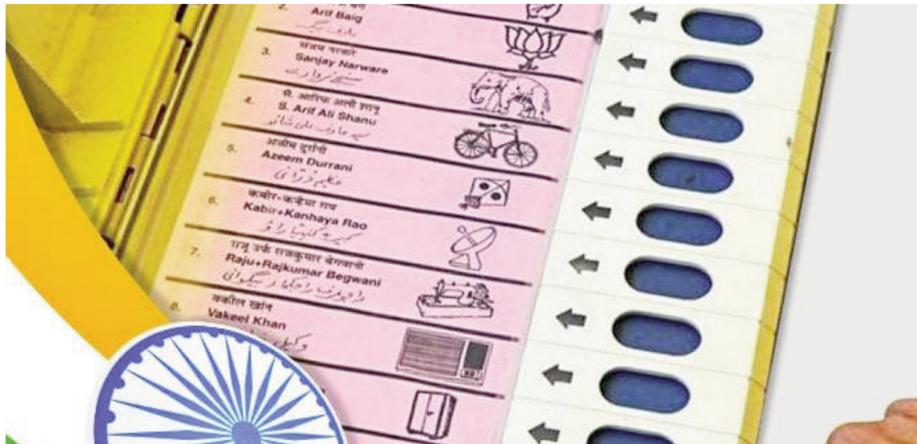


Lok Sabha polls: BJP nervous a day before 3rd phase polling in UP



Biswajeet Banerjee

BJP is nervous before the 3rd phase of polling in UP as senior party leaders believe that BJP will suffer a massive loss in the first two phases of polling and blame its sitting MPs for the debacle

A day before the third phase polling in Uttar Pradesh is set to take place, BharatiyaJanata Party is nervous as its senior party leaders believe that BJP will suffer a massive loss in the first two phases of polling and blame its sitting MPs for the possible debacle.

A senior party leader told this reporter that if BharatiyaJanata

Party had changed 40% of its sitting MPs, as it planned earlier, it would have been easy for BJP to touch the half mark. The scenario looks grim now, as per sources.

What makes BJP apprehensive is the report they are receiving from booths which says that party may win 5 out of 16 seats which have gone to polls in first two phases. "The report from the booth presidents is not very encouraging. The alliance has worked well. The Dalits and Muslims have voted together which is the worrying sign for the party," the leader said on condition of anonymity for obvious reasons.

The BJP campaign rested on the booth management. It was

the first among all the political parties in UP which was off the block and had started working at the booth level. The party had appointed booth presidents and even pannaicharge (in-charge of voters' list) to ensure that people come out of vote. The committee submitted its report to the party leadership on Sunday.

"There is anger against the sitting MPs. People in majority want to bring BJP back to power and see NarendraModi as the next prime Minister of the country. But the anger against the sitting MPs is a spoil sport. At public places people discuss the non-performance of the MP and this negative publicity at market places is hitting the party," the leader said and added that had the party leadership stuck to its original decision to change 40% of the sitting candidates reports would have been different.

The BJP has announced candidates for all the 80 seats and has changed just 17 of them which is close to 20%. One of the candidates SavitriBaiPhule was changed from Bahraich because she joined Congress after reposing faith on Rahul Gandhi's policies.

The only saving grace for the party is around 60% polling in the both the phases. There was a fear that polling percentage will go down because of the apathy of voters. But this did not happen.

In first phase there was dip of around 2% in in polling while in second phase it increased by less than 1%. BJP leaders say it is the new voter who has come out of their houses and voted in favour of BJP.

"Take the case of Jats. The older generation voted for alliance but the young generation voted for BJP," he said.

Despite all these permutation and combination the BJP does not feel confident before going to third phase because the election will be in Yadav land where BJP is already in dire strait.

Sunny Deol joins BJP, says party is his family



Actor Sunny Deol joined BJP on Tuesday in presence of Defence Minister NirmalaSitharaman and Railway Minister PiyushGoyal, days after he met BJP presidentAmit Shah at Pune airport.

"The way my father (film star Dharmendra) was attached with Atalji, today I have come to join Modiji. Whatever I can do for this family (BJP), I will do it... I won't talk, I will show you through my work," Deol said while addressing the media at the BharatiyaJanata Party office here. The party is likely to field Deol, who has acted in films such as "Ghayal" and "Damini", from either Gurdaspur or Chandigarh in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, according to sources.

GurdaspurLok Sabha seat in Punjab was represented by the late VinodKhanna from BJP. Sitharamansaid, "The moment we got to know that he is coming to the party, I can only relate to the film Border he had made, post which the impact on the Indian audience of such a theme was really proven... The feeling of nationalism and patriotism, when so beautifully evoked through a film, can really touch the core of Indian citizen."

