

Four different scenarios predict victory for NDA; over to May 23

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As the 2019 Lok Sabha elections drew to a close on Sunday evening, eight separate exit polls, conducted by different polling agencies, commissioned by different media houses, predicted that Narendra Modi was best positioned to return as India's Prime Minister. They, however, differed on the numbers, and the range hovered from a high of 316 for the Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) to a low of 202. For the Congress, the numbers ranged from a low of 46 seats to a high of 107. A caveat is essential here. These are exit polls, and exit polls have had a history of being inaccurate in terms of exact seat predictions. HT did not commission an independent exit poll, had no access to raw data, and cannot verify the methodological rigour and results of the separate polls. HT has also not attempted a poll of polls since that is not

possible without having access to the methodology, sample representativeness, and raw data of all existing polls before drawing an overall conclusion. But if the exit poll numbers are credible, they throw up four different scenarios. The first is of Modi's return as PM with the BJP having a majority on its own and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) allies supplementing its strength in Parliament. Four polls suggest this scenario.

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath sacks BJP ally from cabinet, his nominees from govt bodies

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Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday sacked Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar from his ministry, days after a case was filed against him for allegedly threatening and abusing BJP workers. The chief minister also removed all members appointed to various boards and corporations in Uttar Pradesh just ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections to placate Rajbhar. "Om Prakash Rajbhar has been relieved of his responsibilities as a minister for backward classes welfare

and disabled development," said a Raj Bhawan communique. The departments Rajbhar headed have been given to Anil Rajbhar, the BJP MLA and minister of state who had campaigned extensively in eastern UP after Om Prakash Rajbhar rebelled. Rajbhar, a disgruntled ally of the BJP, allegedly urged supporters to thrash ruling party workers with shoes if they spread "misinformation" about his party. He claimed that BJP leaders were spreading rumours that the SBSP candidate was not contesting the election from the Ghosi parliamentary seat. A video of his speech

has gone viral on social media. Rajbhar, who has considerable clout in eastern Uttar Pradesh, has been upset over the denial of seats of his choice in the state and had fielded 39 candidates for seats in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh phases. Rajbhar, who has considerable clout in eastern Uttar Pradesh, asserted that his party has not campaigned for the saffron party in these elections. "We are not with them now. We only asked for the Ghosi seat, which the BJP did not give us. On May 6, the SBSP chief had claimed that he resigned from the post of minister but the state government was yet to decide whether to accept his resignation.

In Hindi heartland, BJP may be able to reverse state poll losses



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The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is likely to bounce back after assembly election losses in three key heartland states and capture a big chunk of the Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, a clutch of exit polls predicted on Sunday. The polls showed the Congress, which formed the government in these states in December, may not have built on its gains in the state polls. The BJP was predicted to, more or less, repeat its dominant performance in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, when it won 62 out of the 65 seats in the three states. In Rajasthan, which has 25 seats, News24-Today's Chanakya survey predicted a sweep for the BJP and a rout

for the Congress. India Today-Axis gave 23-25 seats to the BJP and 1-3 to the Congress. ABP News-Nielsen gave the BJP 19 seats. In 2014, the BJP swept all 25 seats in the state but lost power in December to the Congress, which won 100 seats in the 200-member assembly. In Madhya Pradesh, which has 29 seats, News24-Today's Chanakya survey gave the BJP 27 and the Congress 2 seats with a margin of error of two seats. India Today-Axis My India gave 24-26 to the BJP and 1-3 to the Congress. ABP News-Nielsen said the BJP may win 24 seats and the Congress five. In 2014, the BJP had won 27 seats but the Congress wrested power from it after 15 years in December, winning a slim majority in the 230-member assembly. In Chhattisgarh, which has 11

seats, News24-Today's Chanakya said the BJP will win nine seats and the Congress two, with a margin of error of two seats. The India Today-Axis poll forecast that the BJP will win 7-8 seats and the Congress 3-4. ABP News-Nielsen predicted a neck-and-neck battle with the BJP slightly ahead at six seats and the Congress at five. In December, the Congress had secured a two-thirds majority in the 90-member assembly and removed the BJP from power after 15 years. "Exit polls show people have reposed their faith in the BJP but results will clear the real picture...The voters have become mature and it seems that they did not mix state and national politics," said Sheila Rai, a retired professor of political science at St Xavier's College, Jaipur.

Mary Kom and Nikhat Zareen have possible semi-final clash as 10 Indians assure medals at India Open 2019

From a Correspondent
Guwahati, May 20



Six-time world champion Mary Kom has a possible semi-final face-off with Asian Championships bronze medallist Nikhat Zareen in 51kg as the draw of the second edition of the India Open got released here on Sunday. In contrast, Asian Games gold medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) could have a hassle-free route to the final where he might have to take on Asian Games silver medallist Rogen Siaga Ladon of Philippines.

