

## PRE-ELECTION DYNAMICS IN HARYANA

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



### Introduction

Haryana, India's North-Central state bordering Delhi and Punjab, is due to hold **Vidhan Sabha** (legislative assembly) elections on 5 October 2024. The results will be declared on October 8, along with those in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Major political parties -including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), AAM Aadmi Party (AAP)- and some regional parties such as Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) and Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) have fielded their candidates. The BJP, INC, and AAP have nominated candidates for all **90 seats of the state assembly**.

With a population of over 30 million, Haryana has around 20 million registered voters. It has an area of 44,212 km, and is divided into 22 districts and 7,356 villages.<sup>2</sup> Different ethnic groups in Haryana - primarily the Jats and non-Jat communities- have a significant vote share, which affects the outcome of the state elections. Jats comprises around 25 percent of the Haryana population, while the remaining 75 percent are non-Jat communities including the Dalit, Brahmin, Yadav, Gujjar, Baniya, and Rajput.<sup>1</sup> INC in all previous elections has sought support from the Jat community, while the BJP prefers to seek favour from the non-Jats such as the Brahmins, Rajputs, Punjabis, and Other

<sup>1</sup> "Caste equations acquire centre stage in ticket distribution of BJP, Cong in Haryana," The Pioneer, September 14, 2024, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2024/state-editions/caste-equations-acquire-centre-stage-in-ticket-distribution-of-bjp--cong-in-haryana.htm>.

Backward Classes (OBCs). Electorally, the Jats are decisive in 37 constituencies including Hisar and Rohtak. However, the OBCs are in majority and can influence the election results in the BJP's favour. Likewise, there are 17 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), which constitute over 20.2 percent of the state population.<sup>2</sup> In the coming *Vidhan Sabha* elections also, the BJP is relying more on non-Jat communities as the party has allotted more than 50 tickets to Brahmins, Rajputs, and Punjabis; 20 to the OBCs; 2 to the Muslims; and 17 to the candidates from SCs. On the other hand, INC has allotted 28 tickets to Jats, 5 to Muslims, 17 to the SC, 5 to the Brahmins, and 19 to candidates from Backward Classes. The figure below shows the ticket distribution by the BJP and INC:

**Figure 1: Ticket Distribution by the BJP and INC in Haryana**

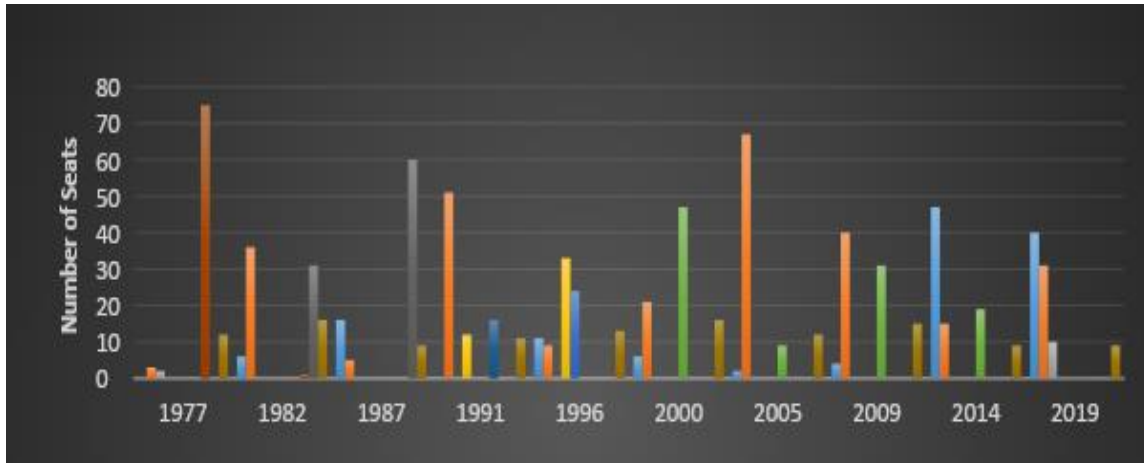
S.No	CASTE	CATEGORY	BJP		INC	
			Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1	JAAT	GEN	15	17%	28	31%
2	BRAHMIN	GEN	11	12%	5	6%
3	PUNJABI KHATRI	GEN	11	12%	6	7%
4	SC	SC	17	19%	17	19%
5	YADAV	BC-B	7	8%	6	7%
6	GURJAR	BC-B	6	7%	7	8%
7	BANIYA	GEN	5	6%	2	2%
8	BISHNOI	GEN	2	2%	1	1%
9	JATT SIKH	GEN	1	1%	4	4%
10	JHIMAR	BC-A	1	1%	0	0%
11	KAMBOJ	BC-A	1	1%	2	2%
12	KUMHAR	BC-A	1	1%	0	0%
13	RAJPUT	GEN	4	4%	1	1%
14	ROR	GEN	2	2%	1	1%
15	SAINI	BC-B	2	2%	2	2%
16	BAIRAGI	BC-A	1	1%	0	0%
17	MUSLIM	GEN	2	2%	5	6%
18	KHATI (JANGRA)	BC-A	1	1%	1	1%
19	TELI	BC-A	0	0%	1	1%

Amir Shakil, "Will Caste Politics Overturn BJP's Anti-Incumbency in Haryana?" *The Wire*, September 19, 2024, <https://thewire.in/politics/will-caste-politics-overtturn-bjps-anti-incumbency-in-haryana>.

Historically, different regional parties have dominated Haryana's *Vidhan Sabha* such as Janta Party (JNP), Lok Dal (LKD), Haryana Vikas Party (HVP), and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), but the BJP and INC have remained in power since 2005. The table below shows the party position in Haryana up until now:

<sup>2</sup> "SC Votes Hold Key for All Political Parties in Haryana," *The Pioneer*, September 19, 2024, <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2024/state-editions/sc-votes-hold-key-for-all-political-parties-in-haryana.html>.

