

In Chandni Chowk, Cong & BJP have a hill to climb

ANANYATI WARI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 25

WITH THE AAP government's free electricity and water schemes touching thousands of voters in the Chandni Chowk Assembly constituency, Congress candidate Alka Lamba (44) and BJP's Suman Gupta (63) have their task cut out. The AAP has fielded Parlad Sawhney (69).

A constituency of around 1.13 lakh people, Chandni Chowk was won by the then Congress leader Sawhney four times in a row be-

tween 1998 and 2013. In 2015, he lost to Lamba, who fought on an AAP ticket. Lamba shifted to the Congress in October last year — and Sawhney left Congress to join AAP the same month.

No talk of politics in the constituency is untouched by the government's subsidy schemes. A BJP supporter on the national stage, Bjender Sharma (62), a resident of Vaidwara, said, "Everyone wants free electricity and water. This gives AAP a clear

edge."

His views were echoed by Shravan Arora (72), a resident of Nayi Sadak, and Mohammad Iqbal (56), a restaurant owner. "They are working for the poor," Iqbal said about the AAP, adding that Congress's support to the anti-CAA/NRC protests may not have an impact on state elections.

Mohammad Parvez (50), a shoe shop owner, said Sawhney, by virtue of being a four-time MLA, enjoys goodwill

in the area.

Sawhney told *The Indian Express*, "Muslims won't leave Kejriwal because they need to fight the BJP and RSS. The poor man won't leave Kejriwal because Rs 5,000-7,000 is coming to his pocket due to free electricity and water. How will any other party come to power?"

On his exit from the Congress, he said, "In Delhi, Congress has no name anymore. All the bigwigs who usually fight elections said they won't contest. Congress's very existence is waning."

BJP's Suman Gupta, who con-

tested in 2013 and 2015, said, "Lamba left AAP to join the Congress, and Sawhney left Congress to join AAP. Both are essentially Congress members." On the BJP's policies, he said, "We have completed the ISBT station and many others projects... We will work for development."

Lamba, when contacted, said: "There are many communities in Chandni Chowk — a minority belt in Jama Masjid, the bastis, Civil Lines, Brahmins, Jains and Baniyas. Perhaps across Delhi, Kejriwal may win, but in Chandni Chowk, Alka Lamba will win."



FROM THE
GROUND
CHANDNI CHOWK



MANY SAY WATER SUPPLY HAS IMPROVED

Roads dug up, sewer lines a mess: Rural Delhi has development on mind

SHIVAM PATEL & ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

THE CENTRE of Bankner village in Narela constituency was bustling with activity around noon Saturday, with party members busy checking voter lists on stalls set along the side of the road as a crowd surrounded them. A few metres ahead, families and groups of women stepped out of a municipal school and a Delhi government school after voting.

"We are all labourers in my family. Netas come and go in the village and we keep making requests to them, but nothing changes here. Although everything is more or less fine, we need jobs. Our children are educated

but they are sitting at home," said Roshini (56) a resident of Bankner.

The problems faced by residents at this village is not too dissimilar to those in other rural belts in outer regions of North West Delhi. Most people in these areas said they voted keeping in mind these problems and for parties that will help solve them.

Sumil Locham (21) said, "Most roads in the village are either dug up or filled with pot-holes. There was a plan for a Metro line to reach here as well but it never took off. There are also no hospitals here, we go to Rohini or Jahangirpuri for treatment."

Water supply was an issue in Bankner until a few months ago, locals said, but has been solved now. Similarly in Gheva village, which



falls under the Mundka constituency, piped water supply would come for half an hour every third day, but has become regular since August last year, said Poonam (37), a resident.

The big problem here, though, is that there is either an incomplete or improper sewage system. Lalit Rana (26) a resident said, "Sewage from the village goes to two ponds here, which is then transported somewhere else through a pipeline. But even then we can see that there has been development. Our big problem with the water supply is now over."

At West Delhi's Najafgarh, Saturday.
The constituency saw mixed support for AAP and BJP. *Express*

Villages in West Delhi's Najafgarh throw up a more complex picture and a mixed support base for both AAP and BJP, with the latter largely getting votes for national issues and the narrative put forward by its leaders on the anti-citizenship law protests.

Raj Kumar (64), a farmer from Dariyapur Khurd, said, "Kejriwal is doing a lot of work for the poor in health, education, water and electricity. When our crops were damaged by hail, the AAP government gave Rs 14,000 compensation."

In Dhansa village, Ram Kumar (55), who works in a printing press, said, "Najafgarh dam has not been built. No one has done any work here... The BJP has been raising important issues such as Shaheen Bagh, Jamia (protests),..."

In Chhatarpur, it's AAP's work versus BJP's history

ANANYATI WARI

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

A CONSTITUENCY that was carved out in 2008 and has elected an MLA each from the BJP, Congress and AAP since, South Delhi's Chhatarpur is an area where allegiances have changed thrice.

The area is a mix of urban villages, posh farmhouses, unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters. Those who live in JJ clusters and the unauthorised colonies have expressed appreciation for the work done by the AAP, but many villagers continue to be unmoved from their traditional stance of voting for the BJP.

