

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Development, welfare focus...

by the Kashi Vishwanath corridor model.

It promised holistic development of Ayodhya, the establishment of "Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosh" for preservation of ancient civilizational traditions and culture and promoting "ved in India" by developing select destinations as wedding venues.

The manifesto promises are categorised under 10 social groups, including the poor; middle class, women, youth, senior citizens, farmers, fishermen, labourers, traders and traditionally deprived sections like the SC and ST, and 14 issues, including secure India, prosperous India and ease of living in cities among others.

As has been its recent practice, the party has chosen to refer to the country as Bharat in the manifesto.

The Sankalp Patra, released by Modi, party president J P Nadra and other senior leaders including Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, however, omitted any mention of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which the BJP promised in 2019 to combat infiltration but had put on the back burner following protests.

In his speech, Modi dwelt largely on his vision for boosting the country's development, asserting that the manifesto reflects the aspirations of a young India with its focus on quality and dignity of life and creating opportunities, both quantitatively and qualitatively high, for the young population.

He noted that the world is full of uncertainties amid conflicts and the safety of Indians living in such a situation is the government's priority.

At such a time, there is a need for a strong and stable government having a full majority, he said.

The manifesto, in its outreach to the poor, highlights the government's decision to continue with the free ration scheme for over 80 crore people for the next five years and vows to protect the "garib ki thali" against any price pressure.

It promises to expand the housing scheme for them and provide them with free electricity with its solar rooftop scheme.

For the middle class, it offered several measures to fulfil their dream of owning a house, creating high-value jobs and improved infrastructure for living.

The ruling party highlighted the government's efforts to empower three crore rural women to become "Lakshmi Didi" and underscored its commitment to their greater participation in sports and to building and maintaining public toilets for them.

To the youth, it promised strict implementation of the recently enacted law against party leaks, boosting the start-up ecosystem and ensuring employment opportunities.

"We will further strengthen our efforts to make Bharat the global hub for high-value services by establishing more global capability centres, global tech centres and global engineering centres," it said.

The Mudra loan limit will also be hiked to Rs 20 lakh, it said.

The BJP said its government will support farmers to make India self-reliant in the production of pulses and edible oil and promote millets as superfood.

Better living conditions in cities have also found a place among the BJP's promises with the party assuring voters of affordable housing, new satellite townships, ease of mobility, developing sustainable cities, improved air quality and removing open landfills in cities.

The manifesto highlights the BJP government's Gaganyaan mission, India's first human spaceflight project, and said it will land an astronaut on the Moon as well.

A BJP government will take more steps to facilitate fiscal autonomy and sustainability of Panchayati Raj Institutions, it said.

Other promises that the manifesto makes include world-class infrastructure, including in railways, road and aviation sectors, besides positioning the country as a global manufacturing hub.

The government will work to make India a leader in automobile and EV manufacturing, build a globally competitive food processing industry, and promote the country as a hub in railway and aviation manufacturing, and shipbuilding, it said.

Speaking of digital infrastructure, it said, "We will expand the 5G network and take the lead in the development of 6G technology."

The opposition Congress in its manifesto has promised a legal guarantee to the Minimum Support Price, Rs 1 lakh for every poor family and cashless health insurance of up to Rs 25 lakh, a massive scaling-up of cash-intensive welfareism as the opposition party looks to woo people.

The BJP has, however, stuck to building on and expanding its existing welfare measures and has not touched on issues like a legal guarantee for the MSP or caste quota.

The Congress has promised to lift the 50 per cent quota cap. The BJP has highlighted its welfare works for the SC, ST and OBC communities in its ten years in power; asserting that it will continue with its 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' approach.

The current central government has 60 per cent of ministers from these communities, it noted.

The BJP chose the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, the iconic leader from the Dalit community and architect of the Indian Constitution, to unveil its manifesto.

On the Uniform Civil Code, the BJP said, "There cannot be gender equality till such time Bharat adopts a Uniform Civil Code which protects the rights of all women." "The BJP reiterates its stand to draw a Uniform Civil Code, drawing upon the best traditions and harmonising them with the modern times," the manifesto said.

BJP will never..

changed if Modi becomes prime minister again and that party's functionaries allege BJP will end reservations after coming to power; Shah said.

"I want to make it clear that till BJP is in politics, we will not let anything happen to reservations. We will not allow Congress to end it either. They (Congress) have been doing the business of lies," the Union Home minister asserted.

Prime Minister Modi has strengthened the country and safeguarded it from terrorism, Shah said, adding the NDA government in its 10-year rule had eliminated Naxalism.

