

Highest-ever vote share for BJP

As of 1.30 pm, the Bharatiya Janata Party had garnered 38.5% of the votes counted in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The NDA as a whole, managed to garner close to 45% of the vote. This is the highest vote share received by the party nationwide in any Lok Sabha election since the party was (re)formed in 1980.

The BJP-led coalition won a cumulative vote share of nearly 45%, which is higher than what the NDA got in 2014 — 38%.

In contrast, the Congress party has managed to increase its vote share only around 2.6 percentage points to gather 22.07% of the counted votes so far.

The BJP and its allies have thus far not only increased their respective vote shares and seat shares from 2014, but also expanded their geographic reach in electoral success. Only Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, have bucked the trend.

LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019

Gloomiest phase for Gandhis

Consecutive polls losses put question marks on Rahul-Priyanka's leadership

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Congress helmed by its President Rahul Gandhi, his sister and General Secretary Priyanka Vadra and their mother Sonia Gandhi today stared at one of the gloomiest phases for the party after the Bharatiya Janata Party won a historic mandate in parliamentary elections.

The Gandhis held a meeting yesterday to take stock of the party's debacle, the second in a row after 2014 national polls when it had fell to its worst electoral performance with just 44 seats under the leadership of Sonia as party president.

As votes were counted for the national election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi secured a landmark victory and a return with an even bigger mandate than 2014.

Although the Congress under Rahul as chief doubled its tally of seats to 87 it struggled to even touch the three-figure mark while Rahul himself lost battle in Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, a Gandhi dynasty bastion and one of the party's safest seats till now.

The overall big picture across the country is dismal for the Congress. The Congress national headquarters in Akbar Road in Delhi is practically deserted and several leaders left after the results started coming



Barring Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Bihar, the Congress failed to enter into alliance with key regional parties in most of the other big states including West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh where it was kept out of the tie-up between Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi Party.

This did not help the Congress and the SP-BSP in UP. As the opposition votes fragmented, the BJP walked away with majority of the 80 seats in UP. Along with its allies, the BJP also swept Bihar and Maharashtra, the two states with a total of 88 seats.

The Congress very poor performance in UP raises serious questions about the benefits of bringing Priyanka Vadra into the party as General Secretary and being



given the charge of eastern part of the state which in the last five years turned into a BJP bastion.

Clearly, Priyanka Gandhi's political debut made no difference at all in Uttar Pradesh where she campaigned extensively. It will most certainly raise fresh questions about the vote-catching ability of the Gandhis and the sheen of the dynasty.

What was more disappointing for the Congress that it had miserably failed to build on the momentum of its victory in assembly poll victory against the BJP in three heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh just six months ago and benefit from it in the parliamentary polls.

Current and former party officials blamed a lacklustre campaign and a failure

to overhaul its top team for the polls debacle.

At the end of last year, Congress's hopes of upsetting Modi had increased, after it won the three heartland states, largely driven by voter concerns about weak farm incomes and a lack of jobs.

But Congress fumbled communications on key policies, with a publicity campaign this year that escaped the notice even of some of its own workers, and failed to forge pre-election alliances in key states, said the party officials who spoke to Reuters.

Congress's campaign was launched on April 7, just four days before the first round of voting began in a general election spread over seven phases across 39 days.

Congress also proved unable to effectively parry Modi's campaign emphasis on national security, after aerial clashes and heightened tension with arch rival Pakistan following a suicide attack in disputed Kashmir that killed 40 Indian policemen.

Still, the 48-year-old Gandhi remains powerful within a party that has ruled India for most of its history since independence from Britain in 1947, and is unlikely to face a leadership challenge immediately.

But Congress's continued slide has raised questions both about its future and the role of his family.

WHO SAID WHAT

"Together we grow. Together we prosper. Together we will build a strong and inclusive India. India wins yet again!"



Indian Prime Minister NARENDRA MODI

"I want to tell our leaders, who won and lost, don't worry, don't lose confidence. We will fight together for our ideology. ... It doesn't matter what I think went wrong. Frankly people of India have decided that Modi should be the prime minister, as an Indian person I accept it."



Congress President RAHUL GANDHI

"Today's result is India's mandate against opposition's propaganda, lies, personal insinuations and baseless politics. It is also people's mandate who have chosen development and nationalism and rejected casteism, dynasty and appeasement."



BJP President AMIT SHAH

"It is the people's decision and we fully respect it. We congratulate the BJP workers, leaders and Prime Minister Narendra Modi."



Congress leader PRIYANKA GANDHI

"Congratulations to the winners. But all losers are not losers. We have to do a complete review and then we will share our views with you all."