An area dominated by *gujjar* voters, the villages that are part of Chhatarpur have brought the BJP to power thrice since 1993.

In Jaunapur village, BJP remains a string contender because of its central leadership. Satpal Ambavata (48) a kirana store owner, said, "I really like Modi, and that's it."

Between 1993 and 2008, the area was part of the Mehrauli constituency. After delimitation in 2008, close to 90% of what was earlier the Mehrauli constituency comprised the Chhatarpur constituency.

And while the BJP has traditionally held sway in the area, AAP MLA Kartar Singh Tanwar is a popular choice, especially in the JJ clusters and unauthorised colonies. He is up against three-time BJP MLA Brahm Singh Tanwar and Satish Lohia from Congress.

At the Sambhav Bapu JJ cluster colony,



The constituency is a mix of urban villages, posh farmhouses, unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters

owner of a food shop and head of the area Aman committee Mohammad Younis (65) said, "Tanwar stopped demolition of the JJ colony. No other MLA has been like that. He has done a lot here — made the roads, improved water supply, given electricity for free, and established schools."

Ritik Nayak (19), who grew up in Shanti Colony, said the schools in the area had seen a lot of improvement. "I have seen schools improve in front of me. Earlier, kids would be running around, there was no discipline, the building crumbling. Now, there is cleanliness, technology and students are better off. I love Modi ji, but for CM, I will vote for Kejriwal," he said.

IN MANIFESTO: FOCUS ON POLLUTION, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Cong borrows AAP's power subsidy scheme, promises 300 units free

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 2

TAKING A leaf out of the Aam Aadmi Party's power subsidy scheme, the Congress has promised to provide subsidised electricity up to 600 units, with free electricity for those consuming up to 300 units.

Launching the Delhi Assembly poll manifesto at the party's headquarters on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg on Sunday, DPCC president Subhash Chopra said, "We will make electricity free till 300 units. From 300-400 units, we will give a discount of 50%, for 400-500 units it will be 30%, and for 500-600 units, there will be a 25% discount."

Under the AAP-led Delhi's government power subsidy scheme, those consuming less than 200 units a month get a zero electricity bill. Those using between 201 and 400 units per month get a 50% subsidy.

The Congress also released a green manifesto, dedicated entirely to environmental issues, which promised to allocate 25% of the budget towards combating pollution and make Delhi India's first electric vehicle city.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which the Congress has been actively opposing, also featured in the manifesto, with the party saying it will move the Supreme Court and challenge its constitutional validity.

Congress leader and manifesto committee chairman Ajay Maken said, "The BJP is trying to communalise and polarise the elections. By February 21, we will approach the SC and challenge the constitutional validity of the CAA under Article 131. In Delhi, we will not implement the proposed NRC nor the NPR in this form. The elections should be on



Gowda, Maken, Chopra and Sharma at the manifesto launch Sunday. Abhinav Saha

issues of Delhi, not anything else."

Other promises that featured in the 'green manifesto' include procuring 15,000 e-buses and building necessary infrastructure for depots; increasing green cover to 30%; giving Metro fares subsidies to students; targeted dust management; and creating a 'rice stubble to energy fund' to establish stubble crushing power plants.

"In the last five years, thousands of people died due to respiratory diseases caused by pollution, and I blame the Kejriwal government for this. We will allocate 25% of the budget to control pollution," said Chopra.

MP Rajeev Gowda, convenor of the manifesto committee, highlighted three initiatives that the Congress will undertake for development of the youth and job creation: the 'Rajiv Gandhi Internship Program' to offer opportunities to young graduates; a Rs

5,000-crore fund for start-ups called Yaari Startup Incubation Fund; and a Rs 1,000 crore corpus for Homi Bhabha Research Fund to encourage research.

"These three initiatives tell you the kind of transformative impact that the Delhi Congress envisions on the potential of our youth. We will transform our youth into world-class professionals, researchers and start-up entrepreneurs," he said.

Other initiatives they promise to undertake are the 'Sheila Pension Yojana', under which Rs 5,000 per month will be given to senior citizens, persons with disabilities and transgender people without any income; building 10 super-specialty hospitals in Delhi in the next five years; a Yuva Swabhiman Yojana or unemployment allowance for graduates at Rs 5,000 per month and Rs 7,500 per month for postgraduates.

THE PROMISES

- 30 paise cashback per litre of water saved from 20,000 free litres provided to each household
- Cash rebate for households conserving electricity, at a rate of Rs 3 per unit up to a maximum of Rs 500 per consumer
- Free education from nursery to PhD levels for women
- Subsidised Metro fares for students
- Discounted coaching for EWS students in higher education
- 350 sq ft flat for those living in unauthorised colonies — rental or owners — at the same place

Hitting out at AAP's policies, Chopra said, "The AAP has not used 40% of its budget allocated to education and health."

On the electricity subsidy, Maken said: "Punjab gives Rs 7,500 crore in electricity subsidy — three times that of Delhi. The way we did it successfully in Punjab, we will do it in Delhi too." He added that electricity will be given at subsidised rates for non-polluting industries to draw them into Delhi.

