

Modi exudes confidence of winning 2019 Lok Sabha polls, says...

'Don't worry, I will be back'

Inaugrating several infra projects, Modi says mood of the nation has changed and from now on every act of terrorism will be dealt with equal force; bashes UPA for not acting after 2008 Ahmedabad blasts and 26/11



ANGELA JAMINDAR

Modi flags off first phase of the Metro train service. CM Vijay Rupani and DyCM Nitin Patel were also present

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On the first day of his two-day visit of Gujarat, the standoff between India and Pakistan dominated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rhetoric while inaugurating a host of infrastructure projects including the Ahmedabad Metro. Be it Jammagar or Ahmedabad, Modi alluded to recent IAF strike on Pakistan and the retaliatory dogfight in air while bashing Opposition for questioning valour of Indian armed forces.

In Jammagar
Modi hit out at the Opposition for questioning his statement that the presence of Rafale fighters would have given greater firepower to the IAF during aerial engagement with Pakistan. "I said if Rafale was acquired in time it would have made a difference (during the February 27 dogfight), but they say Modi is questioning our air force strike," he said, addressing a gathering in Jammagar.

"Please use common sense. What I said was if we had Rafale at the time (of aerial dogfight), then none of our fighter jets would have gone down and none of theirs saved," he added.

"Even if mentors of those seeking to destroy India are outside, this country won't sit quietly," he said, addressing a gathering after inaugurating an annexe building of Guru Govind Singh hospital and various other development works here.

Modi also flagged off the Bandra-Jammagar HumSafar Express and launched development projects, including the 51-km pipeline from Aaji-3 to Kihjadi.

In Ahmedabad

Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the Rs 1,000 crore Umriya Mata Temple complex at Jaspur on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, Modi expressed confidence that the BJP would return to power in 2019 IS polls under his leadership.



Modi waves at thousands of Patidars who had gathered at Jaspur to attend foundation-stone laying ceremony (inset) of Umriya Mata Temple at Jaspur

"Don't worry... I am coming back in 2019 so if you need anything from the Central government, you can tell me," he told a massive gathering of the Patidar community.

Wishing all success to the trustees of the Umriya Foundation for this project, Modi said, amid huge applause, "If you need anything in this, my home in New Delhi is all yours and don't worry I am there even after 2019 (elections)."

Referring to Pulwama terror attack, he said the mood of the nation has changed... the mind of the people has changed. "Now, small actions against terrorism will not work. It is time to do big. Even soldiers are undertaking missions that prove their capability and valour," he said.

He used the occasion to urge Patidars to prevent female foeticide which has a high prevalence in the community. "On one hand, you worship Goddess Umriya and on the other kill daughters in the womb. I know about it as I have grown up with you. I want a promise, that you won't discriminate between boys and girls. Let us not commit that sin," he exhorted.

Metro first phase

Later in the day, PM Modi inaugurated

a 6.5-km stretch of first phase of Ahmedabad Metro service and took a ride on it.

Medicity inauguration

In the evening, the PM inaugurated Women, Children and Super-specialty Hospital, Cancer Hospital, MJ Institute of Ophthalmology and a Dental Hospital at Medicity, earlier known as Civil Hospital complex.

Going down the memory lane to reminisce about the bomb blasts at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital in 2008, he said, "I still remember the patients' bodies, injured doctors and the scenes of carnage at the hospital. The UPA was in power then and did not do anything to terrorists across the border. Even when they attacked Mumbai, no response was given. But 'ab hum gadi me ghus ke maazenge (now, we will hit them in their own fort)."

From the same event, Modi also inaugurated the Dahod Railway Workshop, flagged-off the Patan-Bhildi train and inaugurated the completion of the track doubling on the Anand-Godhra railway line.

He also initiated the work for the Rs 479 crore National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal.

PM SLIP OF TONGUE, CM SNUB

Pak on his mind, Modi mixes Kochi with Karachi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday got "Kochi" in Kerala and "Karachi" in Pakistan mixed up in a slip of the tongue but quickly covered it up by saying that his mind these days is preoccupied with the neighbouring country.

Extolling the virtues of the Ayushman Bharat health scheme at an event in Jammagar, Modi said it allowed a resident of Jammagar to avail treatment anywhere in the country, be it "Kolkata" or "Karachi".

Almost in the same breath, the PM set things right by telling the gathering he meant "Kochi" and not "Karachi". "Nowadays, my mind is preoccupied with the thoughts of the neighbouring country," he said.

"But that (air strike in Pakistan) was also necessary. Should that be done or not?" he posed to the crowd which replied its assent with a round of applause.



Nitin steals limelight among Patidars

Thousands of Patidars made their unhappiness apparent at the treatment meted out to Deputy CM Nitin Patel who is said to have been sidelined at the last minute before appointment of Vijay Rupani as CM in place of Anandiben Patel in 2016.

At the foundation stone-laying ceremony of Umriya Mata Temple, when chief convener of Umriyadham C K Patel introduced Nitin Patel, the audience reacted with collective cheers and ovation. They also listened to Nitin Patel's speech with rapt attention and hailed him as prominent leader of the community.

However, the Patidars snubbed CM Vijay Rupani as soon as he started his speech. Instead of hearing to what the CM had to say, the Patidars started chanting Modi's name.

There have been reports of the Rupani government ignoring Nitin Patel as his name keeps disappearing from invitations of the public events. Also, when Rupani once again became CM in December 2017, Nitin Patel had to put up a fight to get portfolios befitting his stature.



The pilots who drove PM Narendra Modi on Monday call it their special day



UCL 001

Narendra Modi on Monday flagged off the first phase of Metro rail service between Vastral Gann and Apparel Park. He also took a ride after laying foundation stone for Phase 2 which has two corridors, one from Motera to Mahatma Mandir via Akshardham and another from GINLU to GIFT city with combined length of 28.2 km. "I really felt special to be able to drive when PM Modi was sitting inside. Currently it is manually operated but in future people can expect automatic operations too," said pilot Gaurant Darji.

Echoing similar feelings, co-pilot Surbhi Patidar said she felt great about being a part of the project. The Metro services will be open for public 10 am onwards from March 6. The minimum proposed fare structure is Rs 5 for 2.5 km and Rs 10 from 2.5 to 7.5 km.