Modi had ended Maoist violence in his 10-year rule but the tail remains in Chhattisgarh, Shah said in Khairagarh, which is part of Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat, where BJP's Santosh Pandey is up against former Congress chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

"During the previous Congress government under Bhupesh Baghel, the fight against Naxalism slowed down in Chhattisgarh. After the BJP came to power; (in the 2023 state assembly polls), Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma (who also holds the Home portfolio) intensified the fight against the menace," he said.

"More than 54 Naxalites have been neutralised, more than 150 have been arrested and more than 250 have surrendered (after the formation of Sai government). Within 10 years, PM Modi ended Naxalism from the entire country. However, only its tail is left in Chhattisgarh. Give Modi ji a third term and I assure you we will end Naxalism in three years," he said.

Targeting former CM Baghel, Shah said the country was witness to several scams committed by the Congress but none of them had been named after a god, a reference to the multi-crore Mahadev betting app scam that is being probed by agencies.

"The 2G scam, Commonwealth games scam, submarine scam and many more scams were committed by Congress but none of these had names related to god. Baghel did not spare the name of Mahadev and committed a scam of Rs 508 crore," Shah said.

"Baghel is not tired of committing coal scam, liquor scam, PSC scam, cow dung scam, DMF scam, Gothan scam (during previous Congress rule in Chhattisgarh). Hence, he has come to you again in Rajnandgaon," the Union home minister added.

"Keep the anger of Mahadev betting app in mind and press the lotus (BJP symbol) button with such force that the tremors are felt till Italy," he said in a swipe at the Italian origin of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

Slamming the Congress, Shah said the Modi government had increased the budget for farmers' welfare to Rs 1.25 lakh crore.

"I want to remind Rahul Gandhi that the amount during Congress rule was just Rs 22,000 crore," he said.

The Congress ruled the country for 75 years, but never made a tribal the president of the country, whereas PM Modi enhanced their prestige by ensuring Droupadi Murmu occupies the top post.

The Modi government abrogated Article 370, ensured construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and carried out surgical strikes to root out terrorism, Shah said.

"The Congress says people of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan don't have anything to do with Kashmir; Kharge ji, the youth of Rajnandgaon can sacrifice their lives for Kashmir," he said and went on ask the crowd if Article 370 should have been scrapped or not.

The crowd roared back that the scrapping of Article 370 was the right decision.

The Congress obstructed the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya for the past 70 years and used diversionary tactics, but Modi performed idol consecration on January 22, Shah said.

"Ram Navami is on April 17. For the first time, Ram Lalla will celebrate his birthday in a grand temple," he said.

When the UPA government under Sonia-Mamman was at the Centre, terrorists used to enter from Pakistan at will and carry out attacks but under the leadership of Modi, surgical and air strikes were undertaken to eliminate terrorists, he said.

"If anyone can do the work of taking forward the youth, women, farmers and the poor of this country, it is Narendra Modi and the name of the party (that can do it) is Bharatiya Janata Party," he added. Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat will witness voting on April 26.

Congress is ‘Sultan...

dangerous intention of Congress to divide, break and weaken the country is still the same," Modi claimed.

JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda was among those who shared the dais with Modi in a show of strength by the NDA.

The JD(S) joined the NDA in September last year. Of the total 28 seats in Karnataka, BJP is contesting in 25 and the JD(S) in three, including neighbouring Mandya.

"In Karnataka, NDA has the guidance of senior leaders like H D Deve Gowda and (BJP leader B S) Yediyurappa and cooperation of (JD(S) leader) H D Kumaraswamy," Modi said.

Modi claimed that the Congress has crossed "all the limits of hating the country".

"People of Karnataka are witness that those who speak against India, Congress as a reward gives them an election ticket. Recently you might have seen at a Congress election rally a person made people shout 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogan, but before doing it, he had to seek the permission of leaders sitting on the stage," the Prime Minister said.

Questioning whether one requires permission to say 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', he asked, "Will the country, Karnataka, Mysuru forgive such a Congress? First opposed 'Vande Mataram' and now hesitated to say 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'. This is the height of Congress's downfall."

Scion of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar is the BJP candidate in the coming Lok Sabha elections here. Deve Gowda's son, former Chief Minister and JD(S) leader Kumaraswamy is contesting from Mandya.

Karnataka is very important for the BJP as it's the only state in South India where the party has held power.

In the 2019 general elections, BJP bagged 25 seats, while an independent backed by the party also emerged victorious.

The Congress and JD(S) which fought the polls in an alliance back then secured just one seat each.

