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POLL NOTES

RAHUL RALLY ON SUNDAY

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi will on Sunday address a rally at Ramliya Ground in Ambedkar Nagar. This is the same venue where less than a fortnight before the Delhi assembly polls Rahul had addressed a rally which ended in a flop show.

Two more leaders join Cong: BJP leader Sukhbir Panwar and Satan Pal Daima, who contested the assembly polls as an independent candidate from Karawal Nagar, joined Congress on Tuesday. Panwar is a former president of Delhi NCP.

BJP distributes pamphlets to expose 'AAP lies': In a bid to "expose" AAP, BJP has got pamphlets printed which has a list of unfulfilled promises made by AAP. BJP leaders say, its workers will distribute the pamphlets during door-to-door campaigning.

Sehrawat takes swipe at Bidhuri: Colonel (retd) Devinder Sehrawat, AAP candidate from South Delhi, has issued a release alleging that there were criminal cases against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri. The BJP leader's office termed the allegations as baseless.

Sibal 'gifted' Ambani firm ₹650cr: Vardhan

BJP Leader Accuses AAP Of Sitting Quiet

Risha Chitlangia | TNN

New Delhi: After Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP has launched a scathing attack on Congress for "favouring" the Ambanis. On Tuesday, Delhi BJP chief Harsh Vardhan, who is contesting from Chandni Chowk, alleged that his electoral rival, telecom minister Kapil Sibal, "gifted" a Rs 650-crore penalty waiver to Anil Ambani's company Reliance Communications Limited, which was fined for "switching off services in 13 circles" in 2010.

Vardhan also accused AAP, which has been attacking Mukesh Ambani, of sitting quiet on Sibal's alleged bounty to RCL. "He has deprived the country of Rs 650 crore which RCOM should have paid for switching off the services in 13 circles in the northeastern sector. Sibal waived the penalty with no valid explanation. Interestingly, AAP is silent on this issue. They either don't know about it or prefer to remain silent as it suits them. I demand a judicial inquiry," said Vardhan.



WAR OF WORDS: Vardhan is taking on Sibal in Chandni Chowk



han. He showed documents to support his claim. With less than 10 days left for polling in the city, Congress leaders see it as a desperate attempt by BJP to topple Sibal, the sitting MP. "He doesn't understand law and the contours of civilized politics. All I can do is take pity if they are so concerned, why don't they file a complaint," said Sibal while dismissing the allegations. Targeting AAP, Vardhan said, "AAP is attacking everyone. But they preferred to keep quiet on this issue. Their silence proves that they are the B-team of Congress". But AAP leader Prashant Bhushan, who had first raised the issue in 2011 and filed a petition

in the Supreme Court, said BJP is ignorant about the developments in the case. "We were the first to raise the issue. We have filed a complaint in CBI and CVC in this regard. But it is still pending," said Bhushan. An RCOM spokesperson said, "RCOM strongly refutes these wild, baseless and politically motivated allegations. The alleged penalty of Rs 650 crore was completely unsustainable, and there is no question of any illegal waiver". Chandni Chowk is set for a three-cornered fight between BJP, Congress and AAP. Despite strong anti-incumbency, Sibal, a two-term MP, is a strong contender.

Tiwari gets into the act for role

Maria Akram | TNN

New Delhi: Manoj Tiwari, the Bhojpuri star-turned-politician contesting on a BJP ticket from North East Delhi constituency, is also a poet who lets off a couplet or two at the drop of a hat. BJP's poor-vanchali face in Delhi, Tiwari is much in demand with the party's other six Lok Sabha candidates also, but he's finding it hard to win hearts in his own constituency.

The general sentiment among the electorate is that movie celebrities win on their star power but then neglect the voters. At a meeting with RWAs in Yamuna Vihar,

Dance of Democracy

senior citizens had pointed questions for the actor. "Why should we vote for you? When you go back to your movies, who will look after us?" said an RWA member.

With three movies pending, Tiwari has decided not to take up more projects if he wins. "To be with the people, I have bought a flat in Yamuna Vihar," he told the gathering, adding that he has houses in Saket and Dwarka as well. His wife and daughter are



MEET THE STAR: Manoj Tiwari campaigns in North East Delhi

back in Bihar. "But they have accepted my decision. My daughter says 'papa, toh desh ke liye chale gaye' (papa has left us for the country)."

approachable. "North East is the most neglected area. During Commonwealth Games, all the development in east Delhi took place in Sandeep Dikshit's area," said Ramesh Kumar of Maujpur. To this, Tiwari said there are three is-

sues on his agenda: "Completion of Signature Bridge, water and electricity, and regularization of colonies."

The campaigning is taking its toll on him. There are dark circles under his eyes and his tan is a shade too dark for his fans' liking. To create a serious image, he hasn't invited any Bhojpuri starlet or actor to campaign for him. He also refused to comment on his colleagues from Bhojpuri films, Ravi Kisan and Nagma, who are contesting on Congress tickets.

