

‘UPA strange, Dilli mein dosti, gaon mein kushti’

Congress Tally Won't Reach Double Digits This Time, Says Confident Modi



The man whom India Inc sees as the “next leader of India” is working hard to improve the BJP’s tally in Gujarat and filling in for late Pramod Mahajan in Maharashtra. As campaign in-charge of 78 seats in western India, a good show would catapult Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi into national politics. Whether he manages that or not, Modi is sure the Congress won’t put up a good show. “The Congress tally won’t reach double digits this time interview. Excerpts...

How is this election different from previous ones?

This is the first time in electoral history that both Congress and BJP have announced their prime ministerial candidates. It is a good trend.

Who will form the next government at the Centre?

BJP as well as allies will win more seats than last time.

Why do you feel so?

Because this country has remained leader-less for the past five years. Ask any Congressmen who is their leader, nobody names Manmohan Singh. When the party does not accept Singh as a leader, why would the country? When BJP announced LK Advani as PM candidate, all NDA allies backed him. Whereas UPA leaders be it Lalu Prasad or Sharad Pawar aspire to become PM. Their alliance is strange: Delhi mein dosti, gaon mein kushti (They are friends in Delhi and fight in the states). Voters are smart enough to understand why they are doing this.

How many seats will the UPA get?

Congress score will not reach double digits. They will get less than 100 seats. UPA’s allies have offered Congress just nine seats in Bihar, UP and Jharkhand. Need I say more?

Do parties have an election issue?

The main issue is: Does this country need politics of votebanks anymore. People of Gujarat have already rejected it and have opted for development politics. The rest of the country, especially the youth, also think on similar lines. UPA government's failure in tackling terrorism and their wrong economic policies will be major issues. The country's future lies in a strong leadership, which NDA can provide. The battle this time is between Congress parivarwaad (nepotism), Third Front's takwaad (opportunism) and BJP's rashtrawaad (nationalism). Let us see who wins.

Which will be a bigger issue, security or economy?

Both. People have lost faith in UPA as far as tackling terrorism goes. Taliban is wreaking havoc in Pakistan. The stretch between Pashupati (Nepal) to Tirupati has become a Red corridor for terror. Bangladesh has become the new breeding ground for terrorists. On the economic front, UPA has goofed up with its policies.

After Advani, you have also raised the black money issue?

This is not an election issue. Advaniji had written to the PM in this regard last year. But nothing moved. At the agenda meeting for G-20 summit held a few months back, the issue was raised again. But, it seems something is stopping the Congress from taking this issue up with the Swiss banks. Estimates suggest more than Rs 25 lakh crore belonging to Indians is lying in Swiss banks. We have a right to know the details and this is the right time. When we have an opportunity, why let it go?

The Modi magic hasn't surfaced this time?

(Laughs). Good performance is the only magic that works. People don't vote for BJP because of my speeches. They do so because of the hard work and results shown by our government over the last seven years.

Now that you are BJP's campaign in-charge for the entire western region, are you looking at a bigger role in national politics?

I don't think that way. I was given this additional responsibility because I have toured these areas extensively. Pramod Mahajan's death has left a vacuum in Maharashtra. Moreover, most senior leaders are fighting elections themselves.

What is more important in candidate selection: winnability or clean image?

In today's world, clean politics is a relative term.

But, why has BJP fielded tainted candidates in Gujarat?

The ones you are calling tainted have been acquitted by court. One must respect the judiciary. You cannot call them tainted.

BJP has also fielded a number of Congress turncoats in the state. Don't you have good candidates?

It is not that. If a sitting MLA joins BJP, it is our achievement.