Trinamool Congress supremo MAMATA BANERJEE

"As my lead nears 50,000 with 72% counted, I feel like a batsman who has scored a century while his team has lost! It's a bittersweet emotion I will take some time to reflect on."



Congress leader SHASHI THAROOR



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Amit Shah gesture as they celebrate the victory in India's general elections, in New Delhi, yesterday.

End of caste-based politics in UP?

NDTV ONLINE

With the BJP on course for a comprehensive victory across the country, particularly in Uttar Pradesh where it has consolidated its lead, the writing is on the wall for the bua-bhatija combine of Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati. The much-touted Mahagathbandhan (MGB) of SP, BSP and RLD seems to have floundered in front of the persona of Narendra Modi in Uttar Pradesh.

With the Modi juggernaut having swept the state once again, the MGB faces an existentialist question.

Despite BJP winning big in UP, there is little doubt that it could have been far worse for the opposition if they hadn't teamed up.

The MGB has gained 19 seats. BJP and its allies gained 60 seats, while Congress has won one seat. Trends suggest BJP has registered a healthy increase in vote share to nearly 50% in many seats in UP. This means that any increase in vote share for MGB would be of little consequence.

BJP has been in power at the Centre for five years and in the state for the past two years, Akhilesh and Maya have failed to capitalise on the anti-incumbency, especially against many sitting BJP MPs, in large party because they chose to limit their attacks to just Prime Minister Narendra Modi rather than focusing on local issues affecting the people. Modi, meanwhile, deserves credit for changing tack with his 'mahamilawat' jibe during the election campaign to take on the MGB. The young voters too seemed to have moved over from caste-based politics towards BJP's nationalistic brand of politics.

Architect of Modi's victory

REUTERS, New Delhi

With India's ruling Hindu nationalists stunning election victory yesterday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's powerful right hand man, Amit Shah, could reap his reward as a potential home minister, an analyst and a party official said.

Shah, who has long been Modi's backroom strategist, helped run one of India's most divisive election campaigns over the past six weeks to rouse the Bharatiya Janata Party's nationalist base and overcome the loss of key state elections in December.

Their efforts blunted voter discontent at lack of jobs and farm distress by portraying the opposition as weak and indecisive at best and at worst, appeasing minority Muslims and arch foe Pakistan, to deftly exploit national security fears.

"Modi and Shah work in tandem," said a BJP official who has worked closely with the steely-eyed 54-year-old Shah.

"There is no doubt that Modi is India's most popular leader and national figure. Translating his personal popularity into a political victory...requires planning and execution to the last detail. Shah has done that to near perfection."

Now his reward could be a top government post, probably the federal home, or interior, ministry, bringing vast powers over security forces and domestic intelligence, said political analyst Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay.

"From a backroom guy who was a bit diffident about all the charges pending against him, Amit Shah's transition is complete. He is now the legitimised inheritor of Modi's legacy."

Modi ran the government for five years with unquestioned authority while Shah, a Hindu hardliner who also hails from the prime minister's western home state of

Gujarat, presided over the BJP with an iron hand, as its chief.

For more than a year, he focused propaganda efforts on the eastern state of West Bengal, which is ruled by a firebrand regional leader supported by the state's Muslims.

Shah fuelled nationalist sentiment by accusing his rivals of appeasing Muslims with funding for clerics and religious schools that turned the state into a replica of neighbouring Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority country.

"The BJP may just have cracked open the formula to winning over Bengali votes, and the credit is Shah's," said Sandeep Shastri, pro vice chancellor of Jain University in the southern city of Bengaluru.

Shah kicked off a campaign last month against Muslim immigrants, likening them to termites, while backing citizenship measures for Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs from neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Critics have long accused the BJP of a deep-seated hostility against India's 180 million Muslims. The party denies any bias but says it opposes appeasement of any community.

A relentless politician, Shah has himself run 29 elections from municipal bodies to parliament and lost none. He travelled 150,000 km (93,200 miles) to address 161 public rallies during the election, he said last week.

Shah could be a potential replacement once Modi bows out when he turns 75 in 2025, a rule the prime minister adopted to edge out older party leaders who had sought to resist his rise.

"It's some time off, but at the moment he is best placed to succeed him," added Mukhopadhyay, who has specialised in studying the BJP and right-wing groups allied to it.



Amit Shah celebrating with supporters during the election results day.

