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## Polls in 54 seats across 10 states today

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**I**n what could be a reflection of the national political mood, 54 Assembly constituencies across 10 states including 28 in Madhya Pradesh, eight in Gujarat, seven in Uttar Pradesh two each in Jharkhand, Karnataka, Nagaland and Odisha and one each in Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Telangana will go to polls today.

The BJP is in power in five of the states, Congress, BJD, JMM, TRS and Democratic Alliance of Nagaland are ruling one each. Congress is also part of JMM alliance in Jharkhand BJP part of the alliance in Nagaland.

Bypolls have generally not brought good news for the BJP since 2017, either in Assembly constituencies of Lok Sabha seats. While the results will have no bearing on the stability of the Yogi Adityanath government, it will determine the course of Opposition politics in future in the state. Six of these seats were held by the BJP and one by the Samajwadi Party.

For a month before the polls, the issue of "love jihad", is back in the political discourse of BJP and VHP with a greater vengeance in many states, with chief ministers and political leaders raking up the rhetoric. The BJP has fielded former Congress MLAs who quit their parent party under Operation Lotus by the BJP, in nearly three dozen seats.

In Madhya Pradesh bypolls are being held in 28 seats in one go for the first time. 25 of them are seats from where Congress MLAs resigned in favour of Scindia as the later switched sides. The outcome here will determine the continuance of Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government and the political future of Jyotiraditya Scindia within the BJP.

The BJP has 107 MLAs and needs nine more seats for a majority, while the Congress has 87 legislators in the House and bouncing back to form a government again is a tall task for Congress.

In Gujarat, the bypolls in eight seats are necessitated after Congress MLAs resigned, five of whom are contesting as BJP candidates. They had resigned ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls held in June this year. Here, Congress is betting big on the new entrant Hardik Patel, the leader from the influential Patidar community who was made party working president only this year.

In Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh, two MLAs of the Janata Congress Chhattisgarh (J) came out against the party's decision to support BJP's nominee in the Marwahi bypoll.

In Karnataka, one of the two seats, RR Nagar was held by the BJP but was won in the last election by Munirathna, a Congress candidate then. Now Munirathna is a BJP candidate from the same seat. Congress has fielded H Kusuma, wife of former IAS officer late D K Ravi.