

face to face

RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE, I&B minister

'The BJP is against corruption; it will be a black versus white fight in 2019'

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NEW DELHI: Rajyavardhan Rathore, who holds charge of the information and broadcasting ministry and the ministry of youth affairs and sports, brushes aside criticism and allegations levelled against the BJP-led NDA government as "vague" statements that do not stand up to scrutiny. He says the work accomplished by the government in the past four years is proof of promises delivered through speed and a new work ethic. In an interview to HT, Rathore said the 2019 general elections will be a fight of "black versus white". Edited excerpts:



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What are the major accomplishments of this government?

We have worked on core development areas with a high quality of governance, with an objective of transforming this country. So, there are three aspects: development; better governance; and methods for transforming the country.

Our policies have been visionary; our execution of these policies has been factually proven by the number of lives touched.

In the last four years, it is the same country, but there has been a different impact globally. It is the same government officers, but the execution of work has been similar to the private sector. The word sarkari had become synonymous for lack of output. The work ethic has changed.

Can you point out specifics?

We have worked on infrastructure, on women's issues, on involving the youth; we have increased the speed of getting work done. Our standing in global community is very high, we have worked on that; we have worked with farmers.

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The Opposition has accused the government of failing to find solutions to agrarian crisis. The recent hike in petroleum prices is also being flagged as another failure.

Their accusations are vague. We are arguing with someone who humiliated the country by the scams in the Commonwealth Games, who did nothing for modernisation of the armed forces in 10 years. We are comparing with those who never took military action against a neighbouring country that sponsored terrorism in our country.

...Petrol price?

These issues are raised by the Opposition parties, but in

states ruled by them, they do not roll back the excise duty and set an example. When the Centre talks of bringing petrol and diesel under Goods and Services Tax (GST), they oppose it.

Is the BJP equipped to take on a combined Opposition in 2019?

This is the second time the opposition has come together.

First time it was during Emergency; now it is for a fight against a good, clean government. The corrupt parties have put aside their ideology and their differences to come together.

It will be a black versus white fight in 2019. The BJP is against black money and corruption; just as the numbers of those who filed their income tax returns has gone up in four years, when there is an honest government in place, clean people join in.

Is the ministry pursuing regulation of websites?

We believe in self-regulation of all mediums and we trust the consumer of news to be able to tell right from wrong.