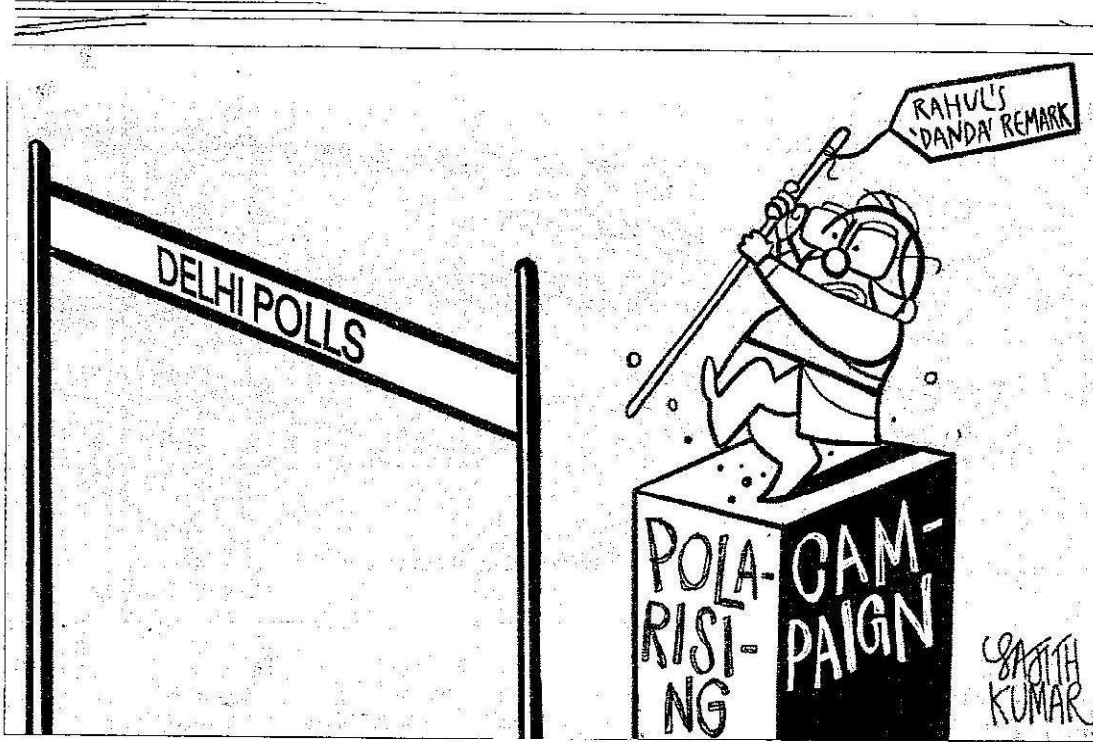


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Delhi goes to polls today

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

8/2/20
Lakhs of Delhi voters will queue up at polling booths on Saturday to put their stamp of faith in the keenly-fought Assembly elections in the capital, where the AAP is vying for a repeat victory while the BJP is seeking to dislodge the Arvind Kejriwal-led party.

The polling will be held between 8 am and 6 pm, while the counting of votes will be on February 11. There are 672 candidates in the fight for 70 Assembly seats.

Around 78,000 security personnel—40,000 from the Delhi Police, 19,000 from paramilitary forces and another 19,000 from Home Guard—have been deployed across the capital to ensure an incident-free election.

Officials said the deployment of 190 companies (19,000 personnel) of paramilitary forces is four times the

number of personnel deployed during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in May last year. The paramilitary personnel have been deployed at polling booths and for movement of EVMs, while Home Guards from Uttarakhand, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh will assist local police.

The EC has put in place a multi-layered security apparatus at 21 counting centres and 2,689 polling premises, which included 545 "critical" ones.

The run-up to the Delhi polls witnessed one of the most divisive campaigns. The AAP is seeking a mandate for the third term, the first being a 49-day government in 2013, on the work it did in the last five years. The BJP unleashed a blitzkrieg based on nationalism and polarisation, seeking to corner both AAP and Congress on the protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), especially in Shaheen Bagh.

All eyes are on Shaheen Bagh, which falls in the Okhla Assembly constituency, and extra security has been deployed in the area to ensure smooth conduct of the polls. Congress, which sought votes based on "golden era" of Sheila Dikshit's 15-year rule, appears to be in the third slot in the race.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari visited temples seeking divine blessings ahead of the election. "Sought blessings of Hanumanji at famous Hanuman temple at Connaught Place. Bhagwanji said 'You are doing good work. Continue serving people like this. Leave the outcome to me, all will be fine,'" Kejriwal tweeted.

Tiwari, who visited the famous Chhattarpur and Kalkaji temples, said: "I prayed for the happiness of the people of Delhi and also sought blessings of the goddesses to enable people to cast their vote judiciously."