

Modi the strong favorite as April voting date set

NEW DELHI | India over the weekend announced its 6-week-long general elections will start on April 19, with most surveys predicting a victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

Voting in the world's largest democracy will stretch over seven phases, with different states voting at different times and results will be announced on June 4. Over 970 million voters — more than 10% of the world's population — will elect 543 members for the lower house of Parliament for a term of five years.

Mr. Modi, who is seeking a third consecutive term, faces little challenge as the main opposition alliance of over two dozen regional parties led by the Indian National Congress party appears to be cracking, riven by rivalries, political defections and ideological clashes.

— *Associated Press*