

Grand Alliance Against People of India: PM



Silvassa: PM Narendra Modi on Saturday hit out at the proposed *mahagathbandhan* or grand alliance of opposition parties, saying it is a combine of those whom he had prevented from "looting" India and it is not against him but people of the country.

He took a dig at the rally organised by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, without taking her name, saying the BJP has only one MLA in the state, "but still they're so afraid of us that they are saying *bachao*".

"The *mahagathbandhan* is not against Narendra Modi but people of India," he said at a function at Silvassa, after laying a foundation stone for a medical college. "My actions against corruption made some people angry as I prevented them from looting public money. They have formed the *mahagathbandhan*," Modi said, adding that these leaders have come together out of fear.

"When those involved in suffocating democracy talk of saving it, then people will say 'wah kya baat hai...'," he said mocking the parties opposing the BJP. —PTI

Modi Inaugurates L&T Guns Facility

Hazira: PM Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the armoured systems complex of Larsen and Toubro in Gujarat, the first private facility in the country where the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns will be manufactured.

L&T in 2017 won the ₹4,500-crore contract from the Ministry of Defence to supply 100 units of K9 Vajra-T 155 mm/52 calibre tracked self-propelled gun systems to the Army. —PTI

At Mamata Rally, Opposition Vows to Oust Modi Govt



(L-R) HD Kumaraswamy, Chandrababu Naidu, Farooq Abdullah, HD Deve Gowda, Mamata Banerjee, Mallikarjun Kharge, Sharad Pawar and Arvind Kejriwal at 'Brigade Samavesh' in Kolkata on Saturday. —PTI

Leaders from more than a dozen opposition parties came together at the rally in Kolkata on Saturday with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee taking centre stage and delivering her war cry: "Change the government at the Centre". "The BJP government has crossed its expiry date. We will have to fight together to make sure they are defeated," Banerjee told the crowd at the United India rally at the Brigade Parade Ground.

Addressing one of the main questions raised by the ruling BJP against the opposition unity, she said the issue of prime minister's post could be decided after the elections. The rally, which was meant to pitch her as a serious player in case of indecisive poll verdict, was attended by as many as 25 political leaders from different parts of the country.

Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi did not attend, but sent Mallikarjun Kharge and Abhishek Manu Singhvi — who read out a message from the party. BSP supremo Mayawati sent party general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra.

Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, Sharad Pawar (NCP) Akhilesh Yadav (SP), Farooq Abdullah

(National Conference), Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy and MK Stalin (DMK) were among the top leaders at the rally. Socialist leader Sharad Yadav, former Union ministers Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha, and BJP rebel Shatrughan Sinha also shared the dais.

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All the speakers called for a united fight against the Narendra Modi government in the Lok Sabha elections due in a few months. "Mamataji has taken an extraordinary initiative to stitch together the opposition parties. We will also hold such a meeting in Amravati and invite all to join," said Naidu. Stalin added, "Narendra Modi is scared of some people. Mamata Banerjee is one of them."

There was no dearth of optimism on stage, except for occasional voices of caution that any difference of opinion among the stakeholders would only benefit the BJP. "This is a Herculean task to forget differences and come together," said Deve Gowda.

Kharge said, "The destination is far away, the road is too difficult, whether our hearts meet or not, let's hold hands and march." —Our Political Bureau/Kolkata

HDFC Bank Q3 Net Profit Rises 20% to ₹5,586 Crore

Mumbai: HDFC Bank's net profit grew 20% in the third quarter ended December to ₹5,586 crore from ₹4,642 crore a year ago on the back of growth in net interest income (NII) and treasury gains, results announced on Saturday showed.

NII, which is the difference interest gained on loans and interest paid on deposits, grew by 22% to ₹12,577 crore from ₹10,314 crore a year ago, driven by loan growth of 24% and net interest margin (NIM) of 4.3%, the bank said.

Asset quality remained largely stable with gross non-

performing asset (GNPA) reporting a marginal increase to 1.38% in the December quarter, against 1.33% in the September quarter and 1.29% a year ago. Net NPA remained at 0.42%, a two basis point dip from year-ago quarter's 0.44%. One basis point is 0.01 percentage point. The bank's total provisions increased to ₹2,211 crore, a spike of 64% from last year's ₹1,351 crore. Total provisions included ₹1,451 crore of floating provisions. Total balance sheet size stood at ₹11.6 lakh crore as against ₹9.4 lakh crore in the corresponding period last year. —Our Bureau



US Spl Counsel Disputes Report Trump Told Lawyer to Lie

Washington: Special counsel Robert Mueller's office on Friday disputed a report in BuzzFeed News that President Donald Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen said Trump directed him to lie to Congress.

BuzzFeed, citing two unnamed law enforcement sources, said Cohen, who is going to prison for lying to Congress, told investigators working for Mueller that Trump had directed him to lie about efforts to build a skyscraper in Moscow while he was running for president.



"BuzzFeed's description of specific statements to the Special Counsel's Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen's Congressional testimony are not accurate," Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mueller's office, said in a rare statement from the special counsel. —Reuters

Swine Flu Death Toll Rises to 48 in Rajasthan

Jaipur: The death toll due to swine flu has reached 48 in Rajasthan, where more than 1,000 people have been tested positive for the H1N1 virus since January 1, authorities said on Saturday.

Two persons died in Jodhpur and Udaipur each, while one death occurred in Barmer, they said. With this, the number of total deaths in swine flu cases has increased to 48, according to a spokesperson of the medical and health department of Rajasthan.

Of the total 5,061 samples collected since January 1, 1,173 have been found positive, he said.

"The health minister has already issued directions for conducting door-to-door screening for patients," he added. —PTI

Let Pandya, Rahul Play While Probe is On: BCCI President to CoA

New Delhi: BCCI acting president CK Khanna on Saturday urged the Committee of Administrators (CoA) to lift the suspension on Hardik Pandya and KL Rahul for their much-criticised sexist remarks and refused to convene a special general meeting on the matter.

Khanna said calling the SGM to appoint an ombudsman to investigate the two players'

conduct, as demanded by board officials, wouldn't be right as the Supreme Court is due to take up the issue next week.



Pandya and Rahul have been suspended pending an inquiry for their sexist comments on a TV chat show.

"They made a mistake, and they have already been suspended and called back from

the series against Australia. They have also submitted an unconditional apology," Khanna wrote in a letter to the Committee of Administrators (CoA) running the BCCI. "I suggest that pending inquiry, we reinstate both the cricketers into the Indian squad immediately and allow them to join the team in New Zealand at the earliest," he added.

The CoA wants the Supreme Court to appoint an ombudsman to decide the fate of the

two players, who have already missed the ODI series against Australia and are set to sit out of the tour of New Zealand as well.

They have also been thoroughly lambasted for their comments on hooking up with multiple women and joking about it on the show.

Around 14 state units, mainly former BCCI president N Srinivasan's loyalists, had requested Khanna to convene an emergent SGM, which needs to be called in 10 days. —PTI