Accusing the Congress of playing with fire for the sake of power, the PM said that at the time when India's stature is increasing globally, Congress leaders going abroad are not leaving any opportunity to project India in poor light.

"The country gives a befitting reply to its enemies, but Congress seeks evidence for 'surgical strikes' from the army. Congress is working with a political wing of a banned organisation which is involved in terror activities," he alleged.

Claiming that an "open game" of appeasement is on in the country, Modi alleged that efforts are on to put a stop to fairs and festivals.

"Will you give the country's administration into the hands of those playing this game of vote bank politics?" he asked, as he hit out at the Congress and INDIA bloc for "boy-cotting" the Ram Mandir consecration at Ayodhya by rejecting the invitation, which "insulted our faith".

Alleging that the INDIA alliance people want to "end Sanatan", and "destroy Hindu Dharma's Shakti", the PM said, "Until there is Modi, and he has your blessings, these forces of hate will never be successful. This is Modi's guarantee."

Karnataka is going to the polls in two phases. While polling for 14 Lok Sabha segments in the southern part of the state will be held on April 26, the second phase of voting in northern districts will be held on May 7.

Stating that the 2024 Lok Sabha polls will decide the future of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed Bharat) for 2047, Modi claimed that for the progress of the country he is putting in his every minute, and said, "24/7 for 2047."

Congress never gave its account of 60 years of rule, because it only knows to create problems and betray, he alleged. Karnataka has become an "ATM state" for the Congress party's loot, he alleged.

Highlighting the guarantees in the BJP's manifesto, Modi called it the picture of 'New India'. Earlier addressing the rally, Deve Gowda heaped praise on Modi and said he has brought a lot of respect for India globally, in the last 10 years.

"To save the state I asked Kumaraswamy to go with Modi," he said, as he also targeted the Congress and INDIA bloc. The veteran leader also attacked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar over their "misrule" and for speaking in poor light about Modi.

NC exploited people...

What have they truly done for the people here? How many schools, roads, or colleges did they construct during their tenure? They merely exploited and deceived our populace. I will not permit this to recur."

He urged the public to remain vigilant against parties that exploit them for political gain. He pointed out the shortcomings of Congress leadership, attributing BJP's electoral victories to these failures, instead of addressing people's concerns, leaders of such parties are engrossed in abusive politics.

Azad said: "If the Congress is losing today, it's because of their failed leadership. They only abuse the opponents, even those who demand leadership change. There is no democracy in the Congress now."

He lambasted the NC leadership and other regional parties for their abandonment of the self-rule and autonomy agendas.

The DPAP Chairman questioned the sincerity behind their previous slogans, accusing them of exploiting people's sentiments for years. He said, "What happened to self-rule and autonomy? Today, you forget. You exploited people over slogans for years." He reiterated his party's unwavering focus on development and peace.

Azad emphasized their commitment to building schools, colleges, and roads, highlighting the importance of continuing this work.

Regretting over the exploitation of people, Azad affirmed that their mission and agenda remains centered on serving the community and fostering progress.

He assured that their party's candidate, G.M. Saroori, would champion people's issues with the same dedication and integrity as himself. He praised Saroori for being a hardworking and honest individual, committed to serving the people effectively.

Azad further emphasized that voting should be based on the candidate's performance, rather than on religious or caste considerations. He underscored the secular nature of the people of Chenab Valley and urged them to unite for the development of the entire region, transcending any divisive factors.

‘Was not expecting...

was expecting a Kashmiri political leader to contest elections from Baramulla and nota tourist. We are tourist-friendly people, and let him fight elections there," he said while referring to Omar Abdullah.

Regarding the National Conference's role in Kashmir's history, Lone alleged, "We have been victims of NC-BJP alliance. My father was assaulted in their regime." He accused the National Conference of being complicit in human rights violations, stating, "They belong to that minority who jailed, booked people randomly under PSA, fired bullets, and made a graveyard in every nook and corner of Kashmir."

BJP manifesto promises...

technology-enabled irrigation initiatives to implement cutting-edge technology for efficient water management and launching an indigenous 'Bharat Krishi' satellite for farm-related activities like crop forecasting, pesticide application, irrigation, soil health and weather forecasting.

Chugh said the BJP has promised India will soon become a global food hub as the party will focus on 'Shree Anna' that benefits 2 crore people engaged in its farming.

