

# The Tribune

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Vol. 122 No. 55 City Edition

Chandigarh • Bathinda • New Delhi: Monday, February 25, 2002

http://www.tribuneindia.com Pages 28, Price Rs 2

## Congress wrests power in Punjab

### Meaning of the verdict

HARI JAISINGH

GUIDED by their earthy common sense the people have their own way of settling scores at the hustings—sometimes selectively, sometimes half-heartedly and occasionally decisively. Seen in this light, the 2002 verdict in the Assembly elections in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Uttaranchal is a mixed fare. This is but natural. For, the poll issues in different states have varied along with local factors. So have been political alliances and equations, though some national level parties and leaders were very much in the thick of this battle of the ballot. To that extent, the poll results in UP and Uttaranchal are bound to have a fallout on the BJP's political standing at the Centre.

To say this is not to suggest that there is a threat to the NDA government in New Delhi. All the same, the message to the BJP leadership is clear and candid. It has fared badly and will, therefore, have to do some soul-searching, quickly learn from its mistakes and improve its house-keeping. It is, of course, sad to see ascendancy of khichri politics in UP. This means the state will see horse-trading and naked display of money power to form a government at Lucknow. This is bad news for the electorate in UP. In sharp contrast to the BJP, the Congress has done well in Uttaranchal and Punjab.

The Congress win in Punjab, though on expected lines, is certainly not a positive vote in its favour. It is a negative vote, reflecting mainly the electorate's reservation on the way the SAD-BJP government managed state affairs. Therefore, the Congress has to look beyond feeling elated at the victory. It will have to earn the people's goodwill by providing good governance. It also cannot overlook the fact that even without power Mr Parkash Singh Badal continues to be the tallest leader in the state.

The task ahead is formidable. How the Congress will face harsh ground realities is difficult to say. The state's coffers are virtually empty. The overall financial situation is messy. Rail freights, coal bills, etc. have remained unpaid. The Congress brand of poll-eve populism will make the job for the newcomers all the more difficult. Mr Badal's government had the advantage of managing funds for its survival from the Centre. Whether the NDA government in New Delhi will be equally considerate remains to be seen. The only silver lining in Punjab's economy is the people's enterprising spirit and their ability to rough it out in adverse conditions. Much will, however, depend on the path the Akali-BJP politics adopts in Punjab. Akalis generally take to confrontation politics whenever they are out of power.

Though Punjab has done reasonably well on the farm front, it will have to quickly work out a new blueprint and prepare the state and its forward-looking farmers to meet the challenges in the post-WTO regime. Time is the essence of progress. Equally vital is the unity of purpose and action. The Congress has once again got an opportunity to prove itself. The choice before the party leadership is crystal-clear: behave, perform or perish!

Equally important will be the ability of the Congress to curb corruption, find new avenues for development and create jobs for educated unemployed youth. Nothing can be more shameful than to see the toppers of universities become victims of "operators" for petty jobs. There has to be fairplay in the system and the youths of Punjab will have to be treated with dignity and respect they deserve. Herein lies the test for the new government. It will be judged on its performance and not on mere promises on the basis of which many of its legislators have won the present election. If the Congress fails to deliver the goods, it will be thrown in the dustbin of history much sooner than expected.

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### The Tribune INTERNET POLL

Is a Supreme Court verdict the only solution for Ayodhya issue?

RESULT Can't Say 5% Yes 57% No 38%



This poll reflects the opinion of the Internet users who participated in it. It may not reflect the opinion of the general public.

Current week's poll: Was it anti-incumbency or corruption that caused the defeat of the Badal government in Punjab? Cast your vote at http://www.tribuneindia.com

The NICTD team of Dr Ichpujani Continued on page 6 col 5

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### WEATHER

City	Max	Min
Ambala	24.0	10.1
Amritsar	24.0	8.1
Bhuntar	20.0	4.6
Chandigarh	24.7	11.4
Hisar	26.4	11.6
Jammu		13.5
Ludhiana	24.8	8.5
Patiala	25.3	8.5
Shimla	13.3	4.0
Srinagar	9.5	1.0
Sundernagar	21.7	5.5

Sunset on Monday: 6.19  
 Sunrise on Tuesday: 6.82  
 All-India weather on page 5

Free four-page colour pull-out with this issue of The Tribune

### Badal resigns as several ministers lick dust

PRABHJOT SINGH  
 TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 24

True to expectations, the Congress has romped home with a clear majority in spite of a gallant fight put up by the Shiromani Akali Dal in one of the most fiercest and toughest battles for electoral supremacy in Punjab in the past more than three decades.

The Congress won 62 of the 116 seats while the SAD-BJP alliance ended with 44, which is 49 behind its strength of 1997.

While the Chief Minister, Mr Parkash Singh Badal, later met the Governor to submit the resignation of his Council of Ministers, the new Congress government is expected to assume office in the coming week after the Congress Legislative Party elects its leader on Tuesday.

