

Modi's failure provides a ray of hope

Published: January 13, 2026, 12:00 pm

I would rarely look to Indian prime minister Narendra Modi as a source for hope. But this morning, maybe I should.

It was widely expected that his ruling Bharatiya Janata party would win a landslide victory in the Indian general election, but it has not. It has fallen well short of a majority and will need a coalition to govern.

Why is that hopeful? There are at least three good reasons.

First, this is a major rejection of populist racism in India. Modi's government is profoundly, and deliberately, divisive on race issues. It is welcome that he has failed as a result.

Second, this is good for democracy. It shows that the power of populists can be challenged.

Third, it shows that forecasts of landslides can be inaccurate. We have to live in hope that this is also true in the UK.

Modi will, unfortunately, stay in power. He has a readily available coalition partner who will guarantee that happens. But, his failure is welcome, nonetheless. If enough people reject populism it can be held at bay.