

general of an army fights from the front, the morale of the forces gets a boost. The end result: the battle is won. When just my name was being discussed for Ferozepur, workers had got into an upbeat mood.

Does that leave you enough time for campaigning across the state?

I have visited all the nine Assembly constituencies of Ferozepur and now I am

campaigning in the whole state... I have told my workers that they have to fight this (Ferozepur) election for me... One constituency called Abohar in my Lok Sabha seat is the native town of Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar, who is contesting from Gurdaspur. Jakhar used to be MLA from Abohar earlier. Take my word, my maximum lead will be from the area of Jakhar.



Sukhbir on campaign. Gurmeet Singh

What is your main campaign issue?

It is an election of vikas versus vinash. Vikas which happened during 10 years of Akali Dal-BJP rule, from 2007-2017, and vinash, in the two years of the Congress.







# Amid a sea of saffron, Shah, Chouhan, hold roadshow for Pragya in Bhopal

MILIND GHATWAI  
BHOPAL, MAY 8

IN A very vocal and assertive endorsement of Malegaon blast accused Pragya Singh Thakur, BJP president Amit Shah, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the entire top leadership of the state BJP participated in a roadshow with the party's candidate for Bhopal Lok Sabha seat to an enthusiastic response late Wednesday evening.

The roadshow went through old Bhopal, with thousands of bystanders, traders and residents lined up with petals on either side of narrow lanes.

Firecrackers, flower petals, confetti, balloons, and music band on hand, the opposition party in the state had made elaborate arrangement for the showcase event. It began a couple of hours late, but going by the turnout and enthusiastic sloganeering, that did not seem to have bothered many people. From sarees, turbans, flags and flax, saffron was the dominant colour.

The crowd shouted slogans that mainly hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP. Unlike the rally when Thakur filed her nomination, there were not many takers for the slogan "*Pragya didi sant hai Diggy* (Digvijaya Singh) *tera ant hai Diggy* (Pragya-didi is a saint; your end is near, Digvijaya)" — instead, it was "*har har Modi, ghar ghar Modi*."

Digvijaya Singh, a former chief minister of MP, is the Congress candidate from Bhopal.

More than 850 security personnel had been posted along the route of the roadshow,



BJP president Amit Shah with party leaders Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Pragya Singh Thakur at a roadshow in Bhopal on Wednesday. *Express*

which began from Bhavani Chowk, which has a temple called Curfew-wali Mata Mandir, apparently because it was built after curfew that lasted for weeks in the 1980s. It passed through Lakherapura, Chowk, Sarafa Bazar, Loha Bazar, Jumerati Gate and Ghoda Nakkas before ending at the old bus stand on Hamidia Road.

The BJP initially wanted to organise a public meeting for Shah but chose the roadshow because it lets them reach more peo-

ple. Shah and Pragya Thakur got on the open vehicle to the recital of Swasti Vachan. As firecrackers were set off and the roadshow began, there was a near-stampede in the congested lanes.

Before Shah, Chouhan and Thakur arrived, BJP MLAs and other leaders, including those who had been contenders for the Bhopal seat, spoke on nationalism and indulged in anti-Pakistan rhetoric. Shah, Chouhan and Thakur did not address the

crowd.

The BJP chief and Chouhan got off the vehicle around 9.45 pm to maintain the campaign deadline.

"Digvijaya Singh has to identify himself as a Hindu, while Sadhvi Pragya Singh is a Hindu from top to bottom," Mayor Alok Sharma said.

Another BJP leader, without taking the Congress candidate's name, referred to Digvijaya as Maulana Bantadhar.

The party's candidate from Khajuraho constituency, V D Sharma, who was among the contenders for the ticket from Bhopal, asked people to vote so enthusiastically that Digvijaya is sent to Pakistan. The crowd was repeatedly asked whether they need any proof about the airstrikes and that the Air Force had killed about 300 terrorists. BJP leader asked them to respond on May 12, the voting day.

Watching the proceedings a few feet from the dais, an overwhelmed Rajesh Verma, 34, a private sector employee, said, "*Ek number hai; swagat se lag raha hai BJP zarur jitegi* (It's top class; from the looks of it, seems BJP will certainly win)."

Although Bhopal is considered one of the safest seats for the saffron party in MP, the BJP did not want to take a chance and looked to field a senior candidate after Congress nominated Digvijaya. After Chouhan and another former CM, Uma Bharati, declined to contest, the party fielded Thakur.

Thakur stirred a controversy, and was penalised by the Election Commission with a three-day campaign ban, with her remarks degrading the sacrifices of slain IPS officer Hemant Karkare.

