

8 GOVT & POLITICS

BJP targets 65-plus tally, Oppn slams 5-phase polls

Ruling party to focus on scheme implementation, Oppn to highlight 'misrule'

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 1

SOON AFTER the Election Commission announced five-phase polls in Jharkhand, the political climate heated up in the state, with Opposition parties alleging that the poll panel did not heed their views on conducting the elections in one phase.

Leader of Opposition and JMM chief Hemant Soren said, "The five-phase elections show that everything is not right in Jharkhand." Congress working president Rajesh Thakur said, "The EC sought our views, but it was a fruitless exercise as our request was not heeded. We had demanded election in one phase. It is clear that Left-wing extremism has not reduced in the state."

Jharkhand's Nodal Officer for conducting elections and ADG (Operation) ML Meena said, "Left-wing extremism has been a challenge in Jharkhand, they boycott polls and target polling parties. We have started the preparations."

He said the polls have to be conducted in rough terrain and communication remains a challenge. In 2014, he said, Jharkhand had 21 Left-wing extremism-affected districts, which has reduced to 19 in 2019. "There were 16 most-affected districts, the number is now 13," Meena added.

BJP is in power in Jharkhand, which has a large tribal population, and an alliance of Opposition parties—mainly the Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)—is making a bid to oust the Raghubar Das government.

While the Opposition parties try to recoup after a dismal performance in the Lok Sabha elections, the ruling BJP is eyeing a 65-plus tally in the 81-member Assembly with the "Ghar ghar Raghubar" campaign. Their main poll plank will be the government's work on "effective implementation" of central schemes and setting up of companies under Momentum Jharkhand to provide employment.

Asked if BJP was perturbed by poll verdicts in Haryana and Maharashtra, Das had told *The Indian Express*, "Maharashtra and Haryana do not have 26 per cent tribal population and situation is very different here. We will definitely win."

The BJP now has 48 seats in the Assembly, with five MLAs from Opposition parties having



Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora (right) with Election Commissioner Sunil Chandra at a press conference to announce the schedule for Jharkhand Assembly polls, at Nirvachan Sadan, in New Delhi on Friday. PTI



joined recently.

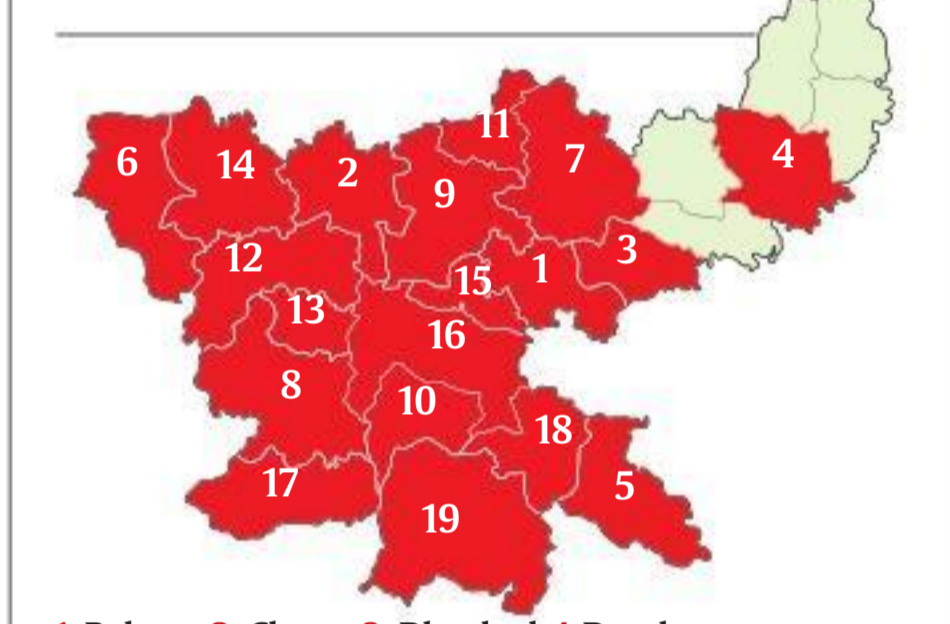
The Opposition, on its part, has been raising the issue of "misrule of the government" and "anti-advani" decisions such as attempted tweaking of tenancy Acts and creating land banks without taking tribals' consent.

Alliances, meanwhile, have been on the backburner. The BJP has been in alliance with All India Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), but there has been no consensus on seat-sharing. Lok Janshakti Party, the BJP's ally in Bihar, is exploring an alliance with the BJP in Jharkhand.

The Opposition, too, has not reached a consensus on seat-sharing. Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee had been grappling with infighting over its president Ajoy Kumar, who resigned after writing a scathing letter against veteran leaders like Subodh Kant Sahay and Pradeep Balmuchu.

JMM has also not reached an agreement on seat-sharing. "The issue is over tribal seats, which will be sorted soon. Some senior Congress leaders were irked because Hemant was projected as the CM face," said a source.