### Vidhan Sabha Election Results in Haryana



"Assembly Election Results in Haryana," India Votes,  
<https://www.indiavotes.com/vidhan-sabha/2000/haryana/152/31>.

### Major Political Issues in Elections

Haryana remained in the limelight of Indian politics due to a number of recent events including protests by farmers and wrestlers, mainly against the BJP's policies. Although the state contributes around 3.7 percent to the country's GDP, majorly coming from agricultural sectors, the farmers' grievances are not addressed yet. Since 2014, the BJP has been in power in Haryana. Farmers' major concern was that the Centre not providing a legal guarantee to Minimum Support Price (MSP).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the wrestlers protested against the president of the Wrestling Federation of India, Brij Bhushan, for allegedly sexually harassing seven women grapplers including a minor. Although Brij Bhushan (former BJP MP) was replaced in December 2023, the protestors faced ill-treatment from the Centre. The wrestlers alleged that the police assaulted and abused them during the protests.<sup>4</sup> Wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik, and Vinesh Phogat were leading the protests.

These anti-incumbent sentiments may be favourable for the INC as Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat recently joined the party.<sup>5</sup> Both the farmers and wrestlers (predominantly representing Jat community) had been supporting each other during their protests against BJP policies. On her recent Olympic mishap, Vinesh Phogat received wide support from the Jat community and other wrestlers. Projecting Phogat from the INC platform illustrates that the party supports the overall sentiments of

<sup>3</sup> Narinder Nanu, "Why Farmers in Punjab and Haryana disallowed the BJP and others from Campaigning," *The Caravan*, May 31, 2024, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/why-farmers-in-punjab-and-haryana-disallowed-the-bjp-and-others-from-campaigning>.

<sup>4</sup> "Protesting Indian Wrestlers say Police assaulted them," BBC, May 4, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-65478542>.

<sup>5</sup> Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat are Indian wrestlers who have represented their country in Olympics. The two wrestlers were the leading figure in protests against WFI President, Brij Bhushan.

the wrestlers, and the farmers of Haryana, particularly the Jat community. This move will also help INC to garner support of the women and youth of Haryana. Besides, the BJP issuing tickets to 15 Jat candidates –lower than in 2019 and 2014 when it issued 19 and 24 tickets, respectively- depicts that overall the Jat community has unfavourable sentiments towards the BJP.<sup>6</sup>

In a bid to prevent these factors from influencing the election outcome, the BJP preferred candidates from non-Jat communities. The INC tried to make an alliance with Arvind Kejriwal's AAP, but the two parties could not reach an agreement on seat-sharing formula. Since all national parties are contesting the upcoming elections on their own, regional parties such as Jannayak Janta Party and Azad Samaj Party have aligned together, substantially increasing the significance of regional parties. Regional parties' votes will likely damage the INC vote share during the polls. For example, the INLD is contesting for 51 seats out of 90 seats. The major support to INLD also comes from the Jat community. AAP, which was unable to secure even one seat in 2019, sought to stir emotions of the public based on Kejriwal's arrest and his resignation from Delhi's Chief Ministership. Hence, some observers feel that the overall balance appears to be in BJP's favour because of the support from non-Jat communities and the Jat-votes dividing among various opposition parties.

### Elections Manifestos

The BJP and INC duly issued their manifestos prior to the *Vidhan Sabha* elections. INC has mentioned seven promises as prosperity for families including providing free 300 unit electricity; ₹ 2000 monthly allowance for over-18 years women and ₹ 500 for gas cylinders; recruitment of youth on 200,000 vacant posts; strengthening social security for handicaps, widows and old age people; conducting caste census to benefit backward classes; legal guarantee of MSP for farmers; and housings for the poor.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the BJP has pledged to provide allowance for women; construction of industrial cities; declared MSP for 24 crops; government jobs for youth and Agniveers; and different developmental and educational projects.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vivek Gupta, "BJP Thrust on Non-Jats, Congress's on Jats as both parties lock their candidate list," *The Wire*, September 13, 2024, <https://thewire.in/politics/haryana-bjp-candidates-list-jats>.

<sup>7</sup> "300 units free electricity, LPG Cylinders for ₹ 500 – Congress announces 7 guarantees in Manifesto," *Mint*, September 18, 2024, <https://www.livemint.com/elections/haryana-assembly-elections-300-unit-free-electricity-lpg-cylinders-for-rs-500-congress-7-promises-11726651465024.html>.

<sup>8</sup> "BJP releases manifesto: MSP for farmers, Rs 2100 for women, govt jobs for Agniveer and more," *Economic Times*, September 20, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/haryana/bjp-releases-manifesto-for-haryana-assembly-elections-2024-check-key-guarantees/articleshow/1134>.

## Conclusion

Earlier, looking at the anti-incumbency sentiments, and discontent of the wrestlers, farmers, and Jat community towards the BJP, it seemed that INC may dominate this time in Haryana's *Vidhan Sabha* elections. However, it appears that the BJP has chosen candidates very pragmatically, to garner support of the non-Jat community and minimize the anti-incumbency factor. The support from OBC, SC, and other non-Jat communities could be favourable for the BJP. Since 2009, it is a trend in Haryana, that the party ruling in the Centre is able to clinch success in Haryana's *Vidhan Sabha* too and form government in the State. If the BJP is unable to secure victory in upcoming elections in Haryana, it would damage the Party's interests in a serious manner. That is why both INC and the BJP are mobilising every possible means to win the *Vidhan Sabha* elections. A closely fought contest appears to be in the offing.