

In its four years, the [Narendra Modi](#) government has shown a penchant for opening too many battlefronts at the same time. To its long list of detractors, the government has now added India's bureaucracy, that too in an election year, with its move to open doors for [lateral entry](#) of private sector professionals to 10 joint secretary-level bureaucratic posts.

In the 14 months since it posted a famous win in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls in March 2017, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made all opposition parties unite by consistently talking of a 'vipaksh mukt Bharat', or how it planned to rid India of any opposition to Modi and Amit Shah-led BJP.

The unleashing of probe agencies on not just Congress leaders, but those from other parties as well, and the general lack of accommodation shown by the BJP leadership to its political opponents, have spurred Opposition torchbearers to make common cause of unitedly fighting to remove Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah. The BJP leadership has also left its allies upset.

The Telugu Desam Party has quit the BJP-led NDA alliance and Bihar's Rashtriya Lok Samata Party, led by Upendra Kushwaha, is on the brink of a divorce. The Shiv Sena continues to keep the BJP on tenterhooks.

The [Modi government](#) has also stopped several non-governmental organisations from receiving foreign funds. Many in industry and big business are unhappy with his administration. The government has not delivered on promise of several of the reforms it had promised. Demonetisation and goods and services tax have hurt businesses, as have its circulars on cow slaughter.

The bureaucracy is peeved by Modi government's move to open its doors to private skilled professionals at the joint secretary level. Politicians, including those of BJP, have either criticised the move or cautioned the government to be careful about how he goes about recruiting lateral entrants. With Lok Sabha [elections](#) barely a year away, the [Modi government](#) has taken a huge risk by ruffling the feathers of the bureaucracy and opening itself to accusations of caste bias in recruitment.

BJP's Lok Sabha MP Udit Raj tweeted on Sunday evening: "While selecting them (the joint secretaries) the rule of reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes should be applied. Now these (communities) have also reached the competence level in all fields."

Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said [Modi government](#) was trying to subvert SC, ST and OBC reservations in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), just as it has done the same for university professors "through similar devious methods". He said the government wants to fill IAS ranks with "Sanghis and undermine reservation too, in the BJP's last few months in office".

It could be that the Modi government might surprise its detractors by reserving five of the 10 posts for professionals from SC, ST and OBC sections. But a failure to do so would lead to a political backlash.

The Modi government has faced much flak since March 20 Supreme Court order that was seen to have diluted the SC/ST prevention of atrocities law. On Monday, a delegation of

Andhra Pradesh ministers and legislators submitted met President Ram Nath Kovind and sought his intervention to protect the rights of the SCs and STs.

N Chandrababu Naidu-led Andhra Pradesh government is run by the Telugu Desam Party, which had in March severed its ties with the BJP-led [National](#) Democratic Alliance. [Elections](#) to the Andhra Pradesh assembly will coincide with the Lok Sabha [elections](#) in 2019, and the issue of SCs and STs is likely to be emotive.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the government should put more details in the public domain about its proposal. He said there are serious misgivings about the government's advertisement.

Opposition parties view the move as an effort to build a “committed bureaucracy” akin to Indira Gandhi government’s plans during the Emergency of putting in place a “committed judiciary”.

The Modi government will need to fight a battle within the bureaucratic system, particularly with the IAS lobby, which is resistant to the idea, and at a time when it would need IAS officers to take its message of last four years of its achievements to the people in the run up to the 2019 polls.

The 2019 battle is already becoming everybody versus Modi and Shah. The BJP hopes 2019 will be an election similar to the 1971 Lok Sabha polls, where Indira Gandhi defeated not just the opposition, but also detractors within her own party.

But 2019 could become an election similar to 1977, where most political parties came together to defeat the Indira Gandhi-led Congress.