

Polling for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls underway

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Polling for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls is underway. Ninety-five constituencies, spread over 11 States and one Union Territory are going to the polls today. Earlier, 97 constituencies were scheduled to be covered in the second phase. But election to Vellore seat in Tamil Nadu was cancelled over allegations of excess use of money power and polling to Tripura (East) has been postponed to the third phase, over law and order concerns.

Polling is being held in 38 constituencies in Tamil Nadu, 14 in Karnataka, 10 in Maharashtra, eight in Uttar Pradesh, five each in Assam, Bihar and Odisha, 3 each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, two in Jammu and Kashmir and one each in Manipur and Puducherry. In Tamil Nadu, voting in 38 Lok Sabha seats and 18 Assembly constituencies is underway. Polling is going on smoothly and peacefully, as elaborate arrangements have been made for over 5.99 crore voters to exercise their franchise freely. Polling will go on till 6 pm in all constituencies except in Madurai where electors can vote till 8 pm as a two-hour extension has been given in view of the famous Kallazhagar festival there.

Several political party leaders have exercised their franchise in their respective polling booths. Five-tier security arrangements have been made in front of polling stations. Special measures have been made in more than 8200 booths that are identified as either sensitive or critical. In Karnataka voting is being held in 14 parliamentary constituencies. There are 241 candidates in the fray in this phase. Our Correspondent gives us the poll s from Bengaluru. In Uttar Pradesh polling for eight Lok Sabha



seats is underway. They are Mathura, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Amroha, Bulandshaher, Nagina, Hathras and Aligarh. There are around one crore 41 lakh voters including nearly 65 lakh women. Over 6.5 lakh voters will exercise their franchise for the first time. Elaborate security arrangements have been made to ensure free and fair polls in the areas with deployment of Uttar Pradesh police personnel and Paramilitary forces. In Chhattisgarh, polling is in progress in three Maoist affected Lok Sabha constituencies of the state. In Bihar, polling is underway in

five parliamentary constituencies Kishanganj, Purnia, Katihar, Bhagalpur and Banka amidst tight security. More than 86 Lakh electors would decide political future of 68 candidates. AIR correspondent reports that strict vigil is being maintained along the Indo-Nepal Border area in Kishanganj parliamentary constituency. To ensure free, fair and peaceful elections patrolling has been intensified. In Odisha voting is being held in 5 Lok Sabha and 35 Assembly constituencies. There are 35 candidates for Lok Sabha and

244 candidates for Assembly seats. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is contesting from Hinjili and Bijepur Assembly constituencies.

In Jammu and Kashmir over 29.81 lakh voters will decide the fate of 24 candidates contesting for Udhampur and Srinagar Parliamentary seats in the 2nd phase of Lok Sabha elections today. A total of 4,426 polling stations have been set up in the two constituencies. 12 candidates are in the fray in Srinagar.

National Conference President and three time Chief Minister and three time Parliament member Dr Farooq Abdullah is among the 12 candidates. Congress has not fielded any candidate for the Srinagar seat. Dr. Jitendra Singh of the BJP is seeking re-election from the Udhampur constituency. In Asaam, polling in five constituencies began this morning.

Bhaichung Bhutia among the 16 candidates contesting in Darjeeling

By: Roshan Gupta
Darjeeling, April 18,

A total of 16,00,564 voters, including 7,93,425 female, are exercising their franchise in 1899 polling stations in Darjeeling. A total of 16 candidates including Bhaichung Bhutia are contesting the polls, six belonging to registered political parties and five Independent.

The election in the Hills is a fight between two parties similar to last elections in 2014.

Darjeeling Lok Sabha parliamentary seat is a fight between two parties :TMC and BJP.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has campaigned for darjeeling constituency candidate Amar Singh Rai under Trinamul ticket backed by Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha Binay Tamang fraction. While BJP candidate for Darjeeling

Lok Sabha constituency Raju Bista, who is jointly backed by Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and Bimal Gurung faction of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha is also fighting for the said seat. The scenario was similar in the last elections in 2014 where the major contenders were also the BJP and the TMC. BJP candidate SS Ahluwalia was backed by the

Gorkha Jan Mukti which did not have a fraction like now. While the TMC had fielded Bhaichung Bhutia backed by the Gorkha National Liberation Front.

The BJP had won with a margin votes of 1,99,826 votes. The BJP had bagged 4,91,202 total votes while the TMC bagged 2,91,373 total votes and coming second in the list.

Officials walk 11 km. by foot for 912 voters in Darjeeling

By: Roshan Gupta
Darjeeling, April 18,

Like Newton Kumar in the film 'Newton,' polling officials in at least 14 polling booths in Darjeeling district had to walk the extra mile to ensure people are able to exercise their franchise.

The highest polling centre in Darjeeling, the Dhaka Shreekhola Primary School, in the densely forested area of Darjeeling that stands at a height of 2800 metres in the lap of mountains. There are 912 voters there, while the voting centre is 99 k, away from Darjeeling town. While officials travel the first 78 km of the distance in vehicles, they have to walk the remaining 11 km.

At another polling booth located at Dariga Junior High School in Kalimpong district under the Darjeeling Lok Sabha constituency, the trek for such officials and polling staff is 9 km, while the number of voters is a mere 840. Darjeeling is 140 km away from Kalimpong town.

The third such remote booth is the Rammam Forest Primary School where there are 334 voters. The voting centre stands at a height of around 2400 meters above sea level, while voting materials at these

polling centres will have to be taken on mules.

"The voting centers have been repaired and infrastructure will be readied seven days ahead of Election Day. The poll party will reach the place two days before the election, and satellite phones or radio transmitters are used if mobile phones fail to work." District Magistrate and District Election Officer, Joyoshi Dasgupta, said.

There are 11 P-2 booths out of 14 in Kalimpong, seven in Kalimpong block-I and four in the Gorubathan block. Tangta is the farthest booth, which is around 150 km away from Kalimpong town.

The 11 P-2 booths are Lower Dong Prathamik Pathala (Samthar GP, Makkum Prathamik Pathala (Yangmakum GP), Tamgyang Prathamik Pathala (Pabringar GP), Lungrep Primary School (Pabringar GP), Geshok Prathamik Pathala (Nimpong GP), Dalachand Prathamik Pathala (Nimpong GP), Reyon Prathamaik Pathala (Nimpong GP), Taंगा Primary School (Todey Tangta GP), Mangzing Primary School (Pokherbong GP), Lungsel Primary School (Pomherbong GP), and Pubung Primary School (Pokherbong GP).

PM Modi to address public meetings in 3 states, Rahul Gandhi in two states today



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Prime Minister and Senior BJP leader Narendra Modi will address public meetings at Amreli in Gujarat, Bagalkot and Chikkodi in Karnataka and Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala today.

BJP President Amit Shah will address rallies at Raigarh and Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh and Jalna in Maharashtra. Congress President Rahul Gandhi will address rallies at Badaun in Uttar Pradesh and Junagadh and Kutch in Gujarat.

Action of Actor Ferdous to campaign for candidate in West Bengal was regrettable, says Bangladesh Foreign Minister

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Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen has said that the action of Bangladesh Actor Ferdous to campaign for a Trinamool Congress candidate in West Bengal was regrettable.

Speaking to newspersons at Dhaka last night the Foreign Minister said that even if he campaigned for

his friend it was really unfortunate and unusual for an actor like Ferdous. Earlier, the Bangladeshi actor Ferdous had regretted his participation in the campaign for Trinamool Congress and offered apology for what he termed his unintentional mistake. He returned to Bangladesh on Tuesday after his visa was revoked for violating visa conditions by campaigning for Trinamool Congress in West Bengal.

In round 2 of Lok Sabha polls, 11 states vote amid EVM glitches

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Voting for 95 Lok Sabha seats is underway across 11 states and the Union Territory of Puducherry. Tamil Nadu holds the key in the second phase of the seven-phased Lok Sabha elections that began on April 11 and will continue till May 19.

Glitches in the electronic voting machines (EVMs) and the voter-verified paper audit trails (VVPATs) were reported during early hours of polling. Voters in Assam's Silchar complained of the VVPAT malfunctioning. In Uttar Pradesh, EVMs glitches are reported from Agra, Mathura and Hathras.

Thirty-eight of 39 Lok Sabha seats of Tamil Nadu are up for the grab in Thursday's polling. Polling in Vellore Lok Sabha seat was cancelled Tuesday by the Election Commission following recovery of huge amount of cash allegedly from an associate of a DMK leader recently. Bypolls in 18 assembly constituencies are also taking place in Tamil Nadu. Besides Tamil Nadu, the elections are taking place for 14 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka, 10 in Maharashtra, eight in Uttar Pradesh, five each in Assam, Bihar and



Odisha, three each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, two in Jammu and Kashmir and one seat each in Manipur and Puducherry. Voting for 35 assembly constituencies is also taking place in Odisha. Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to the voters to come out in large number and exercise their franchise. PM Modi tweeted, "Dear Citizens of India, Phase 2 of the Lok Sabha polls start today. I am sure all those whose seats are polling today will strengthen our democracy by exercising their franchise. I hope more youngsters head to the polling booths and vote!" In the early hours of voting,

several high-profile politicians and other personalities cast their votes. Among the early voters were Tamil superstar Rajinikanth, actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan and his daughter Shruti in Chennai; Congress leaders P Chidambaram in Sivaganga and Sushil Kumar Shinde in Solapur. Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman voted in Jaynagar of Bangalore South constituency, from where the BJP has fielded Tejaswi Surya, 28-year-old lawyer. Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla, who cast her vote in Imphal and Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasami were also among the early voters in the

second phase of the polls. Originally, the polling was scheduled in 97 Lok Sabha constituencies but while the polling in Vellore was cancelled after huge cash seizure, the Election Commission deferred voting at Tripura East Lok Sabha seat to April 23, when the third phase of national elections will be held. The poll booth cited prevailing law-and-order situation for postponing polling in Tripura.

Going by 2014 election results, the NDA holds maximum influence in the constituencies voting in the second phase. Of 95 Lok Sabha seats voting on Thursday, the AIADMK won

maximum 36 followed by the BJP with 27. The Shiv Sena holds four Lok Sabha seats while the Janata Dal-United one. This takes the NDA tally to 68 of 95 Lok Sabha seats.

In the Opposition camp, the Congress had won maximum 12 seats in 2014 followed by the Biju Janata Dal at four. The Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Janata Dal-Secular, both allies of the Congress, had won two seats each. The AIUDF, the NCP, the PDP, the AINRC, the PMK, the CPI-M and the TMC had won one seat each in 2014. In 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the prominent faces in the second phase of the parliamentary polls contest are Union ministers Jitendra Singh, Jual Oram, Sadamanda Gowda and Pon Radhakrishnan, and BJP leader Hema Malini.

On the Opposition side, former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, DMK's Dayanidhi Maran, ARaja and Kanimozhi; Congress leaders Verappa Moily and Raj Bhabbar and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah are among the top contestants.

Over 15.80 crore voters will decide the fate of the 1,600-odd contestants. The Lok Sabha polls will be held in five more phases on April 23, April 29, May 6, May 12 and May 19. The votes will be counted on May 23.

Civil Aviation Secretary to hold separate meetings with airport, framework.

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The Ministry of Civil Aviation has said that Jet Airways has informed it that it is temporarily ceasing its operations. In a series of tweets, the Ministry said, the bank-led resolution process is still under way and it is expected to end by the 10th of next month.

During this time, the Ministry will support the resolution process within the existing legal and regulatory

framework. The Ministry said, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and other regulators are monitoring the situation carefully to ensure that all existing rules regarding refunds, cancellations and alternate bookings are followed strictly. Civil Aviation Secretary will convene separate meetings with airport and airlines today to coordinate and address any emerging issues on capacity, slots and passenger convenience.

Filing of nominations for the fifth phase of polling ends today

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Today is the last date for filing nominations for the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections. 51 constituencies spread over 7 states will go to the polls on the 6th of May. Scrutiny of nominations will be held on Saturday. Monday is the last date for withdrawal of candidature.

In Bihar 19 candidates filed nomination papers for the fifth phase of elections in the state yesterday. With this 88 candidates have filed nominations so far. Former Union Minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy filed his nomination from Saran constituency. Union Minister Radha Mohan Singh filed his nomination from East Champaran for the sixth phase of election in state.