



‘Let forensics prove Rahul Gandhi’s claims’

The New Indian Express Editorial Director **Prabhu Chawla**, in a freewheeling interview on Sachchi Baat with **Rajnath Singh**, former president of BJP.

What’s your role now?

I’m an ordinary BJP cadre.

People call you *kisan neta*...

If there is any issue affecting the farmers, I try to do as much work as possible in their interest.

No *kisan neta* has become India’s PM...

Lal Bahadur Shastri?

He was not a *kisan neta*, he just coined a slogan *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan*.

He worked for the people, and was the first politician to recognise the need for securing our borders, that is why he had *Jai Jawan* in the slogan. He also said that to develop the country, farmers’ conditions should improve, hence *Jai Kisan*.

BJP was wiped out in the recent assembly polls.

The states in which the elections were recently held are in parts of India where BJP does not have much influence. Earlier we didn’t even have one seat in those states. Still, in Assam our tally improved in the last elections—BJP won 10 assembly seats.

Now that’s down to five.

Yes, primarily due to large infiltration of Bangladeshis, who were given wholehearted support by the Congress government.

There were more leaders visiting Assam than number of party workers there. Responsibility

for debacle in 810 seats over five states—party workers or ‘high flying’ leaders?

Nobody is responsible for this. I only accept we had no influence in those states, and were failed to create one till now. But we will struggle to win the confidence of the common people there.

In UP, Rahul Gandhi (RG) won the first round by highlighting brutal treatment of people by the state.

RG said he’d sit on an indefinite *dharna* till his demands are met. But lifting of Section 144 just before his visit was a conspiracy by the BSP and Congress. After he left, it was imposed again. He returned the evening.

RG challenged you, and made public photos and videos of atrocities.

He went there after the clashes. Farmers have been treated unfairly and targeted but let forensics prove RG’s claims. Until I have proof, I won’t allege anything.

RG changed agenda of UP politics.

Who says that? We held five massive rallies in UP recently, the biggest in the state, bigger than Congress can ever do. Politically, the Congress has been dead in UP for a long time.

They have 20 MPs in UP, you have only 10.

Their tally has reduced in Kerala where they won only 35 seats, while CPI-M won 45. In West Bengal, had there been no Mamata, Congress would have been wiped out.