## In 'incomplete' vision document, Pragya compares Digvijaya and Chouhan govts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BHOPAL, MAY 8

SEVENTEEN DAYS after Congress candidate Digvijaya Singh released a vision document ahead of the polls in Bhopal, his BJP rival Pragya Singh Thakur followed suit, releasing an incomplete document that made references to the seizure of AK-47 rifles from Sohrabuddin Sheikh's village Jhimriya, training by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, and other controversies during Singh's tenure as the Madhya Pradesh chief minister.

Releasing the 'Sankalp Patra' at the BJP headquarters here Wednesday, Thakur said she was compelled to release an incomplete document at this stage as it was an auspicious moment. She claimed she could not include several promises related to women, children and unemployment due to lack of time but would do so at the earliest.

With a little prompting from senior BJP leader Vinay Sahasrabudhe, Thakur said that she could not include promises for Jain seers, who face difficulties in relieving themselves while travelling.

Immediately after releasing the document, Thakur left to campaign, riding pillion on a motorcycle, saying that she wanted to meet as many people and reach as many lanes and bylanes, possible on a two-wheeler. She campaigned in an Innova for several days before the party gave her a bigger vehicle equipped with a hydraulic platform.

Campaigning in Bhopal ends on Friday.

The four-page leaflet released by the BJP candidate devotes one page to the condition of the state capital before 2003, describing it as lacking basic amenities, with potholed streets and without job opportunities. Singh was the CM between 1993 and 2003, a tenure which the document describes as "kushasan (bad governance)", pointing to controversies like the death of Congress leader Sarla Mishra and the gangrape of a sarpanch.

The leaflet devotes another page to achievements of the BJP rule between 2003 and 2018. The remaining two pages mention promises such as launching a light-and-sound show on the life of Raja Bhoj, and new international flights and trains from Bhopal. It promises loans up to Rs 50 lakh for entrepreneurs, steps to protect interests of small traders, digital connectivity and Central government schemes such as housing for all and Ayushman Bharat.

Digvijaya Singh's document was unveiled using audio-visual aids at the Congress headquarters. His 16-page booklet promises to make Bhopal safe for women, children and the elderly. Delving into history, Singh has promised to make the city a tourist hub, and develop it as Bhopal State Capital Region by developing satellite towns, ring roads and super corridors.

An education city, medical college at Sehore (part of the Bhopal Parliamentary constituency), art city, film city, mega logistic and warehouse zones, IT city, public friendly transport system and Narmada water for every household are among the promises made in the Congress document.

## FIR filed over pro-Modi slogans as saints hold roadshow for Digvijaya

MILIND GHATWAI  
BHOPAL, MAY 8

A DAY after they held a *yagya* praying for Congress candidate Digvijaya Singh's victory, a group of saints held a roadshow in Bhopal's old city on Wednesday — on a route followed by BJP candidate Pragya Singh Thakur when she had filed her nomination.

The Congress candidate, who attended Tuesday's *yagya* with his wife, walked alone with the saints on Wednesday. Beginning from Bhavani Chowk, the rally was led by Computer Baba, a religious figure who switched loyalty to the Congress ahead of last year's Assembly elections.

Without naming the BJP, Computer Baba said it was a "dharma yuddha (religious war)" and predicted the defeat of those who use religion for political purposes.

Computer Baba enjoyed minister of state status in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government for a few months before he resigned and announced his support for the Congress.

On the basis of a complaint from the rally's organisers, the police, after going through video footage, filed an FIR against a group of BJP supporters who raised pro-Modi slogans when the rally passed them.

While the BJP slammed the administra-



Digvijaya Singh with Computer Baba at the roadshow in Bhopal. *PTI*

tion and Congress government for ordering an FIR against those who shouted pro-Modi slogans, the police justified it as a violation of Section 144 that is in force.

DIG (Bhopal) Irshad Wali said that those who raised slogans have been booked under Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the IPC. He said they did not take any permission to demonstrate and the slogans amounted to disturbing a peaceful procession being taken

out with permission. "Even if they had raised Obama, Obama slogans without permission, they could still have been booked," he said.

The roadshow courted another controversy after allegations that some plain-clothed police personnel were made to wear saffron *gamchhas* (towels). While some said it was done as part of a strategy to control the crowd in case some elements turn unruly, others claimed it was aimed at ensuring a bigger turnout.

Denying the allegation that police personnel on duty sported saffron *gamchhas*, the DIG said they were volunteers, not police personnel, and the dress code they followed was not a lookout for the police and the administration. When asked about a couple of women who claimed on camera that they were from the police and were made to sport saffron *gamchhas*, the DIG said he could not help if people identified themselves as police when they were merely volunteers meant to ensure peaceful passage of the roadshow.