Though the Congress expected anything between 70 and 75 seats, it just managed to get past the majority mark of 59 by three seats, leaving the outgoing ruling alliance with 44 seats. Independents, including rebels, especially of the Akali Dal, did well by winning five of the remaining 10 seats.

The Congress triumph, though expected, certainly fell short of what the Punjab Pradesh Con-

gress Committee chief, Capt Amarinder Singh, and some of his ardent followers visualised. Of the 116 seats for which elec-

tions were held, the Congress bagged 62, SAD 41, BJP three, CPI one and Independents nine. Election to one seat was coun-

termanded due to death of a candidate. The BSP, which fielded 99 candidates, CPI which put up 13

nominees and newly-formed Panth Morcha (99) failed to gain entry into the House.

The results have not only shown the door to the BJP in three major cities of Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana but also rejected several seasoned stars, including former Chief Minister, Mr Harcharan Singh Brar, besides the Speaker, Mr Charanjit Singh Atwal,



Capt Amarinder Singh celebrates the victory of the Congress in the Punjab Assembly elections at Punjab Congress Bhavan in Chandigarh on Sunday. Tribune photo: Panjaj Sharma

### Punjab Assembly

Final party position	
Total seats	117
Election held	116
Results declared	116
INC	62
SAD	41
BJP	03
Independent	09
CPI	01

Deputy Speaker, Mr Sat Pal Gosain, and several ministers, including Mr Balramji Dass Tandon, Mr Madan Mohan Mittal, Mr Mohan Lal, Mr Chiranjit Lal Garg, Mr Sikander Singh Maluka, Mrs Mohinder Kaur Josh and others. The elections have thrown up a number of youngsters, including Mr Parminder Singh Dhindsa (Sunam), Mr Gagandeep Singh Barnala (Dhuri), Mr

Continued on page 18 col 5

### Amarinder vows clean-up

SARAJIT DHALIWA  
 TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 24

Obviously in an upbeat mood, the president of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee, Capt Amarinder Singh, who led the party to victory in the Assembly elections, said today that the people of the state had given a mandate to the Congress to clean up the system. "It will not disappoint them in this connection," he added.

The top contender for the office of Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh told TNS that a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) would be held on Tuesday to elect the leader of the CLP to head the government in the state.

He said that senior party leaders, including Mr Moti Lal Vora, Mrs Ambika Soni and Mr Ahmed Patel, would reach here tomorrow or on Tuesday. The leader of the CLP would be elected in the presence of the party observers in consultation with the party President, Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Admitting that the Congress had got slightly fewer seats than what it was expecting, Capt Amarinder Singh said it was, however, a "big

Continued on page 12 col 1

### SP largest party in UP, BJP out

LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 24

The BJP was today voted out of power in Uttar Pradesh in a hung verdict that saw Samajwadi Party emerging as the single largest party after the BSP put up an impressive show as the race for power narrowed down to the two regional parties.

As the SP looks to the Congress and other anti-BJP groups to stake its claim for government formation, the BSP may look to its estranged ally BJP for support in their common desire to push Mulayam Singh Yadav-led party out of power.

Significantly, Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri told reporters that his main concern would be to see which party or group could provide a stable government before he takes a decision on government formation.

With the BJP and BSP pro-

jected to secure 207 seats in the 403-member House, five more than the magic mark, BSP leader

Seat tally (2 a.m.)	
Total seats	404
Election held on	403
(one member to be nominated)	
BJP and allies BJP	88
RJD	14
JD(U)	2
Loktantrik Congress	2
SP and allies SP	143
CPM	2
Congress	25
BSP	98
RKP	4
Apna Dal	4
Others	3
Independents	14
Results declared	401

Mayawati flew to New Delhi and sought an appointment with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vaj-

payee setting off speculation of possible understanding between the two parties.

But senior BJP leaders, including Pramod Mahajan and Sushma Swaraj, ruled out BJP staking claim to form government but indicated that if approached for support by some other party, it could be considered.

The SP and its allies are projected to secure 143 seats and if supported by the Congress, which is likely end up with about 30, the alliance will still be way behind the majority mark.

In results for 401 seats declared till late tonight, the SP has secured 143, BSP 98 and BJP 88.

The Congress has won in 25 seats and Independents and others have emerged victorious in 18 seats. **UNI, PTI**

### Cong ahead in Manipur

IMPHAL, FEBRUARY 24

Coming from behind, the Congress was marching ahead in the 60-member Manipur Assembly, romping home in 11 seats pushing the BJP and the Federal Party of Manipur (FPM) far behind with three and seven seats, respectively.

Of the four seats declared so far from the hills, Saitu, Chingai and Tadubi went to the Congress, while the Chandel seat was captured by the BJP where the Congress had to withdraw its candidate following the NSCN (IM) threat.

Seat tally	
Total seats	60
Results declared:	31
MSCP	7
FPM	3
MPP	2
BJP	3
Congress	11
Manipur National Conference	1
CPI	1
Samata Party	1
NCP	2

The CPI which had never struck a purple patch in the state, however, managed to open its account wrestling the Kakching seat where its candidate Thokchom Tomba defeated N. Nimai of the Congress.