MAOIST-AFFECTED DISTRICTS



- 1-Bokaro, 2-Chatra, 3-Dhanbad, 4-Dumka
- 5-East Singhbhum, 6-Garhwa, 7-Giridih, 8-Gumla,
- 9-Hazaribagh, 10-Khunti, 11-Koderma, 12-Latehar,
- 13-Lohardaga, 14-Palamu, 15-Ramgarh, 16-Ranchi,
- 17-Simdega, 18-Saraikela-Kharaswan, 19-West Singhbhum

MHA, February 2019

EXPLAINED LS poll spell broken, Jharkhand a new test

THE FIRST set of Assembly elections after the Lok Sabha polls was sobering for the incumbent BJP, which witnessed a slip in tally in both Maharashtra and Haryana. It also gave hope to the Opposition, which improved its performance. The Jharkhand elections follow the two Assembly elections that have broken the spell of Lok Sabha elections, in which the Opposition got swept away. Jharkhand will test whether the earlier two state elections marked the beginning of a new trend after Lok Sabha polls, or a one-off sobering reminder to the incumbent.

In previous poll, 19 seats decided by margin below 5,000 votes

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

A SMALL swing of votes in the Assembly elections can influence the outcome of many seats in Jharkhand, as 19 of the 81 seats were decided by a thin margin of less than 5,000 votes in 2014. Most of these seats were won by the BJP-AJSU alliance.

An analysis of the 2014 Jharkhand Assembly election results shows that as many as 23 per cent of the seats were de-

ecided by a margin of less than 5,000 votes. These seats include Barkagaon, Torpa, Saraikella, Jama, Nirsia, Bhawanathpur, Bagodar, Lohardaga, Daltonganj, Panki, Simdega, Tundi, Rajmahal, Borio, Sisai, Gumla, Dumka, Jarmundi and Manika.

In at least five seats, the victory margin was less than 1,000 votes. Similarly, five seats were decided by a margin of between 1,000 to 2,000 votes.

In 2014, among the 19 seats with a thin victory margin, most went to the BJP-AJSU alliance



The Raghubar Das-led BJP emerged as the leading party in at least 57 Assembly segments in Jharkhand in 2019 Lok Sabha elections

(BJP got 8 and AJSU 2). Opposition parties Congress and JMM won 3 seats each. The JMM was runner-up on maximum 7 seats followed by BJP (5) in the seats with thin victory margin.

In terms of the overall performance in the last Assembly election, out of 81 seats, the BJP won maximum 35 seats—almost double of its tally of 18 seats in 2009. JMM won 17 seats, Congress six and AJSU five, and 18 seats went to others.

The BJP's vote share increased to 31 per cent in com-

parison to 20 per cent in 2009. Among the Opposition parties, the JMM's vote share increased from 16 per cent in 2009 to 20 per cent in 2014, while Congress's vote share came down from 12 to 10 per cent.

An analysis of the 2019 Lok Sabha election results shows that BJP emerged as the leading party in at least 57 Assembly segments in Jharkhand, whereas the Congress was in leading position on 11 seats, JMM 7 and AJSUP 6.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, too, BJP was the leading

party in 56 Assembly segments, but the party could not repeat this performance in the Assembly election held a few months later. At the same time, the BJP's vote share was 40 per cent in the 2014 Lok Sabha election in Jharkhand and increased to 52 per cent in 2019.

Among the Opposition parties, the Congress and JMM too increased their vote share marginally, whereas Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajanatrik), a state party, registered a decline in vote share from 12 per cent in 2009 to 5 per cent in 2019.

Conclave on MP govt's right to health initiative begins

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 1

A TWO-DAY conclave that will brainstorm over fulfilling the Madhya Pradesh government's promise to provide right to health to its residents, began in the state capital on Friday.

While reviewing the activities of the health department in May this year, Chief Minister Kamal Nath had instructed officials to work out a scheme that will ensure right to health. Experts who are attending the conclave will suggest ways to enable the scheme.

Inaugurating the event, the CM said right to health is the most important among human rights. He added that the state will have to ensure not just infrastructure and financial resources but also skilled manpower to ensure peo-



State lacks qualified medical practitioners: Kamal Nath

ple have access to health facilities. Admitting that the current infrastructure is not up to the mark, the CM said though the state has budget, it lacks qualified medical practitioners and other human resources. He said he supports PPP model in the field of health but the best model will have to be chosen carefully. There are many villages with primary health centers but there are no doctors, the CM added.

State Health Minister Tulsi Silawat said the government will try to cover 97 per cent illnesses under the proposed right to health initiative.

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifts German Chancellor Angela Merkel a Ratnam pen and a handloom woollen Khadi stole, in New Delhi, on Friday. PTI

SPECIAL GIFT

THE NEW Union Territory of Ladakh gave a personal touch to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to the national capital. Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a handloom woollen khadi stole from Ladakh to Merkel, the first visiting foreign dignitary after the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories. The PM also presented her a set of the Ratnam Pen used by Mahatma Gandhi to write letters, along with a recycled wood and brass framed copy of the letter that Gandhi had written to Ratnam for developing that ink pen for him in 1934.