Some religious leaders who were part of the roadshow told the local media that they were not concerned about the candidate but had gathered for the cause of the construction of Ram temple. Some of them raised slogans of "Bharat Mata ki jai" and "Narmada Maiyya ki jai".

### SEAT WATCH SAGAR, VOTING ON MAY 12

## In BJP's Bundelkhand bastion, rebel gives Congress a foot in

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA  
SAGAR, MAY 8

AFTER A long time, the Congress has a reason to smile in what is considered the BJP's strongest seat in Bundelkhand, in north Madhya Pradesh. The party, that has not lost from Sagar since 1996, is anticipating trouble from party rebels.

Speaking at a rally in Lateri village, Congress candidate Prabhu Singh Thakur tells people about the "false promises" made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and grins at the mention of BJP opponent Raj Bahadur. "His weakness will be my gain."

A municipal corporator, Bahadur is seen to have got the ticket by virtue of his proximity to former state minister Bhupendra Singh. One of those taken by surprise was incumbent BJP MP Laxminarayan Yadav, who had won in 2014 by a margin of 1.2 lakh votes against the Congress's Govind Singh Rajput.

Yadav, who has since gone on the warpath, accuses Singh of "hijacking" the constituency, and threatens, "I cannot vouch for Yadav voters." He said, "The decision to give him (Bahadur) ticket was wrong. I am not campaigning for him in Sagar. Instead I am working for other candidates in Damoh and Chatarpur."

In open signs of Yadav's rebellion, Bahadur's effigies have been burnt by BJP workers. "This has never happened before, that BJP workers burn effigies of a party candidate," said senior Congressman Lakshman Singh, Digvijaya Singh's younger brother.

The BJP has been holding firm in Sagar for



Congress candidate Prabhu Singh Thakur at a public meeting in Sironj Assembly segment under Sagar Parliamentary constituency. *Express*

two decades. Even in the 2018 Assembly elections won by the Congress, the BJP had retained seven of the Lok Sabha seat's eight Assembly segments (Bina, Khurai, Surkhi, Naryoli, Sagar, Kurwai, Sironj and Shamshabad). In Sironj, Khurai and Surkhi, senior BJP leaders have not been campaigning for Bahadur.

BJP Sagar vice-president Gaurav Sarothiya admitted that it's not just BJP lead-

ers who are angry. "A few Yadav leaders too oppose Bahadur's candidature," he said.

Sagar MLA Shailendra Kumar Jain of the BJP, who is campaigning for Bahadur, too conceded "lack of support from a few MLAs".

Of the constituency's 15.7 lakh voters, two lakh are Yadavs, 1.5 lakh Dangis, 1.3 lakh Lodhis, 3.5 lakh SC/STs and about 1.5 lakh Dangis-Yadavs. Both Thakur and Bahadur are Dangis.

Playing down any effect from Yadav's anger, Bahadur said he was confident of a win. "The sitting MP was miffed at not getting a ticket, obviously he will rebel. But the initial resistance from party MLAs has been taken care of."

FULL REPORT ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)



Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee campaigns for her party's Ghatal candidate Dipak Adhikari, at Debra in West Midnapore district. *PTI*

## Mamata compares fight against Modi with Quit India movement

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, MAY 8

TRINAMOOL CONGRESS chief Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday compared her fight to oust Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power with the Quit India movement (1942), saying that he was running a fascist government and that the BJP is thrusting religion on the people.

The West Bengal CM also said that the state government under her leadership protected tribal land rights, unlike the BJP government in Jharkhand, which she said snatched land from tribals.

"Everyone is scared of Modi. But I am not. Because I was born in Bengal. Someone has to bell the cat. Bengal will bell the cat. In 1942, the Quit India movement was launched against the British, now we are fighting to oust a fascist Modi from power. Modi will lose. There will be no democracy in the country if Modi is voted to power," Mamata said while addressing a public meeting at Debra in West Midnapore.

"After we came to power in West Bengal, we have brought legislation that protects tribal land. Here the tribal rights are protected. In Jharkhand, BJP snatched tribal land. At one occasion we had to send people from here and it (land grabbing) was stopped," she said at another rally at Hura in Purulia district.

She also alleged that BJP was trying to impose religion on the masses.

"Everyone has the freedom to worship their own god. While we worship Ma Durga, Ma Kali, Muslims follow Islam and Christians worship Jesus Christ. Tribal people worship their own gods. But BJP comes with an idol or picture of Hanuman and say you will have to worship this. Such a party has no place in India. People will bury this party in a democratic manner," said Mamata.