The BJP and the MSCP were trailing far behind with three each, while the MNC won two, Samata Party one, and MPP two. MSCP's Konthoujam Govindas Singh was declared elected from Bishnupur, defeating his nearest rival N. Sanajasba Singh (DRPP).

The NCP also opened its account to the Assembly when L. Radhakishore was declared elected from Oinam. **UNI**

### Uttaranchal goes to Cong

DEHRA DUN, FEBRUARY 24

The Congress today stormed to power in Uttaranchal bagging 36 seats in the 70-member Assembly. The ruling BJP could win only 19 seats as the results of all 70 seats were declared this evening.

The BJP suffered a string of defeats when its main bigwigs like former Chief Minister Nityanand Swami, Sports Minister Narayan Singh Rana, Tourism Minister Kedar Singh Fonia and Finance Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal lost at the hustings.

Except Chief Minister Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, Health Minister Ajay Bhatt and Urban Development Minister Harbans Kapoor,

all BJP ministers have lost. Significantly, the BJP has virtually lost ground in the Garhwal region while it has

Seat tally	
Total seats	70
Results declared	70
Congress	36
BJP	19
BSP	7
UKD	4
Independents	3
NCP	1

been able to save its face in the Kumaon region.

The BSP sprang a surprise when it won seven seats, a majority of

them coming from Haridwar district. On the other hand, the Uttaranchal Kranti Dal, which spearheaded the separate statehood movement in the 1990s, managed to win only four seats.

Congress Legislature Party leader Indira Hridayesh and its state General Secretary Kishore Upadhyaya won convincingly from the Haldwani and Tehri seats, respectively.

State Congress President Harish Rawat said the Congress Legislature Party would meet shortly to decide on the choice of its leader but the final decision on it would be taken by party President Sonia Gandhi. **PTI**

## Opposition braces to take on govt in Budget session

T.V. LAKSHMINARAYAN  
 TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24

A beligerent Opposition is all set to take on the government in the Budget session of Parliament beginning tomorrow.

With the heat and dust of Assembly polls behind them, the Opposition led by the Congress is hoping to pin down the ruling party on several national issues, which it says were raised by the BJP in the electioneering campaign.

It will, however, take some time for the storm to build up as on the opening day of the session, the President, Mr K.R. Narayanan, would address a joint session of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The next day

would be consumed by the MPs gleaming through a plethora of figures and policy statements that would emanate from the Railway Budget and the Economic Survey. With February 27 being a Parliament holiday on account of Guru Ravi Das day, both the Economic Survey and the Railway Budget are being presented on the same day.

The last day of the month would be dominated by Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha presenting the Union Budget proposals. Though a grim reminder of India's uneasy relations with Pakistan would be there right at the gates of Parliament, the Opposition parties have indicated that it would be domestic issues rather than international that would dominate the sittings this time.

After the December 13 shootout in the Parliament complex, a new security system has been installed with additional layers of security being thrown in. Machine-gun wielding cops can be seen all around and rules for entry into the complex have been changed. New check-in counters with sophisticated machines have been set up with the security men asserting it would be near impossible to breach security now. It would be an Army related issue that would dominate the proceedings, with the Opposition giving notice about the coffin scam.

The Congress leader in Rajya Sabha, Dr Manmohan Singh, said the issues of national security and the government's inept handling of, and the government's bid to

make terrorism and national security an election issue would be raised by the Opposition.

Amidst vociferous demands for the Defence Minister's resignation, the Opposition, including the Left parties, are bound to raise the issue of Mr George Fernandes to influence the Public Accounts Committee on Defence. The Opposition hopes to press for a privilege issue against the minister.

The Vajpayee government would face some embarrassing moments when some of the partners within the National Democratic Alliance, like the Shiv Sena

, join hands with the Opposition, especially the Left parties, to criticise the proposed reforms in labour laws. Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray has talked about withdrawing support to the NDA if the controversial labour laws amendment, that makes it easier for hiring and firing workers, is not dumped within a month.

The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) and the Ayodhya issue would come back to haunt the government. Congress leader Jaipal Reddy has already made it clear that Bharatiya Janata Party leaders would be asked to explain the threat posed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on the construction of the temple. Left leaders have said that the dismal performance of the economy

under the current NDA government would also be a major issue in the session.

According to Dr Manmohan Singh, there are several issues on the economic front like the collapse of the economy, fall in industrial production, growing unemployment, and distress among farmers which would be debated in Parliament.

The Budget session would break for recess on March 22 and reassemble on April 15. A total of 76 Bills are pending from the winter session, and four ordinances need to be passed before the March 22 recess. The important Bills pending in Parliament include those on patents, fiscal responsibility, money laundering, banking companies' acquisition and transfer and the Lok Pal.



Mr Abhey Chautala greets the newly elected MLA from Yamunanagar who defeated the HVP, Congress and BJP candidate.

This issue of The Tribune consists of 28 pages, including a six-page colour pullout of Chandigarh Tribune.