

— HEMANT SOREN

## Both parties to fight on 3 seats each, 1 seat jointly Cong, AAP may join hands today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

After weeks of dithering, the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are learnt to have agreed in principle to form a pre-poll alliance for the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi.



DESPITE OBJECTION by Delhi Congress chief Sheila Dikshit, the Congress agreed to enter into an arrangement with the AAP with a pre-condition that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party will not insist on an alliance in other states.

ty of city party workers — when asked about their opinion on the alliance proposal through the party's Shakti app — are said to have given their approval to the a tie-up with the AAP.

It is learnt that the party high command reconsidered its stand on alliance with the AAP after receiving a positive feedback from party workers.

Mr Chacko had publicly said that the alliance should happen, though he had added that the final call would be that of Mr Gandhi.

Interestingly, the change in party's stand is likely to leave Ms Dikshi, who recently took over as the city Congress chief, on a sticky wicket. She was the CM in Delhi when the AAP was formed in 2013 amid allegations of corruption in the city government.



BJP leader Mukul Roy with party leaders leave after a meeting with deputy election commissioner Sudeep Jain ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Kolkata on Saturday.

— PTI

## Cong names 5 in 1st list for N-E

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, MARCH 16

The Indian National Congress (INC) on Friday night released the first list of five candidates in Assam, two in Meghalaya, one each in Sikkim and Nagaland for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

The sitting MP Mr Gaurav Gogoi, Ms Sushmita Dev in Assam and Mr Vincent Pala in Meghalaya have been re-nominated from Kallabor, Silchar and Shillong Lok Sabha seats respectively.

The party has also decided to field former Meghalaya chief minister Mukul Sangma from Tura, the stronghold of former Lok Sabha Speaker late P.A. Sangma and his family. Late P.A. Sangma's daughter Agatha Sangma is the NPP candidate in the Tura seat. Sikkim Congress presi-

dent Bharat Basnett will be in the fray from the lone seat in the hill state, while K.L. Chishi will be the nominee from Nagaland.

In Assam, Congress has fielded Swarup Das from Karimganj, Sushanta Borgohain from Jorhat and former Union minister Paban Singh Ghatowar from Dibrugarh.

The first phase of Lok Sabha elections will take place on April 11.

Sources in the Congress party said that candidates for remaining nine seats in Assam, two in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur is expected to be announced on Saturday.

Informing that party was looking into prospect of existing candidates in the panel, sources said that Congress party was looking to nominate some new entrants as well.

## BIHAR 'Grand alliance to announce seat sharing tomorrow'

Patna, March 16: Seat sharing among constituents of the Opposition 'Mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance) in Bihar for Lok Sabha polls will be announced on Monday, Hindustani Awami Morcha (Secular) president Jitan Ram Manjhi said Saturday.

The announcement will come following another round of talks among the partners on Sunday, the former chief minister said.

On Thursday, Bihar Congress Campaign Committee chairman Akhilesh Prasad Singh had said the seat sharing would be declared on Sunday. "We (grand alliance) will announce our seat sharing for Lok Sabha polls in the state on March 18 at any cost," Mr Manjhi told reporters here after a meeting of his party's parliamentary board.

The 'Mahagathbandhan', as the grand alliance is called in local parlance, comprises old allies like the Congress and the RJD, besides new entrants such as Upendra Kushwaha's RLS, the HAM(S), Sharad Yadav's Loktantrik Janata Dal and the Vikashsheel Insaan Party, a fledgling outfit floated by former Bollywood set designer Mukesh Sahni.

"Two rounds of talks among the grand alliance partners have been held in Delhi and another round will be held in Patna tomorrow (Sunday)," Mr Manjhi said. An agreement has been virtually reached on the number of seats the HAM(S) would contest, Mr Manjhi said without divulging the details. He said his party wanted to contest in five Lok Sabha seats in Bihar.

— PTI

## Ayushman Bharat will benefit pvt firms: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

Launching a scathing attack on the NDA government's much hyped Ayushman Bharat or Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PMJAY), which promises health insurance cover to poor of upto ₹5 lakh, Congress alleged on Saturday that it is not for the common man but actually a "life-saver" for private insurance companies and hospitals.

Asserting that the government's claims about the success of the scheme are "fake and false," senior Congress leader Jaipur Ramesh said beneficiaries can avail treatment costing only up to ₹50,000 under this scheme on the premium of Rs 1,100 paid by the government. "It is not ₹5 lakh as promised by Modi; he has exaggerated it 10 times," the Congress leader alleged.

"The claim that 'Modicare' has provided each household insurance cover of ₹5 lakh is a huge fraud," he claimed.

He further said that 11 crore people across the country are already covered under respective



Congress supporters during a Parivartan Rally in Dehradun on Saturday.

— PTI

health insurance schemes of various states and the Centre's Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY).

RSBY was started by the Congress-led UPA government, Mr Ramesh added.

"10 crore people to be benefited under the Ayushman Bharat are not over and above the 11 crore beneficiaries who are already availing benefits," the senior Congress leader said, adding, "Modi is trying to take credit for various health schemes through Ayushman Bharat."

Emphasising that the Ayushman Bharat Yojana (ABY) or PMJAY, which is also described as 'Modicare,' is conceptual-

ly wrong, Mr Ramesh said: "It doesn't cover diabetes and high blood pressure, the two common ailments in India."

"Patients will not have access to adequate healthcare under PMJAY because it excludes outpatient treatment, which 87 per cent of ailing persons undergo. Outpatient treatment is a serious financial burden that accounted for 63 per cent of ₹4.955 spent by households out of their pockets on health in 2014," he said.