Deol understands the pulse of people and was inspired by the work done by Prime Minister NarendraModi, who is serving the cause of the people, and keeping India's glory high, she said. He is an artiste of such eminence who make films beyond commercial considerations on the themes that are important for the country, Sitharaman said. HemaMalini, the BJP candidate from Mathura, is Deol's stepmother.

No Modi wave like in 2014, BJP at loss: Raj Thackeray



Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray on Tuesday claimed there is "no wave now like 2014" for Prime Minister NarendraModi and the BharatiyaJanata Party and its leaders are now bewildered what to do.

"Modi has said nothing about the promises he made in 2014. Instead, he grabs any issue to seek votes. Now, he's asking for votes in the name of the Easter Sunday terror strikes in Sri Lanka," he said at a rally in south Mumbai's Kalachowky area.

Alleging Modi has "only said lies and made fake propaganda" in the past five years, Thackeray showed a picture of the PM posing with a family ostensibly brought above the poverty line in a government ad.

To prove his point, he called on stage the entire family - amidst thunderous applause - and said their

photo on a social media site was "simply picked up" and the PM's photo pasted alongside to produce the fake advertisement for the government campaign.

"Here they are - recognize them all. It was their family album photo which they had posted on a social site. Compare them with the picture in the Modi ad," Thackeray said as the crowds roared their approval.

The recent open support expressed by top industrialists and bankers to Mumbai South Congress candidate MilindDeora "is a hint to the entire country" that the BJP government is on way out, he claimed.

"This is unprecedented. I don't recall any such instance of the past when such top industrialists have come out and openly endorsed a particular candidate. Mark my words, this is not limited to just one constituency, but its a message to the whole country that NarendraModi will not become the Prime Minister again," Thackeray

claimed. Charging the BJP of making fraudulent memorandums of understanding during the Make In India expo held in Mumbai over three years ago, catching local businessmen and creating inflated investment documents, he rued how Mumbai entrepreneur AmolYadav - who designed and built a passenger aircraft on his building terrace - was promised huge land and investments of around Rs 35,000 crore, but nothing came out of it and now he's preparing to leave for the US.

Referring to attempts by the BJP to "gag" him for holding his rallies, the MNS chief said: "I just want them to answer my questions. But Chief Minister DevendraFadnavis is baffled as to what reply to give to me, so they attack me."

He touched on a variety of other issues, including playing videos of Modi who first praised Nationalist Congress Party supremo SharadPawar in most glowing terms barely three years ago, and his recent strategy vowing to politically "wipe out" the Pawar clan from Maharashtra.

Cong. will win all seats in state

Jaipur: Congress publicity committee chairman Mahesh Joshi claimed that people have seen the reality of 'Brand Modi' in the last five years, as the NDA government has failed to fulfill their expectations despite getting a big majority.

"Vision of AICC president Rahul Gandhi has been included in the manifesto. Congress is doing positive campaigning," he said. "In Rajasthan, there is no VIP seat; all are VIP seats and focus is on all 25 seats. Congress will achieve its 'Mission 25' in the state." Rajasthan will vote for 25 LS seats on April 29 and May 6.

Joshi and other party leaders released a folder focusing on 15 main points in the manifesto and photos of all 25 candidates. The points include minimum income guarantee to remove poverty, employment revolution, budget every year for farmers, health facilities to all, GST 2.0, fulfilling all needs of armed forces, and quality education to all children.

"We are taking these main issues in the manifesto to the people and we are saying these are the promises of Rahul GandhimAshok Gehlot, Sachin Pilot and of workers," he said.

Asked if the BJP is scared of Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav as Prime Minister NarendraModi will address a public meeting in Jodhpur on Monday, Joshi said, "BJP is scared as Vaibhav is getting good response. Let Modi, Shah or anybody from the BJP come, people of Jodhpur have decided to make Vaibhav win from Jodhpur."

Cong. moves its war room to Lodhi Estate

New Delhi: In this poll battle, the Congress party has a new war room.

The new war room hosts almost all important meetings related to strategy, campaign, and data analysis. The operational nerve centre of the largest opposition party shifted to a small bungalow in Lodhi estate a few weeks ago from its traditional war room, 15, Gurdwara Rakabganj Road (GRR), which it has used for the past 15 years.

The new war room at 80, Lodhi Estate, hosts almost all important meetings related to strategy, campaign and data analysis. Every day at 4pm, senior leaders such as Ahmed Patel, Anand Sharma, RandeepSurjewala, Jairam Ramesh, Praveen Chakravarty and Sam Pitroda go into a huddle at this bungalow to take stock of the situation and the campaign.