LS Polls: Electoral...

station in Kashmir Valley and those who have already submitted their Form-M, choosing a Special Polling Station which is different from the one allotted in the draft and wish to retain the same as per choice already given in Form-M can approach ARO Migrant Jammu and ARO Migrant Udhampur or their respective Zonal Officers (Nodal Officer)/BLO and file the claim/objection in writing within seven days of the publication of the notification, in the format annexed with the notification.

UPA demoralised Armed...

now they are also cultivating their land upto the last point, which has led to hike in the income of the farmers along the IB. Similarly, raising of exclusive battalions along the border has increased the opportunities of employment, he said.

Emphasising that the government under Prime Minister Minister Modi addressed the issue of border at two levels (a) by allowing the Army a free hand and (b) by providing ease of living to the people living along the International border.

Dr Jitendra recalled Prime Minister Modi's words in his address at the Udhampur rally where he had said that what had been done for this region was only a trailer and much more was yet to come in the years to come. In the same vein, he said, there is an era of prosperity and new dawn awaiting the people of the border whose children now not only enjoy 4% reservation in admission to higher education institutes and jobs but also making their mark by the strength of their hard work and merit in different areas of vocation.

Prime Minister Modi, Dr Singh said, has been repeatedly reiterating that he knows only four classes of the society of which two are the farmers and the poor and the other two being the youth and women. He said, by addressing these four classes, there is a miraculous improvement and transformation in the conditions of the people along the borders.

Modi has also named the border villages as the "First" village to give the dwellers living there the esteem and pride they deserve.

During the election tour, Dr Jitendra was accompanied at different locations by former MLAs, DDCs, Councillors, PRIs, BJP leaders, Panches, Sarpanches and local activists.

Omar rules out...

the Chief Minister. And I most certainly do not aspire to lead a Union Territory.

"I have made it abundantly clear that in the current situation that J-K finds itself in, I am not contesting assembly elections. I have said this all the way back from 2020 onwards and my position has not changed," Abdullah told PTI in an interview here on Saturday.

Asked about the rationale behind leaving the family bastion of Srinagar Lok Sabha seat to contest from Baramulla, Abdullah, who has been elected to Lok Sabha three times, said it was not his habit to take the easy road.

"Why should I shy away from a fight? Yes, the political wisdom would suggest that I fight from Srinagar because God forbid a setback for me would be a setback for the entire party. But this is not the first time that someone from the family has fought from a seat other than Srinagar," he said.

Abdullah recalled his grandmother Akbar Jehan winning from the Anantnag constituency in the 1984 Lok Sabha polls.

"I still remember as a child campaigning with my grandmother from Anantnag in 1984 after the murder of democracy when MLAs were bought, defections were engineered and my father's government was brought down.

"My grandmother fought and won from Anantnag," he added.

Abdullah said his fight in the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat was not against a particular candidate but against the "might of the central government and the BJP".

"The biggest onslaught of Delhi that we are seeing is in north Kashmir. The maximum effort to cobble unnatural alliances is in north Kashmir.

"If you remember last Friday, while coming out of Hazratbal, the leader of Apni Party Altaf Bukhari while referring to Sajad Lone, was a little insulting.

"He had called him do *eenton ki imarat* (a building of two bricks). No sooner had he uttered those words, senior BJP leader Tarun Chugh came running to Srinagar; went straight to Altaf Bukhari's residence, and summoned Sajad Lone there to patch up this alliance.

"So, I am not fighting against an individual. My fight in north Kashmir is against the BJP; it is against the support it is giving to people on the ground," he said.

On the claims made by the BJP about development in Jammu and Kashmir post abrogation of Article 370, the former chief minister said by any measure of human development, J-K is far better than some of the so-called developed states of the country.

"In terms of the quality of life, J-K ranks above even the states like Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In terms of basic things like the matrix that makes up the human development index, in terms of infant mortality, maternal mortality, development, girl child's education.

"According to them, the NC did nothing but we gave free education right up to the university level. Can you deny it? We handed over land to people without taking any compensation in our landmark land reforms which have not been replicated anywhere in the country.

"J-K is the only place in the country today where Dalits are able to walk with their heads held up high because they are land owners. Can we forget that? J-K has amongst the low levels of poverty in the country. When was the last time that you heard that somebody in J-K starved to death," he said.

Abdullah listed infrastructure projects like hospitals and universities started by the elected governments in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is all very well to say that we did nothing. I am citing to you the infrastructure that we created. What can they show me?

"They show me the winter games, not one piece of infrastructure that they used for Khelo India skiing has been built by them.

"This railway project that they are now talking about, how many PMs have laid the foundation stones for this. It was started by late PM Indira Gandhi, I was in school when work started, sharam karo (Have some shame)," he said.