In Debra, a tribal-dominated pocket in West Midnapore district, the CM took a dig at Modi, saying he never visited the area when people needed him. "You never came here when the people really needed you. When there are floods or when there is drought, you are never here. But now you are coming only because of elections," she said.

She also said that the BJP had made sev-

### Attack on Ghosh convoy: BJP wants DM, SP removed

*Kolkata:* BJP leaders have demanded the removal of East Midnapore District Magistrate (DM), following an attack on the convoy of state party president Dilip Ghosh in Khejuri on Tuesday. Assam Deputy Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was also part of the convoy, which was attacked allegedly by Trinamool Congress workers, while it was on its way back from a rally addressed by Amit Shah. In a letter submitted to the Chief Electoral Office (CEO), the BJP wrote, "We strongly demand replacement of the District Magistrate of Purba Midnapore, Superintendent of Police, SDPO of the area concerned, and the inspector-in-charge of Khejuri police station. A case must be filed against the culprits, including the local MLA Ranajit Mondal, his security guard and other TMC leaders. The allegation should include 'brutal attack on peaceful persons with murderous intent' along with other sections of the IPC. The culprits who can be easily identified from video footage should be arrested, including the local MLA."

ENS

eral promises ahead of polls for the livelihood of tribals, but they were never fulfilled.

"He was a chaiwala, now he is chowkidar. He never sold tea, I tell you this. There is joblessness in the country, farmers are committing suicides. What has Modi done in the last five years, apart from going for foreign trips," Mamata said.

She also highlighted her government's initiatives and popular schemes, including Kanyashree (scheme for the girl child), Sabuj Sathi (distribution of bicycles to school students) and Yubashree (scheme for youths). She also talked about government schemes for insurance and grant of Rs 5,000 to farmers annually.

## Cong, CPM object as EC orders repoll in 168 Tripura West polling stations

ABHISHEK SAHA  
GUWAHATI, MAY 8

THE TRIPURA unit of the Congress and CPI(M) have objected to the Election Commission of India's order on May 7 to conduct repoll in 168 polling stations of Tripura West Lok Sabha constituency, saying that the number of stations undergoing repolls should have been much higher owing to how widespread the alleged rigging was during the election on April 11.

Tripura West — one of the two Lok Sabha segments of the state — is a largely Bengali-dominated constituency and includes 1,679 polling stations. The Congress's Subal Bhowmick, who recently quit as the BJP's state vice-president, is pitted against BJP's Pratima Bhoomik. The CPI(M), which has held the seat since 1996, has again fielded its sitting MP Sankar Prasad Datta.

Polling in the constituency was marred by violence with voters being "intimidated" to cast votes in favour of a particular candidate and polling agents casting votes on behalf of voters on multiple occasions.

The ECI's May 7 order to conduct repoll on May 12 came after persistent allegations by the state unit of the Congress and CPI(M) about alleged rigging and violence, and consecutive reports by the state's top election officials — the Chief Electoral Officer, the Special Observer, General Observers and the Returning Officer.

"We are not happy at all because the repolling should have been ordered on, say, 400 more polling stations. We will contest (the election) definitely but will also go to the

Supreme Court to appeal for repoll in a higher number of polling stations," state Congress chief Pradyot Manikya Debbarma said.

CPI (M) state secretary Goutam Das said, "We are not satisfied. There was widespread rigging and booth capturing. We had initially demanded a repoll in 464 booths but then had to revise it to 846 booths when we got to know further details from each station."

In a report to the additional CEO of Tripura on April 23, the then Returning Officer (RO) of Tripura West constituency, Sandeep Mahatme, who was transferred by the EC in an order dated May 2, wrote that the polling process was "vitiated" in 433 polling stations. The EC also ordered the transfer of Additional DGP (Law and Order) Rajiv Singh following reports of "several incidents of law and order failure".

In another report submitted to the EC, Mahatme noted that it was observed through video footage of the polling stations that violations had occurred in at least eight of them. These ranged from intimidation of voters, polling agents accompanying voters to the compartment multiple times, people entering the polling compartment several times and polling agents casting votes on behalf of the voters.

On May 12, over 1.4 lakh voters across 26 Assembly segments of the constituency are expected to cast their vote as 15 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces stand guard.

Tripura CEO Sriram Taranikanti said, "Around one-tenth of the polling stations of the constituency are going for repolls. All preparations are going on smoothly. We have got additional security forces to ensure free and fair elections."