

## Indefatigable Lalu campaigns on fractured leg in Jharkhand

He may be hobbling on a fractured leg but Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad is campaigning energetically in the run-up to the Jharkhand assembly polls, wooing voters and ensuring that the break with the Congress does not affect his party's electoral chances.

The indefatigable Lalu Prasad is addressing three to five public meetings a day, notwithstanding the hairline fracture he suffered last week when the dais he was on collapsed in Bihar's Arrah district.

With a stick for support, the former railway minister, who has temporarily shifted base to Ranchi, campaigns all over the state but is back here at night. He is undergoing treatment at a private nursing home here.

The focus in his tireless campaigns through the state is rising prices and the Maoist trouble. However, he steers clear of the Madhu Koda controversy -- the former Jharkhand chief minister is at the centre of a Rs.2,500 crore money laundering scam.

'When I was in power, potatoes were Rs.2 per kilo. It is now Rs.25. If you want to eat potatoes, vote for Lalu,' the RJD chief said at a public meeting in Dhanbad Wednesday.

He has also been asking Maoist rebels to join mainstream society.

The RJD, Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and the Left have joined hands to fight the Jharkhand polls beginning Nov 25.

After the RJD's dismal performance in the Lok Sabha elections in Bihar and Jharkhand, Lalu Prasad tried to cement an alliance with the Congress. He was, however, snubbed with the Congress tying up with old Bharatiya Janata Party man Babulal Marandi's Jharkhand Vikas Morcha-Prajanatantrik (JVM-P).

The picture became clear last week when Lalu Prasad said in Bihar: 'The RJD will not join hands with the Congress in the next assembly polls.'

Paswan is also camping in Jharkhand, hoping to make an electoral dent in the state.

The Jharkhand assembly polls are being held over five rounds. Counting of votes will take place on Dec 23.

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