The bungalow belongs to RajyaSABha member and former union minister, P Chidambaram. It doesn't have a big, formal reception counter but offers visitors rooms, conference facilities and ample parking space.

The GurdwaraRakabganj Road war room was set up before the 2004 election and a lot of recent electoral history is attached to the property. Ramesh and Salman Khurshid used to write the party manifesto and other documents at the GRG bungalow. It also played host to the extensive process of Congress and Left leaders writing their common minimum programme for the first United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government.

Nearly 66% polling amid reports of violence; man hacked to death in WB

New Delhi: A high voter turnout, including over 80 per cent in Assam, was recorded in the third and largest phase of Lok Sabha elections today, covering 117 constituencies amid complaints of EVM malfunctioning in many states and killing of a man outside a booth in West Bengal. Election Commission officials in Delhi put the voting percentage at 65.71 at 9 pm. Final figures are likely to change as queues of voters were seen at several centres even after the scheduled time for voting ended. With Tuesday's polling, voting has been held in 302 Lok Sabha constituencies. In Gujarat, a turnout of 63.67 per cent was registered for the 26 seats. Key political leaders, including PM NarendraModi, BJP president Amit Shah, party veteran LK Advani, Union Finance Minister ArunJaitley and Congress leader Ahmed Patel, cast their votes at different places in the state. Shah is contesting from Gandhinagar.

The polling percentage was 71.47 in Kerala from where Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, party MP ShashiTharoor and Union minister KAlphons are among those in the fray. In Karnataka, 67.44 per cent electors cast their votes in 14 LS constituencies. Around 61.35 per cent voters exercised their franchise for the 10 Lok Sabha seats in UP amid reports of EVM snags at some booths.

At a booth in Etah, the presiding officer was removed after people accused him of forcing them to cast their votes in favour of the SP. A turnout of 58.98 was

recorded in 14 LS constituencies of Maharashtra. State BJP president RaosahebDanve (Jalna) and NCP chief SharadPawar's daughter SupriyaSule (Baramati) are among the prominent candidates in the fray. The two LS seats in Goa registered an average 73.23 per cent voting.

Chhattisgarh saw a turnout of 68.41 per cent. In West Bengal, a group of men attacked 52-year-old Tiyarul Sheikh with sharp-edged weapons following an altercation when he went to vote at a booth in Baligram Primary School in Murshidabad LS constituency, the police said.

Central forces influencing Bengal voters towards BJP: Mamta

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee on Tuesday accused Central forces personnel of influencing voters to cast their vote in favour of the BJP and said her Trinamool Congress party has lodged an "official complaint" with the Election Commission (EC) against the offenders.

"Today I have got news that in Malda South constituency's Englishbazar, the Central force personnel entered polling booths number 166 and 167 and influenced the voters to vote for BJP," Banerjee said at an election rally here in Hoogly district. "They have no rights to this. We have lodged an official complaint against them," she said. "Why will they do it? Is it their duty to do it? Police cannot enter inside the polling booths without the permission of the returning officer. We have received the same complaint from Itahar (in Balurghat) as well. They are asking people standing in the queues to vote for BJP," she alleged.

Sandeep ray on Satyajit Ray's 27th death anniversary



He shot his films according to my vacations, so my mother and I could be with him. ...these vacations became an opportunity for me to imbibe his filmmaking acumen, reminisces Sandip Ray

"I remember him as an affectionate and caring father, though the onus of bringing me up, taking care of all my day-to-day requirements fell entirely on my mother. She looked after my school, my homework everything while my father was busy making movies. Though he did care a lot about what went on in my life. Oh yes, he was definitely a family man. He always wanted us to be near him. So what he did was to plan all his outdoor shootings around my school holidays.

Yes! He shot his films according to my vacations, so my mother and I could be with him. More than the chance to be with my father these vacations became an opportunity for me to imbibe his filmmaking acumen. I guess I began observing the Master at work at a time when other children are only bothered with games and homework. My three mandatory school holidays during my growing years—the summer, winter and Pooja holidays—were devoted to watching my father shoot his great works. I was there at the shooting of his first film PatherPanchali though too young to understand what was happening. No one knew it would become such a timeless classic. We all looked at the shooting as a picnic.

We knew he was working on something different. But we were all more enamoured of the wonderful rural Bengali outdoors. I can still remember the hut where the film was shot and that railway track with the steam engine chugging on it. They don't make steam engines or movies like PatherPanchali (1955) any more. I also remember being present for the shooting of ParasPathar (1958). There was this marvellous party scene featuring TulusiChakraborty in an immaculate suit and several other stalwarts of the Bengali film industry, and there was this huge crane with Baba's regular cinematographer SubratoMitra and Baba perched on it. That memory remains vivid.