GREEN AWARD

THE ELECTION Commission announced the poll schedule for Jharkhand on Friday. While press conferences on election announcements are usually addressed by all three election commissioners, Ashok Lavasa was conspicuous by his absence on Friday. It turns out he was in Australia to receive the International Alumnus of the Year Award at Southern Cross University. Lavasa, who has an MBA degree from the university, was recognised for his contribution to address issues of environment, forests and climate change.

BALANCING ACT

EIGHT GERMAN women from the German side and one Indian woman—Indian envoy in Berlin Mukta Tomar—were in a photograph tweeted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hosted German Chancellor Angela Merkel for bilateral talks. While this looked like a gender imbalance in the Indian and German delegations, Merkel held a separate roundtable, with some women Indian leaders from different walks of life attended it.

QUICK SHIFT

EVEN AS the government has sought an explanation from WhatsApp on the alleged surveillance of phones of more than two dozen people through spyware, users of the messaging platform within the government seem to be reacting in their own ways. While the government waits for WhatsApp's response, its National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) chief—Satish Jha—is known to have joined another messaging platform, Telegram, Friday evening.

Bengal govt gives 'Y' category security to Sovan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 1



Sovan Chatterjee

THE STATE government upgraded former Kolkata mayor and BJP leader Sovan Chatterjee's security to 'Y' category on Friday.

The development comes in the wake of Chatterjee and his close associate Baishakhi Banerjee's meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on October 29, the occasion of Bhatridwitiya. This also led to speculation that Chatterjee may return to TMC soon.

Earlier, as a mayor and TMC leader, Chatterjee used to enjoy 'Z' category security. However, when he resigned as the mayor and also from other party posts, his security was downgraded to 'Y' category. Later, when Chatterjee and Banerjee had both joined the BJP last month, the state government withdrew his security with immediate effect.

At present, under the 'Y' category, Chatterjee will be provided 11 security personnel, including one or two commandos. A senior police official said, "It is a routine process. The state review committee, under the leadership of state DGP, regularly evaluates the security and threat perception of VIPs and VVIPs. Accordingly, their security cover is upgraded or degraded."

However, a few top TMC leaders do not think that the development is a routine process.

According to a TMC source, Chatterjee and Banerjee used to visit CM's residence every year to

celebrate Bhatridwitiya. However, last year he had skipped the event, and had later joined the BJP. But after a while, both Chatterjee and Banerjee were reportedly unhappy with the BJP. The duo's visit to the CM's house led to speculation that Chatterjee's return to the TMC was just a matter of time.

"This is a signal that Chatterjee will return to the party fold very soon," said a top TMC leader who did not wish to be named.

Medinipur MP and BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said, "Chatterjee used to get security from the state government. I do not know why that was withdrawn and now why it is being provided again. Only the state administration can clarify."

Later, addressing mediapersons at the state BJP headquarters, Ghosh took a dig at Chatterjee.

"When he (Chatterjee) joined the party, no one had given any assurance that certain responsibility or post will be given to him. Even after joining our party, he remained inactive. Only once he came to our state party headquarters after his induction...I had talked to him but could not make an impact on his behaviour."

BJP slams MP govt's liquor moves: Won't allow state to become 'Madira Pradesh'

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 1

THE BJP on Friday targeted the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh for its decisions aimed at increasing revenue from liquor shops.

The government had recently decided to simplify the procedure for bar licence for resorts to encourage tourism in the forest areas of the state. The bar licences will be provided near forest sanctuaries in addition to national parks.

The government has also decided to encourage liquor shops to create an adjacent facility where people can sit and drink. The government has argued that in the absence of such a facility, people drink on the roads and create trouble.

Leading the BJP's opposition to the moves was former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who warned the Kamal Nath government that he would not let Madhya Pradesh become "Madira (liquor) Pradesh".

He claimed that most rapes are committed by people in inebriated condition, and said that the government's decisions would lead to an increase in crime against women and would result in a law-and-order issue.

Chouhan said his government did not allow a single new liquor shop to come up, and had made attempts to reduce the existing shops with an aim to gradually take the state towards prohibition. He cited the decision to close down shops close to the Narmada as a step in that direction.

"Even we used to get such proposals to increase liquor

shops but our Cabinet used to reject all," the senior BJP leader said, alleging that the Congress government's bid to increase revenue will lead to more crimes.

He also pointed out that the state government has taken these decisions when the country is celebrating 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, who had referred to alcohol as "a major social evil".

In response, Congress leader Bhupendra Gupta accused the former CM of lying and dismissed his charges as ridiculous. "When you took oath as CM for third time you said there will be prohibition in the state. Why did you not do it? Who stopped you?" Gupta said, and alleging that Chouhan later went back on his announcement to claim that the BJP never promised prohibition and only said that "liquor was bad."