

IN FIFTH GEAR

Oppn efforts to fight Modi seems like a meek challenge

It will be four years since Narendra Modi took oath as the Prime Minister of India. While most political pundits had predicted that the Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party would emerge victorious in 2014 polls, no one in their wildest of dreams had thought the party would get simple majority in Lok Sabha on its own. The mandate that the party received was almost entirely due to the leadership of Modi who promised he would change the face of the governance if he was voted to power. And changed the face he did. Under Modi, the behemoth that Indian Red Tape is, started moving. Modi's critics may not agree, but the number of Jan Dhan accounts that were opened in the last four years are a testimony that even the banks that were notoriously famous for not serving the poor, had swung into action. Direct Benefits Transfer, something that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance had only conceptualised, was brought to fruition during Modi's regime. This has indeed saved thousands of crores in the last four years, and more importantly, has closed the tap of corruption for those who had been milking the system and in effect, destroying it. There has been much criticism of this government over demonetisation and GST, but they need to be seen as the boldest steps of a leader who is not afraid of risking alienation of the party base. There was a time when BJP was seen as the baniya party. Both these steps hurt the trader class the most. And yet, Modi saw how these two steps would bring in transparency in a system that thrives on unaccountability. No doubt it hurt a few, but the benefits are going to be long term. Through GST, a mechanism is now in place that has simplified tax structure in the country. Demonetisation sent out a strong message to the black money hoarders who lost their ill-gotten wealth and will now think a thousand times. The fact that the BJP won almost all state elections after the roll-out of demonetisation and GST speaks volumes about their acceptance by the people. Modi's foreign tours became a subject of ridicule for the Opposition, but one must understand that it achieved the hard-sell of India, much needed in the wake of strong leaderships around the world. Modi's unique style put India on the world map and even got the US to rethink her policy in the Indian subcontinent. China met her match in Doklam and had to retreat in the face of a firm and strong India. Surgical strikes against Pakistan sent the message to the mischievous neighbour that they will get tit for tat. As the Modi-led government enters its fifth and final year of this term, Opposition leaders have realised they cannot take on the Modi might. A few bypoll victories and fractured mandate in Karnataka have made a few of them believe they can defeat BJP if they joined hands. What the Opposition cannot see is that one swallow does not make a summer.