



Supporters of India's Congress Party celebrate at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad yesterday with their party's clear victory as the vote counting of the national elections drags on.

## Rahul's summer of content

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

This is clearly Rahul Gandhi's summer of content. The self-effacing Nehru-Gandhi scion, who was once seen as a reluctant politician who shunned the media, is now being credited for his starring role in the resounding victory of the Congress in the 2009 elections and the revival of the party in Uttar Pradesh.

Senior party leaders have been quick to lavish praise on the 39-year-old Rahul Gandhi, along with his mother and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, for the decisive victory of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which defied most pollsters' predictions who were projecting a fractured verdict.

The 2009 elections will shine in the Gandhi family

lore. The year saw a stunning transformation of the Gandhi heir apparent into a shrewd strategist and politician as he emerged from his mother's sheltering shadows to campaign tirelessly in the blistering summer heat, addressing as many as 10-15 rallies a day.

Rahul Gandhi's role in mobilising the youth power, his strenuous efforts at rejuvenating the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest and most populous state where the party machinery had virtually ceased to exist, and his robust defence of Manmohan Singh as the party's prime ministerial candidate against the BJP's onslaught were seen as some of his singular contributions to the party's victory.

"The electorate wants the youth to come up. Rahul Gandhi should get the credit," senior Congress leader Kapil

Sibal told IANS.

"People have shown faith in Rahul Gandhi's leadership," said Congress leader Digvijay Singh.

"The feedback we got from our workers was how Rahul Gandhi, in the past two-and-a-half years, worked in every area, and we had the confidence that it would help us," said party leader Ambika Soni.

"The way youth, for the first time, has shown enthusiasm for elections and has thought about joining politics is all because of Rahul Gandhi," Soni added.

The Congress general secretary in charge of youth affairs who became MP for the first time from Amethi in 2004, Rahul Gandhi proved to be a relentless campaigner, turning on his charm on voters, trumpeting the Congress' achievements with panache and demolishing opponents with withering sarcasm.

## Advani proposes to shun leadership in new House, BJP rejects

PTI, New Delhi

Taking responsibility for BJP's poor performance in the Lok Sabha elections, its Prime Ministerial candidate L K Advani on Saturday offered not to be the party leader in the new House which was, however, rejected.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, BJP General Secretary Arun Jaitley said Advani proposed at the meeting of the party's Parliamentary Board, which discussed the outcome, that a new leader be elected to lead the party in the Lok Sabha.

"However, the Board asked

Not supporting Congress was a mistake: Lalu

ANI, New Delhi

Rashtriya Janata Dal supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav on Saturday admitted that not supporting the Congress was a mistake.

"It's the mandate for the people," Lalu said, adding that he harbored no grudges against Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Lalu lost from the Patna parliamentary seat to JD (U) rival Ranjan Prasad Yadav, but won from the Saran constituency against BJP rival Rajiv Pratap Rudy.

Nitish Kumar, whose party registered major electoral gains in Bihar, didn't miss a chance to take a potshot at Lalu.

"The lantern (RJD's election symbol) has broken and the oil that was split set on fire the bungalow (LJP's symbol) as the arrow (symbol of JD-U) was right on target," he said.

"The people of Bihar have the rejected negative politics pursued by RJD president Lalu Prasad and LJP chief Ramvilas Paswan and have given a positive vote to my government which has been successful in bringing about peace, communal harmony and development," he added.

## Young MPs likely to find place in new cabinet

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

With the electoral verdict clear, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance will next turn its attention to government formation and there is strong likelihood that young parliamentarians will find a place in the council of ministers, said party sources.

"The Congress president Sonia Gandhi has already promised that young MPs who have worked hard and proved themselves will be included in the cabinet this time," said a senior party leader.

After a spectacular showing in the staggered Lok Sabha election, key ministries including finance, defence, external affairs and home will be retained by the Congress.

As a new government must be formed by June 2, the party's leadership is meeting to review its performance that will be followed up a cabinet meeting to be presided over by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Among the Congress veterans who will find their way back into government will be Pranab Mukherjee, P. Chidambaram, Kamal Nath, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Hans Raj Bhardwaj, A.K. Antony, Kapil Sibal, Jairam Ramesh, Vayalar Ravi, Anand Sharma, Sushil Kumar Shinde and S. Jaipal Reddy.

According to party insiders, among the Young Turks who are likely to figure in Manmohan Singh's cabinet will be Jyotiraditya Scindia, Milind Deora, Sachin Pilot and Jitin Prasada.

Another possible inclusion

could be former UN under-secretary general Sashi Tharoor who created history by winning the Lok Sabha seat from the Kerala capital, Thiruvananthapuram.

Manmohan Singh said he would try to persuade Congress general secretary, Rahul Gandhi, to join the cabinet after the ruling Congress-led coalition's win in the election.

"It is my wish that he should be in the cabinet. But I will have to persuade him," the prime minister told reporters.

Rewarding cabinet berths for the Congress party's allies - the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra - will also be discussed by the party leadership.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi in all smiles.

## A deserving PM in waiting

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

It once described himself as a politician by accident but today Manmohan Singh, who nearly risked his government on Indo-US nuclear deal, is a prime minister by design as he prepared to assume the top post after Congress' stunning success in general elections.

Activists were unanimous

that it was the party's Italian-born president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul, 38, who were responsible for the success.

Congress led India's campaign for independence from Britain in 1947, and Rahul's great-grandfather was Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister.

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