

PM, Sonia, Rahul head to Jammu and Kashmir for campaigning

Intensifying its campaign in Jammu and Kashmir, the Congress will send Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, party chief Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul to woo voters in the remaining five phases of the ongoing elections.

Star campaigner Rahul Gandhi arrives in the state Friday for meetings both in the Kashmir valley and in the Jammu region. The Lok Sabha MP, who will be campaigning here for the first time, will address his first meeting in Tangdhar in Karnah constituency of Kupwara district in the valley; he will later fly down to Udhampur.

'We have put up a strong candidate in Karnah (retired deputy commissioner Sheikh Yasin) and Rahul Gandhi's visit would be a great boost to him,' said state Congress chief Saifuddin Soz.

Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi arrives Dec 3 to canvass for votes in Uri in the valley and in the mountain locked Doda district of Jammu region, added Pradesh Congress Committee spokesperson Ravinder Sharma.

In the second week of December comes the prime minister to rally voters for the sixth and seventh phases.

Congress leaders say they are enthused by the large turnout of voters in the first two rounds of the seven phased elections that end Dec 24. The first two rounds saw voting percentages of above 60 percent.

According to them, the Amarnath land row that had put the Congress party and the government in the dock, resulting in the chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad resigning on July 7, was finding no resonance.

The two-month agitation over land being allotted for pilgrims to the Amarnath cave had ranged Hindu majority Jammu against Muslim dominated Kashmir.

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