WORLD REACTION

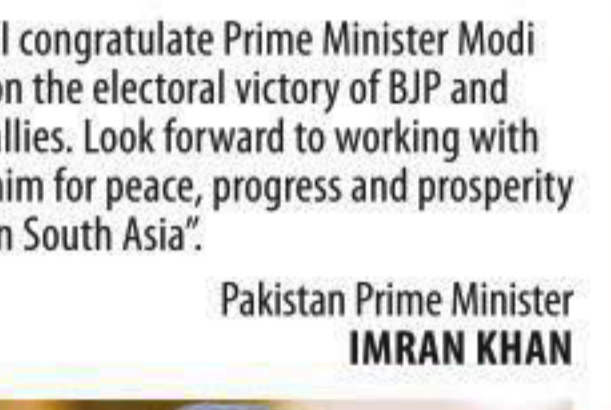
Leaders across the world have congratulated Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his historic electoral victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.



US President DONALD TRUMP

"Congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi and his BJP party on their BIG election victory! Great things are in store for the US-India partnership with the return of PM Modi at the helm. I look forward to continuing our important work together!"

US President DONALD TRUMP



Pakistan Prime Minister IMRAN KHAN

"I congratulate Prime Minister Modi on the electoral victory of BJP and allies. Look forward to working with him for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia."

Pakistan Prime Minister IMRAN KHAN



Chinese President XI JINPING

"On the occasion of the National Democratic Alliance winning the 17th Lok Sabha elections on India under your (Modi) leadership, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations."

Chinese President XI JINPING

Congratulations, my friend @Narendramodi, on your impressive election victory! ... Together we will continue to strengthen the great friendship between India & Israel. Well done, my friend!

Israeli Prime Minister BENJAMIN NETANYAHU



Other neighbours and foreign leaders to congratulate Modi's win include Russian President Vladimir Putin, Japanese PM Shinjo Abe, President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, Portugal PM Antonio Costa, President of Tanzania Dr John Magufuli, President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades, Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering and Sri Lanka PM Ranil Wickremesinghe.

STARS WHO FELL



Rahul Gandhi (Congress) From Amethi, Uttar Pradesh



Digvijay Singh (Congress) from Bhopal



Deve Gowda (Janata Dal) from Tumkur, Karnataka



Sheila Dixit (Congress) from North East Delhi



Ashok Chavan (Congress) from Nanded against



Kanhaiya Kumar (CPIM) from Begusarai, Bihar



Urmila Matondkar (Congress) from Mumbai North

West Bengal sees saffron surge

Mamata congratulates winners, calls for complete reviews of results

AGENCIES

West Bengal headed for a saffron surge, with the BJP gaining 18 seats and the ruling All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) ahead in 22 out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state.

The Congress gained two Lok Sabha seats, while the Left drew a blank. In the outgoing 16th Lok Sabha, the TMC had 34 seats in West Bengal, whereas the BJP had only two. The Congress and the CPI(M)-led Left Front had four and two seats respectively.

Congratulating the winners, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee called for a complete review of the results.

"Congratulations to the winners. But all losers are not losers. We have to do a complete review and then we will share our views with you all. Let the counting process be completed fully and the VVPATs match," she tweeted.

BJP's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said the trends

show that the days of "TMC's misrule is numbered in Bengal".

"The initial trends reflect the anti-TMC mood. Despite so much terror in Bengal, the people have reposed faith in BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. The days of TMC's misrule are numbered in Bengal," Vijayvargiya said.

As per the current EC trends, the TMC has so far secured 44.61 per cent votes, closely followed by the BJP, which has bagged 39.03 per cent votes. The CPI(M) and the Congress have garnered a meagre 6.66 per cent and 5.44 per cent share of the pie respectively.

The saffron party, it seems, is cutting a swathe in TMC turf of Bengal, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed 17 poll rallies, with focus on the issues of NRC and the Citizenship bill.

The party is seen making substantial gains in areas close to the India-Bangladesh border, which have a substantial minority population.

In Jangalmahal area too, the BJP can be seen marching ahead of its rivals.

With trends favouring BJP at the Centre as well as in Bengal, the saffron party workers and supporters have burst into celebrations outside its state headquarters in Kolkata and elsewhere in the districts.

The BJP which is alleged by many to be trying to promote Hindu nationalism, has had its eyes on West Bengal for a long time and they have been trying to make inroads in the state bordering Bangladesh. The saffron party was encouraged by its recent successes in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

And to achieve what they wanted to achieve, the ruling party, prior to and during the beginning of the campaign, gave maximum effort in West Bengal to do well. The frequent visits of Modi and Amit Shah to the state, are proof of their desperation to leave a significant mark on the state. And, the party's effort seems to have paid off.