

Muslims faring better in Gujarat: Modi

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Balasinor: BJP's Hindutva poster-boy was in an image-makeover mode in his first election tour of Gujarat on Tuesday. No more Muslim bashing for him, for now. Instead, CM Narendra Modi kick-started his campaign in his backyard on Ambedkar Jayanti, speaking about the "good condition" of Muslims in Gujarat.

Reacting to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's remarks of 1,200 Muslims being 'butchered' in the post-Godhra riots, Modi said Muslims in Gujarat were better placed than in most Indian states. "Literacy rate of the Muslims in Gujarat is higher than any other state. Muslims in the state have more bank accounts and their savings are higher than their brethren in other states. Their per capita income is also higher in Gujarat than in other states," he said in his 50-minute speech at Balasinor, quoting the Sachar Committee report.

Asserting that he did not distinguish between Hindus and Muslims, Modi said, "The PM and the Congress talk about Muslims and Hindus. For me, it's the 5.5 crore Gujaratis that matter". Attacking the Congress for divisive politics, Modi said "The Congress talks about reservation for Muslims. Such policies will divide the country," he said. He also criticised Singh for saying that Gujarat was not a developed state. "It was the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation — Sonia madam is a trustee in this foundation — which adjudged Gujarat as No. 1 in development. The Planning Commission has also said that the growth rate of Gujarat in the last five year was 10.4% while the country's growth under was 6 to 7 %."