10 Indian boxers have already confirmed medals with 6 in men and 4 in women being already placed in the semi-finals because of the smaller size of the draw. On the men's side, Brijesh Yadav and Sanjay are already into the 81kg semi-finals and so are Naman Tanwar and Sanjeet in 91kg and Satish Kumar and Atul Thakur in

+91kg. In women's, Lovlina Borgohain and Anjali are already assured of medals in 69kg while Bhagyabati Kachari and Saweety Boora are through to the last-four in 75kg by virtue of a first round bye. "We have at least a couple of Indian boxers in each category and the competition is very close. It will be a very

interesting tournament and the exposure for the boxers will stand them in good stead ahead of the World Championships," said Raffaele Bergamasco, the Performance Director of Indian women's boxing. On the men's side, the competition has heated up in 52kg and 56kg with each of the categories having at least three Indian medal hopes. In 56kg, while Asian Championships silver medallist Kavinder Singh Bisht, Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin and World Championships bronze medallist Gaurav Bidhuri will be vying for a podium finish, in 52kg Panghal, Commonwealth Games gold medallist Gaurav Solanki and GeeBee Boxing tournament bronze medallist Sachin Siwach will be aiming for medals.

"We have World Championships medallist in Gaurav Bidhuri in 56kg, Hussamuddin has done really well and Kavinder just won the silver at the Asian Championships. In 52kg, Solanki just won a gold in Poland while Amit and Sachin are there. Each of them is competing against each other. So it will be a tough competition within the countrymen as well as with the foreign boxers. It will be a great experience for the boxers with such high level of competition," said Santiago Nieva, India's chief performance director.

The opening ceremony will be held at 5pm on Monday at Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi AC Indoor Stadium, Sarusajai Sports Complex, where Mr. Siddhartha Bhattacharya, Honourable Education Minister of Assam, will be the Chief Guest. Mr. Kuladhar Saikia, Director General of Police, Mr. Biswaranjan Samal, Principal Secretary, Sports & Youth Welfare, Mr. Samir Sinha, Principal Secretary, Finance, Health & Family Welfare and Mr. Jay Kowli, Secretary, Boxing Federation of India, will be gracing the occasion.

It will be followed by the Day 1 matches from 6pm where seven Indian boxers will be contesting their opening round with the highlight being the clash of Sachin Siwach vs Ramon Nicanor Quiroga of Argentina in 52kg.



Opposition plans coalition list to stake claim in event of hung verdict

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Even as exit polls at the end of the 17th general election on Sunday pointed to a clear edge for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a section of the Opposition was planning to launch a pre-emptive strike by submitting a list of parties committed to an alternative government to the President before May 23, when the results will be declared.

Opposition leaders said Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu had taken the initiative to submit such a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind. The move is aimed at improving the chances of an Opposition coalition being invited to form the next government by the President in case a hung Parliament emerges from the seven-phase election. Naidu told opposition leaders that if there was no such prior intimation to the President, the BJP and its pre-poll partners in the NDA would have a clear edge in getting the first chance to form government and proving a majority in the House. "His calculation is that the BJP will end up getting less than 200 seats and if that happens, the gap between the NDA and the other side would not be wide. But if the letter of intent with signature of all willing parties are not given to the President, the



scattered Opposition is no match against the NDA," a senior Opposition leader said on condition of anonymity. According to the Sarkaria Commission report, if a leader has to be selected from among a group of parties, in the order of preference, "an alliance of parties that was formed prior to the Elections" comes first. The Punchhi Commission guidelines also said: The party or combination of parties which commands the widest support in the Legislative Assembly should be called upon to form the Government. If there is a pre-poll alliance or coalition, it should be treated as one political party and if such coalition obtains a majority, the leader of such coalition shall be called [to form government]. Naidu met Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati before holding a

meeting with Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury in New Delhi on Sunday. The Left is not keen on the course of action suggested by Naidu. A senior Left leader said, "We don't need to go to the President till the results are actually out. We have advised other parties that we should maintain our unity in the public ...and give public statements about our commitment. We can only meet the President after the results are actually out." The Congress and some other parties had been keen on drafting a pre-poll Common Minimum Programme (CMP) to showcase the strength of the anti-NDA camp in the run-up to the Lok Sabha election. That initiative didn't go beyond preliminary discussions. During the day, Naidu held a second round of talks with

Congress president Rahul Gandhi to discuss the outcome of his meetings with Mayawati and Yadav in Lucknow on Saturday. Naidu also met United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar. He also met the Congress's Sam Pitroda. During the meetings, the opposition leaders discussed the strategy to be adopted after the results are declared on May 23. Soon after his meeting with Naidu, Pawar said they had assessed the likely election outcome in their respective states. "We assessed the elections in our respective states. We are waiting for counting day to take further steps," he said. About the possibility of a meeting of the combined Opposition, he said it will take place only after May 23.

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