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Mahayuti and MVA pin hopes on increased voter turnout

Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis sees 'pro-incumbency' trend, voters' 'affinity' towards BJP-led govt.; Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut sounds confident of unseating ruling alliance

Abhinav Deshpande
MUMBAI

The rise in voter turnout on Wednesday for the Maharashtra Assembly election, compared with the 2019 figure, has been claimed as a sign of support by both the ruling Mahayuti alliance and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), each interpreting it to its advantage. Votes will be counted on November 23.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party leader Devendra Fadnavis attributed the rise in turnout – provisionally recorded at 65% compared with 61.74% in 2019 – to a “pro-incumbency” trend and voters’ “affinity” towards the BJP-led Mahayuti government. He expressed confidence that this trend would help the alliance retain power.

“The increased voting percentage in Maharashtra generally favours the BJP and our alliance partners. It reflects pro-incumbency



The Election Commission provisionally recorded voter turnout for the Maharashtra polls at 65% compared with 61.74% in 2019. ANI

and the sense of connection voters feel with the government,” he said. The BJP leader also credited the participation of women voters to initiatives such as the Ladki Bahin scheme.

On the other hand, the Opposition Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray or UBT) MP Sanjay Raut expressed optimism over the MVA’s prospects, predicting a victory by winning 160-165 seats in the 288-member Assemb-

ly. “We and our allies, including smaller parties like the PWP (Peasants and Workers Party), Samajwadi Party (SP), and the Left, are crossing the majority mark. I am confident we will form a stable government,” Mr. Raut said.

The BJP-led Mahayuti comprises the BJP, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde’s Shiv Sena, and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar’s Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), while the MVA in-

cludes Uddhav Thackeray’s Shiv Sena, the Congress, and Sharad Pawar’s NCP (SP).

While both alliances are eyeing control of the State, the Mahayuti is determined to retain power, and the MVA hopes to capitalise on the momentum of the 2024 Lok Sabha election and “change” narrative.

Exit polls have largely predicted a victory for the BJP-led alliance, although some have indicated a potential edge for the MVA.

When asked about the next Chief Minister, Mr. Fadnavis said the alliance partners would collectively decide on the leadership if the Mahayuti won the election.

When asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s demand for the arrest of industrialist Gautam Adani over bribery allegations in the U.S., the BJP leader dismissed it, saying, “Rahul Gandhi speaks every day, and there’s nothing significant in it.”

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11 held for vandalism at polling booths in Maharashtra's Beed

Snehal Mutha

MUMBAI

A day after incidents of violence and intimidation marred the Assembly election in a few pockets of Maharashtra, the State police have taken action, arresting 11 persons for damaging an electronic voting machine and vandalising several polling stations in Beed district.

A polling booth was vandalised at Someshwar School in Agriculture Minister Dhananjay Munde's Parli constituency, and a Nationalist Congress Party (SP) worker, Madhav Jadhav from Ghatnandur, was attacked by unidentified individuals at Kanherwadi village.

"We went to stop the bogus voting of Mr. Munde's goons, but I was only attacked. Now police have arrested people, I hope they will be punished," Mr. Jadhav told *The Hindu*.

According to the police, a few officials were also attacked by the accused, who were carrying wooden sticks.

Several other booths



A vandalised polling booth in Ghatnandur village of Beed district on November 20. ANI

were also vandalised in Ghatnandur village in Ambajogai Taluka, where police have registered a case against at least 35 people and arrested 11, according to the Beed Superintendent's office. "We arrested at least 11 people who vandalised and harmed the booths and EVM," a Beed official told *The Hindu*.

The accused were booked under Sections 109 (charges of attempt to murder), 115 (voluntarily causing hurt), and 132 (criminal force against a public servant) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and under sections of the Representation of the People Act.

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Jharkhand records 67.74% turnout in election

Amit Bhelari
RANCHI

Sharing final figures of the second phase of polling in the Jharkhand Assembly election, Chief Electoral Officer K. Ravi Kumar said the second phase saw a voter turnout of 68.95%. Polling in 38 constituencies, comprising 14,218 booths, concluded peacefully on Wednesday with a higher turnout than the first phase.

"Turnout was 68.95% in the second phase. The voting percentage will increase further after the counting of postal ballots. Overall voting percentage in both phases was 67.74. Once again, in the second phase, women voters outnumbered men. Rural voters were ahead compared to those in urban areas," Mr. Kumar said while addressing the media at Nirvachan Sadan in Ranchi.