Tiwari was associated with Samajwadi Party in the last Lok Sabha election and contested from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, where he lost to BJP's Adityanath, polling only 83,059 votes (4.9% of the total). "I wasn't ready, but in the Delhi assembly elections last year I did several rallies for BJP. Now, my only motive is to make Modi win," said the 43-year-old.

With Muslims making up 25-27% of the electorate here, winning on a BJP ticket may not be easy. Tiwari, though, claims Muslim-dominated areas are not cold to him. "People say 'hi-hello' to me and are receptive," he said. Asked if it is a three-cornered fight, he said, "It's between AAP and BJP in this constituency. Congress is finished."
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2 FIRs against Bhati for violating norms

Vandana Keelor | TNN

Noida: District officials on Tuesday took cognizance of media reports on how Samajwadi Party candidate for Gautam Budh Nagar, Narendra Bhati, was trying to influence voters to violate Election Commission norms at a rally. Two FIRs under Section 171-C of IPC and Section 123(2) of Representation of the People Act, 1951 have been lodged against Bhati in Noida and Greater Noida for violation of model code of conduct and for undue influence during elections.

Officials said a monitoring team, along with the city magistrate, perused Bhati's videos with senior police officials and found Bhati was trying to influence voters. "Considering Bhati had addressed two gathering and given inflammatory speeches at both locations, two FIRs were lodged," said Rajesh Yadav, SDM, Dadri, also in-charge of enforcing model code of conduct.

A detailed investigation will be carried out to determine how Bhati's speech was missed by teams monitoring candidates involved in campaigning.

First-time voters believe it's time for change

Shreya Roy Chowdhury | TNN

New Delhi: There have never been so many first-time voters in a Lok Sabha contest before this, and with its high aspirations and a modern worldview the city's youth is likely to shape the poll outcome across all seven constituencies. All the more, because the youngsters—3.4 lakh are in the 18-19 age group—tend to be more enthusiastic voters. Political parties are going all out to woo them with promises of development, corruption-free governance, economic progress and a secure future. TOI spoke to some and found them eagerly waiting for polling day on April 10.



A FORCE TO RECKON WITH: 3.4 lakh voters are in the 18-19 age group

Eighteen-year-old Uday Talwar wants to see what it's like not to have Congress in power. For as long as he can remember, Congress has been in government - state and Centre. "I want to see what happens," says Uday

who's just finished school, "I will be voting for change—for better or for worse. Now we are just stuck." Even if everything goes south, he figures "people will start valuing what they had."

Increased efficiency in government departments would be welcome as would be greater industrialization. Corruption is a valid issue but Uday says he's "completely let down" by AAP which brought attention to it most. "We had so much hope but AAP must learn to work within the system. You can't

hamper the function of the democracy by holding strikes and dharnas. Arvind Kejriwal needed to toughen up, instead he threw a fit every time something didn't work."

Many are still holding on to AAP. Govan Mehta, 23, also a first-time voter, isn't ready to let the AAP dream go just yet. "Kejriwal resigned on moral grounds and wanted to come back with more AAP MLAs in assembly." An MBA student, the main concern for him and his peers is jobs. "The economy needs to be in better shape," he says but isn't sure which party is capable of making that happen. "AAP seems to have the brains to make it work but the nation will have to take a risk," he said.

Rishi Thariani, 18, got his voter ID card four days ago but doesn't know who he will cast his vote for. If he'd been eligible to vote in the assembly elections, he'd "definitely

"I will be voting for change—for better or for worse. Now we are just stuck. Even if everything goes south, people will start valuing what they had"

UDAY TALWAR
18-year-old first-time voter

have voted for AAP." Now he is less sure. "We don't see any one party that will actually work for the people. There was AAP but their inexperience will go against them. Their 49 days in power did have an impact on Delhi but they seem to have internal problems too and Kejriwal's quitting now looks like a political move." Also, Delhi was an "experiment" for the people. "AAP doesn't have the experience to manage all of India", is Thariani's opinion. Navin Moni, 22, doesn't

care about the party but the candidate that can solve Dwarkas's - more specifically, Madhu Vihar's - electricity, water and road problems. "And nothing gets done here without bribes," he says adding that AAP has lost its sheen a bit but the public still expects much from it.

Zeeshan Khan, at 25, is also a first-time voter. A Delhiite now, he will be travelling to his home in Nagina, Bijnor, for a single day - April 17 - to vote. "There's been a lot of corruption in the name of development and in these parts people tend to vote the same leader back into office repeatedly," he says.

He'll use a single day to even do a spot of awareness-raising. He works with the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), studies candidates' affidavits as part of his day job and plans to share the "data" with friends and family so they can take an informed decision.

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