

How Modi's party lost its majority

AFP, New Delhi Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will remain in office but with a substantially reduced mandate, confounding expectations of a resounding victory forecast by analysts and exit polls.

At his rallies, he referred to Muslims as "infiltrators", and claimed the main opposition Congress party would redistribute the nation's wealth to Muslims if it won.

But the strategy failed to galvanise Hindu voters behind the BJP, while also solidifying minority communities' support for the opposition.

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INDIA ELECTION 2024

Ridiculed for half a decade, Rahul slows Modi juggernaut

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

As the Indian parliamentary election results neared completion on Tuesday, supporters at the Congress party's national headquarters at 24 Akbar Road in the heart of Delhi broke into celebrations.

The happiest man was Rahul Gandhi as Congress, powered by his campaign, won 99 seats on its own recording its best performance in national elections since 2004.

Often derided as "pappu" and dismissed as a serial 're-inventor' constantly looking for an identity, Rahul perhaps thought he had had the last laugh in this Lok Sabha election. Congress' tally of seats is not only a quantum jump from the worst show of 52 seats five years ago but more importantly prevented BJP from getting a majority on its own.

Rahul carried out a 'padyatra' from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in 2022-23 and a 'Nyay Yatra' this year from Manipur to Mumbai in the run up to the parliamentary elections setting the narrative for Congress and staying the course and refusing to be distracted by setbacks.



Riding a tempo with migrant workers, tractor in the company of farmers, hugging a child, bowing to comfort a woman who lost her husband or attacking BJP, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in press conferences, short videos and social media platforms - Rahul was the centre-piece almost all over.

The 53-year-old scion of the Gandhi family describes himself as the best chess player among Indian politicians. His latest gambit of making social justice as the central theme of his party's campaign seems to have paid off in the political chess with his party making a surprising comeback in the Hindi belt, making significant gains in Rajasthan,

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Even the harshest of detractors of Rahul would concede that his 2024 campaign was by far his best as he focused on bread and butter issues and the party's welfare guarantees which struck a chord with a section of the voters.

A key feature of Rahul's election campaign was that he depended heavily on social media as opposed to conventional interactions and interviews with the mainstream media. His repeated claim at rallies that BJP would change the Constitution if it is voted back to power as he carried a copy of the Constitution succeeded in whipping up a fear perception.

He contested from Kerala's Wayanad and Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly constituency his mother Sonia Gandhi gave up. In Rae Bareilly, he bettered Sonia's margin of victory in 2019.

The half a decade has been challenging for Rahul's political career. He lost the Lok Sabha poll in Amethi to BJP's Smriti Irani by over 55,000 votes in 2019. His strategy of pitching the 2019 polls campaign of Congress on the alleged scam in Rafale fighter jets purchase issue and bringing Modi in the line of fire boomeranged badly. But he did not budge and continued to attack the Prime Minister - this time on the Adani issue.

'Free me from govt' Says Fadnavis after BJP's poor show in Maharashtra

TNN, New Delhi

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis yesterday offered to step down as Maharashtra deputy chief minister taking moral responsibility for the party's poor showing in Lok Sabha elections in the state.

The BJP, which had 23 members in the last Lok Sabha, could manage to win only 9 this time around. Fadnavis urged the party's top leadership to free him from the state government so that he could work for the party.

"I am requesting the BJP high command to relieve me from the responsibility of the government," Fadnavis said. The Maharashtra deputy chief minister claimed that the BJP-led NDA got more votes in Mumbai but there was consolidation of votes against the party which resulted in loss of seats.

Manipur rejects BJP after year-long ethnic clashes

REUTERS, Guwahati

India's main opposition Congress party bagged both parliamentary

seats in strife-torn Manipur in the general election as the north-eastern state voted out Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party and its ally after year-long ethnic clashes.

Since May last year the remote state bordering Myanmar has been roiled by fighting between the majority Meitei and tribal Kuki-Zo people that killed at least 220 people and displaced 60,000 to relief camps.

The state of 3.2 million people continues to be divided into two enclaves - a valley controlled by Meitei and Kuki-dominated hills.



In the lead up to the election, victims on both sides of the sectarian divide expressed their displeasure with Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party for not being able to bring peace to the state.

"This is the voice of those people..." said Congress's A Bimol Akojiam, who beat his BJP rival in the Meitei-dominated inner Manipur seat by close to 110,000 votes.

World on 'highway to climate hell'

Says UN chief as planet endures 12 straight months of extreme heat

REUTERS, Brussels

Each of the past 12 months ranked as the warmest on record in year-on-year comparisons, the EU's climate change monitoring service said yesterday, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for urgent action to avert "climate hell".

"We need an exit ramp off the highway to climate hell," he said, adding: "The battle for 1.5 degrees will be won or lost in the 2020s."

The average global temperature for the 12-month period to the end of May was 1.63 degrees Celsius (2.9 degrees Fahrenheit) above the pre-industrial average - making it the warmest such period since record-keeping began in 1940, the Copernicus Climate Change Service said.

This 12-month average does not mean that the world has yet surpassed the 1.5 C (2.7 F) global warming threshold, which describes a temperature average over decades, beyond which scientists warn of more extreme and irreversible impacts.

In a separate report, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said there is now an 80 percent chance that at least one of the next five years will mark the first calendar year with an average temperature that temporarily exceeds 1.5C above pre-industrial levels - up from a 66 percent chance last year.

Japan's birth rate 'critical' as it hits record low

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's health ministry described the nation's birth rate as "critical" yesterday as it hit a record low for the eighth straight year, with the government moving to improve support for parents.

The ministry released data showing that Japan's birth rate - the average number of children a woman is expected to have in her life - stood at 1.20 last year, well below the 2.1 children needed to maintain the population.

The figure was down from 1.26 in 2022 and was the eighth consecutive yearly decline in the country of 124 million people.

"The continuing decline in the birth rate is a critical situation," a health ministry official said.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়. বাংলাদেশ পাট গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট. সংস্থাপন শাখা. www.bjri.gov.bd. নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি. বাংলাদেশ পাট গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (বিজ্ঞানসৌকর) এর নিয়োগ শূন্য পদসমূহ পূরণের লক্ষ্যে পদের পার্শ্বে বর্ণিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে অনলাইনে আবেদন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে: