

Lok Sabha Elections 2019 PM shielding few businessmen, ignoring farmers, says Rahul Gandhi

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Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused him of "shielding the interest of a few businessmen" while ignoring the interests of the farmers and the poor. Accompanied by AICC general secretary Jyotiraditya Scindia, he was addressing an election rally in Lakhimpur to support party candidate Zafar Ali Naqvi and Nighasan

assembly bypoll nominee Atal Shukla. Claiming that during his last visit to Kheri, Modi had assured farmers in Uttar Pradesh that they will get their sugarcane dues within 14 days, the Congress chief asked, "Has any assurance come true in five years?" "Narendra Modi in 2014 made a number of false assurances of 'achhe din' (better days), of two crore jobs, of Rs 15 lakh in every bank account but none of them came true," he said. Raking up the Rafale issue, the

Congress chief said, "Anil Ambani, who never manufactured an airplane, was awarded with a Rs 30,000 crore contract, but cane farmers were told that cane-farming caused sugar (diabetes) when they demanded their dues." He claimed that his party will form government at the Centre and that "after the Lok Sabha polls, the next target was (UP) assembly elections (in 2022) to ensure that the state is at the top in education, health and employment as before." Earlier, Congress general

secretary in-charge of west UP Jyotiraditya Scindia made a scathing attack on the Modi and Adityanath governments and accused them of ignoring the farmers and youths. "The Modi government promised to reduce the input cost by half and double the support price of farmers crops. But after five years, the cost has doubled while MSP has come to half," he said. Scindia also raised the issue of stray cattle, mob lynching in the name of 'gau-raksha' and farmers suicide. "People were beaten up in the name of gau-raksha but even now gau-matas were roaming on the roads and no gau-sewak was there to take care," he said.

'Rich and powerful can't run this court', says Supreme Court on conspiracy against CJI

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The Supreme Court, at hearing on conspiracy against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, said that "the rich and powerful cannot run the court. The top court's remarks came during a hearing on the affidavit by a lawyer claiming there was a conspiracy behind framing the Chief Justice in a sexual harassment case. "Don't play with fire. We want to send a message to the people of the country, the rich and powerful that they cannot

control or run this court," a bench of the Supreme Court said. The bench said there is a systematic attack or game to run the court and "nobody knows the truth." The court also expressed anguish over the way "the institution was being treated over the last three-four years." "This institution will die," it said. On Wednesday, the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court had asked the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Intelligence Bureau, and the

Delhi Police to look into the claims made by lawyer Utsav Bains. Also, the former Supreme Court staffer, who accused the Chief Justice of sexual harassment, wrote to the three-member inquiry committee set up to hear the issue, expressing her reservation and concern on the composition of the committee. The committee, headed by justice SA Bobde, and comprising justices NV Ramana and Indira Banerjee, is to begin its in-camera hearing on Friday.

Engine of Air India's Boeing aircraft shuts down at Delhi airport, 'black fumes' observed



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An engine of an empty Boeing 777 aircraft of Air India shut down at the Delhi airport on Wednesday night during a technical inspection, the airline said. Airport fire personnel then observed that black fumes were coming out of the engine's exhaust, following which they sprayed foam on

it, Air India said in a statement on Thursday. When an engineer was doing a routine technical examination of the empty aircraft (777) at the Delhi airport on Wednesday night, auto shutdown of the auxiliary power unit (APU) took place, the airline said. The APU is the smallest engine on an aircraft and situated at the tail of it. It provides the necessary power to start the main

engines. Airport personnel observed black fumes from the APU exhaust and, believing it to be a fire hazard, sprayed APU and part of the fuselage with foam spray, the national carrier said. The APU was examined by opening its cowlings (cover). After opening the cover, "there was no traces of any burn or external damage noticed except for the minor oil leaks traces, which was normal," it said.

Lok Sabha elections 2019: Candidates matter little in fierce two-way UP battle

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What started as a triangular contest in Uttar Pradesh is fast turning into a fierce two-way battle between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the gathbandhan (the SP-BSP-RLD alliance) in a majority of the 80 constituencies in the state. This is a closely- and intensely fought election between sentiment (Modi) and arithmetic (the alliance). Polling in 26 constituencies is over but candidates have literally disappeared from the scene. This could be a masterstroke on the part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to kill dissent against the sitting MPs. Unlike Chhattisgarh, where the party dropped all 10 sitting MPs, the BJP high command faced the compulsion of retaining

around 64 of them in UP; many were elected in a Modi wave in 2014. The remaining four phases will see 54 seats going to the polls in Uttar Pradesh, including high-profile seats such as Varanasi, Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Azamgarh, Kanpur, Kannauj, Lucknow and Faizabad. The focus on Modi is a part of the BJP's design which is clearly reflected in its slogan, "Ek naam, ek nishan, naam Modi, kamal nishan", which translates as "One name, one symbol; the name is Modi, the symbol is the lotus". The party's banners and posters, put up at vantage positions across the state, have only the picture of Modi along with the party symbol. Other star campaigners figure in posters put up at rally grounds, but nowhere else.

The fact is, none of the prime ministers, including the popular ones such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Rajiv Gandhi, could ever become a rallying point like Modi has. Or, like Indira Gandhi did before him. The late Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who implemented the controversial recommendations of the Mandal Commission, polarised society but could not become a rallying point himself. Interestingly, both Indira Gandhi and Modi were proponents of social engineering, rallying points, and also the driving force behind campaigns. If Indira formed a rainbow coalition of Brahmins, Muslims and Dalits, Modi's popularity spreads to various castes — Brahmins, Thakurs, most backward castes and non-Jatav Dalits.

from earlier elections when pictures of candidates featured prominently. Thus, the two popular words heard throughout the state are 'Modi' and 'gathbandhan'. In Konech town of Jalaun district, some young people complain about the non-performance of their four-time MP Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma. "We did not see him once in the last five years. We are angry but this election is about Modi who deserves a second chance to fulfil his promises," says Mukesh Sikarwar. Others nod in agreement. On the other side of the equation, the Ahirwars (Jatavs) and Yadavs have always been at loggerheads in Jhansi Lok Sabha constituency. The seat has been given to the SP candidate but the Ahirwars in Mirchpur village have decided to support him, forgetting their age-old enmity. Why? "Mayawati is our leader and she has asked us to vote for him. Otherwise our vote would have gone to Modi, who gave us gas and electricity," they say. Barring a few constituencies where the Congress is in the race, any query about the party is met with indifference. "Yahan Congress nahin hai, yahan to bas Modi aur gathbandhan hai" (It's Modi or Alliance here, there is no Congress). The Congress is in the race only in those constituencies where it has fielded high-profile candidates.

Campaigning in full swing for the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections

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Campaigning is in full swing for the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections. Seventy one constituencies, spread over nine states, will go to polls in this phase on Monday. Star campaigners of various political parties are making whirlwind tours at different places garnering support for their candidates. Senior BJP Leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address public rallies at Darbhanga in Bihar and Banda in Uttar Pradesh today. The Prime Minister will also hold a road show in Varanasi in the afternoon. Mr Modi is currently a sitting MP from Varanasi and he will file his nomination from the seat tomorrow. AIR correspondent reports that senior BJP Leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Varanasi today around 12 noon and will lead a roadshow at 3 pm. Roadshow will begin from Banaras Hindu University's iconic Lanka Gate where Modi will first pay floral tributes on the statue of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. After starting from Lanka Gate 7 km long roadshow will pass through key locations of the city including Ravidas Gate, Assi Chauraha, Shivalaya, Madanpura, Godolia, Kashi

Vishwanath and will culminate at Dashashwamedh Ghat. In evening PM is scheduled to participate in Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat. Narendra Modi is currently a sitting MP from this seat and contesting again. Turncoat Shalini Yadav from Samajwadi party is alliance candidate here who is fighting against Narendra Modi on this seat while congress is yet to announce its candidate. Varanasi goes to polls in the seventh and final phase of elections on May 19. BJP President Amit Shah will also be in UP addressing rallies at Ghazipur and Unnao. Congress President Rahul Gandhi will hold public meetings at Jalore, Ajmer and Kota in Rajasthan. AIR Jaipur correspondent reports that campaign is at full swing in the state. Congress President Rahul Gandhi will address three election rallies today in Ajmer, Jalore, and Kota. He has already been addressed a public meeting in Banswara District. Many other senior leaders also canvassing for the party candidates including Ashok Gehlot, Sachin Pilot in Mewar and Mewar regions. BJP president Amit Shah will also participate in a Road Show in Jodhpur. Prakash Jaydekar, Vasundhara Rajje, Avinash Rai Khanna,

Sudhanshu Trivedi are among leaders from BJP who are campaigning for the party. Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be campaigning in Jalaun in UP. BSP Chief Mayawati is scheduled to address public rallies in Shahjahanpur and Kannauj in the state. In the fourth phase, voting will take place for 17 Parliamentary seats in Maharashtra; 13 each in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan; 8 in West Bengal; 6 each in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh; 5 in Bihar; 3 in Jharkhand. Voting will also be held in all the polling stations falling in Kulgam district under the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituency in Jammu and Kashmir. In Madhya Pradesh, Chhindwara is one of the important Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh. There are 14 candidates in this election from Chhindwara. Most of them are independents. The Congress fielded Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath against the BJP's tribal leader Nathan Shah. And BSP's Gyaneshwar Gajbhiye while the chief minister will also contest the assembly by poll from Chhindwara assembly constituency. A traditional Congress bastion, Chhindwara elected a non-Congress candidate only

once - in the 1997 by poll when it elected BJP's Sundar Lal Patwa. The party's sitting MP, Kamal Nath, has won from the Chhindwara constituency 9 times since the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress will be hoping to retain the Chhindwara Lok Sabha constituency once again while the BJP will try to break the Congress tradition of winning the seat. In Maharashtra, in order to attract and encourage Mumbaiers to come and vote in large numbers, the state election commission has made elaborate plans. AIR correspondent reports that, with an aim to encourage more and more Mumbaiers to participate in the festival of democracy, when the city goes for polling on Monday, the state election commission has informed that each assembly constituency in suburban Mumbai will have a 'Sakhi matdan kendra'. These polling booths will be managed entirely by women. Rangoli and other art forms would be used to make these booths more attractive while cold drinks would be offered to all the voters at these booths. As a "goodwill gesture", the commission has decided to give a pack of sanitary napkins to all the women voters at these booths. Mumbai District Collector in association with

state election commission had also organised a flash mob at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus yesterday to urge commuters to vote and fulfill their social responsibility. More flash mobs are planned at Churchgate, Mumbai Central and Gateway of India in the coming days. Mumbai will vote in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha polls on Monday. Besides the 71 Lok Sabha seats, forty two of the total 147 Assembly seats in Odisha will also go to polls in this phase. Meanwhile, re-polling is being held today in nine booths located in eight Assembly constituencies in Odisha. The constituencies are: Sorada, Bonai, Sundargarh, Daspalla, Atabira, Bargarh, Padampur and Brajrajnagar. Voting was affected in these booths due to various reasons, including procedural errors and damaging of an EVM by a candidate. Re-polling is also taking place at one polling station in 37-Tyui Assembly Constituency in Wokha district of Nagaland. Re-polling is also being held at a polling booth in Agra Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh. It was ordered by the Election Commission after the presiding officer wrongly d some votes after the polling by pressing a button of the control panel of the EVM.

Even at the state level, leaders such as Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad, Bal Thackeray and Mamata Banerjee were and are polarising figures but their influence remains restricted primarily to their own castes or states. Prof Rajesh Singh, a political analyst from Gorakhpur, says, "This election is all about Modi versus gathbandhan. I have been watching parliamentary elections since 1977. It's the first time when even the candidates are becoming irrelevant. People are voting for Modi or gathbandhan." It may sound bizarre but many voters are walking to the polling booth oblivious of the candidate they will vote for. A farmer in Hathras, when asked about the candidates, pleaded ignorance and said: "I don't know, I am voting for Modi". It isn't just Modi and the BJP which has adopted the look-beyond-the-candidates strategy. So has the alliance. The catchphrase among the supporters of Mayawati and Akhilesh is "our vote is for gathbandhan", which seems to have caught the imagination of voters even in remotest areas. The two parties sealed the alliance on January 12 this year. Interestingly, even the banners and posters of the SP and BSP have pictures of only Akhilesh and Mayawati along with their party symbols. This is a clear shift

Political expert Gyanendra Sharma says, "Campaigning does help in getting the support of indecisive voters who sometimes play a crucial role in deciding victories. But this time, elections are being fought more on television channels than in the field." Sharma says it's unfortunate that even the party manifestoes are taken flippantly by voters, who otherwise have lots of complaints of non-performance against the government in power and the sitting MPs. Yes, 2019 polls will be remembered as an election that created noise on issues, but voted for personalities.