On the security situation, Abdullah, while admitting a decline in stone-pelting incidents, said militancy was still there as terror attacks were taking place.

"If everything was normal, why did we not have simultaneous polls for Parliament and Assembly? What reasons did they give? That they do not have enough security forces.

"If they do not have enough security forces, that means the situation is abnormal, that there is still a threat of terror and that is why they need additional forces," he said.

On the decline in protests, Abdullah said it would have been a good development if the hearts of those espousing separatism had changed.

"I would claim normalcy when all this is happening by choice, when you convert people who were otherwise against the interests of India into people who are for the country," he said.

Asked about his dare to the BJP to field its candidates on Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir instead of supporting the proxies, Abdullah said, "Let them put their candidates, I am trying to get them to put their candidates."

"I want to know why they are afraid... they are reducing tall leaders to almost nothing. In spite of his recent attacks against us, I feel great sympathy for Ghulam Nabi Azad. He was a national leader in the Congress," he said.

Abdullah said Azad has been reduced to the leader of one parliament constituency.

"He has been reduced to a leader of Doda where he himself is not fighting... His party announced his candidature for Anantnag. Delhi must have told him 'sit down'," he claimed.

Sarabjit Singh's killer...

the afternoon. He was rushed in critical condition to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Police have registered an FIR against two unidentified assailants on the complaint of Tamba's younger brother Junaid Sarfraz. According to reports, Tamba's body bore bullet wounds on chest and legs.

Singh, 49, died of cardiac arrest in Jinnah Hospital Lahore in the wee hours of May 2, 2013, after being comatose for nearly a week following a brutal assault by inmates, including Tamba, inside the high-security Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore.

Singh had been allegedly found guilty of taking part in several bombings in Pakistan's Punjab province in 1990 and was given the death penalty. However, Singh's family in India maintained he was a victim of mistaken identity and had inadvertently strayed across the border.

His sister Dalbir Kaur had fought a long battle to secure his release from Pakistan but failed.

Dr Usman Anwar, Inspector General Police of Pakistan's Punjab province, said that police are investigating the murder of Tamba from all aspects. "However, it will be premature to pinpoint involvement of anti-State elements at this stage," he said.

According to the FIR, Junaid Sarfraz said he and his elder brother Amir Sarfraz Tamba were present at home in Sanant Nagar when the incident took place.

"I was present at the ground floor while Tamba was at the upper portion. The main gate of the house was open. Two unidentified motorcyclists -- one wearing helmet and other a facemask -- entered the house at 12.40 pm Sunday and moved towards the upper portion.

"They fired three shots at Tamba and fled from the scene. I rushed to the upper floor and found Tamba in a pool of blood. He was shifted to hospital where he succumbed to his wounds," Junaid said in his complaint.

Tamba, son of Sarfaraz Javed, was born in Lahore in 1979 and was a close associate of the LeT founder, who felicitated him for killing Singh, official sources in India said.

In Lahore, police officer Sajjad Hussain told PTI that it appears to be a "targeted attack."

Hussain said the younger brother of Tamba told police that the family had no enmity with anyone. He said police are also investigating Tamba's killing regarding his role in the alleged murder case of Sarabjit Singh.

Notorious as 'Lahore ka asli don', Tamba was part of the 'Truckwalla gang' and was engaged in the property trade and drug trafficking, the sources said, adding, he was involved in a clash recently with one of the gang members Ameer Balaj Tipu, who was later killed during a marriage reception in Lahore.

Tamba and his accomplice Mudassar -- two Pakistani death row prisoners -- had attacked Singh in 2013 resulting in his death.

Singh died before recording his statement before the doctors.

A Pakistani court in 2018 had acquitted them both in Singh's murder case citing "lack of evidence" against them after all the witnesses turned hostile.

A one-man judicial commission of Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi of Lahore High Court had initially investigated Singh's murder case before the trial kicked off in the Sessions court. Judge Naqvi recorded the statements of some 40 witnesses in the case and submitted its report to the government, which is yet to make its findings public.

The one-man commission had also issued notices to Singh's relatives through the Foreign Ministry to record their statements and produce any evidence they had regarding his death. However, Singh's family did not record their statements.

Tamba and Mudassar, in their statements to the commission, had confessed to the crime and said they killed Singh as they wanted to avenge the killing of people in Lahore and Faisalabad in bomb blasts allegedly carried out by the Indian national.

Tamba was enjoying all facilities, including a mobile phone, inside the jail during his imprisonment, the sources said.