He also said that instead of the subsidies going to private companies (discoms) like the AAP government initiated, the Congress will give it to the people through direct benefit transfer method.

CM SAYS BJP MPs PAINTING INCOMPLETE PICTURE

AAP and BJP in classroom warfare

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

With BJP MPs putting out videos to show where Delhi government schools fall short and AAP rebutting the party's claims, *The Indian Express* visited six schools at the centre of the political tussle

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday accused BJP MPs of releasing photos and videos of abandoned school buildings which are up for demolition, and painting an incomplete picture of the condition of Delhi government schools.

On Monday, Delhi Lok Sabha MPs had visited some schools in different parts of the city to "puncture" Aam Aadmi Party's narrative that the Delhi government improved facilities since coming to power in 2015.

"Out of 1,024 government schools in Delhi, BJP found only eight schools with some deficiencies. I want to congratulate all the children of Delhi. Congratulations to the parents and teachers that you have passed such a difficult exam, but even those (deficiencies) turned out to be false," Kejriwal said.

The MPs, including Gautam Gambhir, Hans Raj Hans, Manoj Tiwari, Meenakshi Lekhi and Ramesh Bidhuri, had visited schools and alleged, in videos put up on Twitter, that facilities were poor. Tiwari spoke to students studying in a school in Khajuri Khas, who said they are taught for only two hours a day.

Gambhir had visited the Government Girls/Boys Senior Secondary School in Khichdipur and shared the video of dilapidated rooms and dirty toilets. Education Minister Manish Sisodia said the particular school had been shifted to another building in October last year, and students were shifted to a temporary campus till the new building is rebuilt. A notice stating this was also pasted on the school gate. "I have the demolition orders of this school and the public notice has also been placed at the gate of the school. When Gautam Gambhir went to make a video of this school, he must have seen this truth. But he chose not to read it," said Sisodia.

Gambhir tweeted later: "So 'Mr. Education' is saying that this school became a wreck in three months? For five years it was a model school and right before elections it was shut down!"

Sisodia also said that Parvesh Sahib Singh had tweeted a video of a school in Matiala where the old building is opposite the new one. "He very carefully made sure not to show the new building," he said. He also alleged that North West Delhi MP Hans Raj Hans



GOVERNMENT BOYS SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, PREM NAGAR (PATEL NAGAR),
photos of which were tweeted by Chandni Chowk MP Harsh Vardhan

When *The Indian Express* visited the school, it found that the administration is in the process of constructing a new building for the school, which runs in two shifts. There are around 2,200 students in the morning shift and around 2,000 students in the evening shift, who study from class VI to XII.

A series of photographs shared by the Union Health Minister on Twitter show a dislocated drain, broken table and chairs, dirty washroom and a field filled with garbage.

However, school vice-principal R P Meena said the minister did not take photos of the

new building. Recently, the old building housing 10 classrooms and a hall was demolished to make space for the new building. The school has started makeshift classrooms under a tent in another part of the campus for students.

"We have two other new buildings that are already functional. The main building will be demolished in a few months and the students will have a newly constructed building soon. The ground filled with garbage and debris is the same place where the building was dismantled," said Meena. — **ASTHA SAXENA**



SARVODAYA VIDYALAYA, MANGOLPURI,



SARVODAYA BAL VIDYALAYA RAILWAY COLONY, TUGHLAKABAD,
visited by South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri

On Monday, Bidhuri had shared pictures from the school of benches in porta cabin structures and dilapidated furniture pushed to a corner in a room. On Tuesday, *The Indian Express* found that a section of students are studying in 12 porta cabin structures as a block of the school has been demolished to construct a new building, which is in fact nearing completion.

The head of school said a structure of 60 rooms had been demolished a year ago to construct 52 new rooms. The school has 3,400 students. "It's a temporary arrangement. A four-storey tall building with 10 labs has been

built, it should be ready in a month. An alternative has to be given to children whose classrooms have been demolished," he said.

He added that he asked the MP to also take photos of the new construction but was told to "not do politics". This is the second phase of reconstruction in the school. Ninety rooms had been completed in the first phase in 2016 and are in use now. The HoS added that pictures of dilapidated rooms are of a block of the school — where around 450 children study — slated for the third phase of demolition and construction. — **SUKRITA BARUAH**

RAJKIYA SARVODAYA KANYA VIDYALAYA, MATIALA,
visited by West Delhi MP Parvesh Sahib Singh

Singh had visited the school on Monday and claimed it was deemed dangerous by the Public Works Department and liable to fall any minute. Head of School HR Meena said it is awaiting a physical assessment by the PWD. "The department has said it is dangerous based on an assessment from outside. If it is deemed dangerous after a physical assessment we may have to demolish it... We have shut some classes where we felt there was a prob-

lem. Others are being used. The situation is not that bad. Why would we keep children there if the condition was like that?" Meena said.

New classrooms were built across the building in 2017, but Meena said both buildings were being used to accommodate all students. Some classrooms in the old building have damp walls with paint peeling off, and at least one did not have windows. — **SHIVAM PATEL**