When did I decide I'd like to make films? I don't know...I was always keenly interested in the post-production aspect of filmmaking, particularly editing. I still consider editing to be my first love. According to me, that's where the film takes shape. Seeing the rushes on the moviola and watching Baba cut the film fascinated me. Those aspects fascinated me. I think in my growing years there were more advantages than disadvantages to being Satyajit Ray's son.

I was treated very normally in school. Only later in fact recently I find I am being constantly being compared with him. But it's all right. People do expect a lot from me as a filmmaker because of who my father was. But I don't let those expectations bog me down. If I thought about it I'd have done nothing in life. I think most critics are satisfied with me. I think I was a very good student of Satyajit Ray. But I couldn't ask him too many questions, as that would've disturbed him. So I'd address all my queries to members of his crew. They helped me understand his craft. I was completely fascinated by his working method. I'd say I have inherited his method of shooting.

Like him I do extensive homework before shooting. In any case one has to be well-prepared before shooting since filmmaking has become very expensive...After I grew up Baba and I became friends. We shared a common passion—cinema and spent a lot of time discussing it. I'd show him the first cut of my film, though not the entire film. But he's never come for my shootings nor for the editing. You know how the film industry is? Before I knew it they'd have said my father made all my films.

But I did show him my films after they were complete. He was very satisfied with what I had done in GupiBaghaPhireElo (the third part of the GupiGayenBaghaBayen trilogy). I was very relieved. Baba was my censor board.

Once he said it was okay, I was fine. I remember when he saw my first film he didn't say whether it was good or bad. He only advised me to run through it myself and see where I had gone through. As a filmmaker his one advice to me was to view both good and bad films. While the good taught you what to do the bad taught you what not to do. Another very interesting advice from him was to be unsentimental about what I shoot.

'You may love a particular shot. But if it doesn't move the story forward throw it out because it's a useless shot.' If you see his film they absolutely fat-free. There are no superfluous moments in his cinema. In some of his best works like Aranyer Din Ratri he shot extensively and the film got lengthy. He ruthlessly cut away the

footage. That's where my fascination for editing came in. I could see how he was tailoring his films to make them precise and succinct...I think the successive generations of directors who are Baba's fans are doing great work. In fact Dibakar Banerjee has shot one of my father's short stories in Bombay Talkies. Dibakar is deeply influenced by my father. He is a very straightforward and no-nonsense man. He suddenly came to ask for the story. I was very happy to talk to him.

He promised to be true to the story and I believe he has. He did tell me he was relocating the story from Bengal to Mumbai. I am happy to know not much has been lost in the translation. Another one is AshutoshGowariker. SujoyGhosh is also a fanatic fan of my father. He also plans to shoot one of my father's stories. He came down to ask for the story. Sujoy is a fungus. When these filmmakers ask for rights to my father's material I only give them the Hindi rights. I try to do justice to his Bengali stories. I've filmed Baba's Feluda stories. My last film was an anthology of three ghost stories, two of them were my father's stories. But I'd never dare to remake any of his films. It would be a futile exercise.

My favourite works of my father? Oh, there are many. Keeping the Apu Trilogy aside, I'd say Kanchenjunga is absolutely awe-inspiring. It was far ahead of its time. Then Aranyer Din Ratri was such a sublime film, then of course Charulata, Jana Aranya (for its black humour) and GupiGayenBaghaBayen. And of course the Feluda films. As for Baba's Hindi films I liked ShatranjKeKhiladi but I loved Sadgati (featuring Om Puri and SmitaPatil) even more. One of the most hard hitting films ever made, still very relevant. The Information & Broadcasting ministry had organised a wonderful tribute and created a museum of artifacts in my father's memory on the occasion of 100 years of cinema.

We were thrilled to hear about this. We've plans to do more in memory of my father in Kolkata and also in Mumbai I don't have film prints of all of Baba's films. Because they belong to different producers. Even the DVDs of his films that I have come from abroad. Luckily the Criterion Films company in New York have come out with a restored version of Jalsaghar which is stunning. They're also bringing out the Apu Trilogy. Sadly in India we're celebrating a 100 years of Indian cinema and most of masters' works are missing. It took a Martin Scorsese to restore Uday Shankar's Kalpana. Most of the Bengali masterpieces are lost. I am happy Baba's films are safe...in the West and the Ray Society. But films by RitwikGhatak and MrinalSen are gone."