The country does not need health insurance that benefits private players but health assurance which helps common man, he added.

## Shah set to launch poster of Modi film

New Delhi, March 16: BJP president Amit Shah will release the second poster of upcoming film *PM Narendra Modi* on Monday here.

Directed by Omung Kumar and featuring actor Vivek Oberoi in the lead, the biographical drama on Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release countrywide on April 12. "This film is very close to my heart. The first poster received immense love and only one person could have taken this excited a notch higher and that is Mr Amit Shah. I am looking forward to the second poster launch," producer Sandip Singh said in a statement.

Critically-acclaimed actor Manoj Joshi is essaying the role of Shah in the film.

Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis along with Oberoi had unveiled the first look and poster of the film in January.

The film also features Darshan Kumar, Boman Irani, Prashant Narayanan, Zarina Wahab, Barkha Bisht Sengupta, Anjan Shrivastav, Rajendra Gupta and Akshat R Saluja in key roles. Suresh Oberoi, Anand Pandit and Acharya Manish are also serving as producers on the film.

— PTI

If Oppn makes any mistake, nobody knows whether there will be polls in future — Tejaswi Yadav, RJD leader

## SHORT TAKES PM only makes tall promises: Gehlot

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Saturday Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made false promises and had 'zero achievements' to highlight.

Addressing public meetings in Jamwa Ramgarh and Bhandreji, Gehlot alleged that Modi had failed to fulfil the promises he had made in the 2014 Lok Sabha election and took wrong decisions.

The senior Congress leader claimed that demonetisation and the hastily-implemented goods and services tax were among the decisions that did not benefit the people. The chief minister said the farmers and traders were disappointed with the Modi government.

## National security key issue in HP

Shimla: National security can become a major issue in the upcoming general election in Himachal Pradesh, where a good number of voters are either ex-servicemen or currently serving in the security forces. Most of these personnel can hold sway in at least three out of the state's four Lok Sabha seats — Kangra, Hamirpur and Mandi. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is raising the issue of the surgical and airstrikes carried out by the Modi government in its public meetings.

## SP fields BJP's Allahabad MP

Lucknow: The Samajwadi Party on Saturday decided to field sitting BJP MP from Allahabad Shyama Charan Gupta as its nominee for Banda Lok Sabha seat. Gupta, a leading business-man-turned-politician, was elected to the Lok Sabha from Banda parliamentary constituency in 2004 on a ticket of Samajwadi Party. He fought from Phulpur in the 2009 general election, losing to his Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) counterpart.

## TN CONG URGES RAHUL TO FIGHT FROM STATE

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Congress unit Saturday urged its national president Rahul Gandhi to contest from the southern state for the April 18 Lok Sabha elections, saying he was first proposed as the next Prime Minister from here by the DMK.

TNCC president K.S. Alagiri said besides contesting from Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, Mr Gandhi should also select a seat from Tamil Nadu as he cannot be perceived as belonging to just the northern state, but "is seen as an asset of the people of India." Referring to DMK president M.K. Stalin first proposing Mr Gandhi's name as the next Prime Minister in the event of the Opposition winning the Lok Sabha polls, Alagiri said the secular alliance cobbled up by the DMK leader had the full support of the people. "In this backdrop, on behalf of the state Congress unit and the people, I request Mr Rahul Gandhi to contest from any one of the Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu. I am sure the (DMK-led) Secular Progressive Alliance will extend grand support to this plea," Alagiri said in a statement. He said Mr Gandhi was "acceptable" by the people as a leader beyond religion and caste and therefore, cannot be considered as "belonging only to UP."

## 'PriGa entry will make no difference'

ARUNAV SINHA and SUBHASHIS MITTRA | DC  
LUCKNOW, MARCH 16

Asserting that Priyanka Gandhi's entry into politics will make "no difference" to the BJP's prospects in the Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, chief minister Yogi Adityanath Saturday dubbed it an "internal matter" of that party.

He also dismissed as "false alarm" the SP-BSP alliance and claimed that it was already embroiled in dispute.

"The Congress has made her (Priyanka) the party general secretary (in-charge of eastern UP) this time. It is an internal matter of that party as to how it will utilise her services. Earlier too, she had campaigned for the Congress. And this time too she is the party's campaigner and it will make no difference (to the BJP)," he told PTI in his first interview after announcement of the Lok Sabha poll schedule on Sunday.

Asked as to what extent the SP-BSP alliance could dent the BJP's prospects in the hustings, Adityanath said, "The fledgling SP-BSP alliance is already embroiled in dispute." He was referring to reports of hard bargaining between the two parties over certain seats.

"(Alliance) is nothing but a 'haaua' (false alarm)," the chief minister said in his exclusive



Yogi Adityanath

UP CM also dismissed as "false alarm" the SP-BSP alliance and claimed that it was already embroiled in dispute.

interview during which he touched upon various key issues including the IAF airstrikes on terror camps in Pakistan and Ram temple.

The 46-year-old saffron-robed monk-turned-politician said in general elections state-level local issues hardly matter. "People will vote for that person and party in whose hands the country is safe, secure and prosperous," he said, adding the voters know this very well. "An effort is being made to whip up an unnecessary confusion and 'haaua'," the BJP hardliner said, adding the current polls will present a "golden opportunity" for his party, which will come out with flying colours.

Amul advertisement featuring various ice cream products: Sweetheart, Tricone Butterscotch, Frostik, Punjabi Kulfi, Sugar Free Shahi Anjir, EPIC Choco Almond, Cake Magic Neapolitan, Fruit 'N' Nut Fantasy Tub, and Afghan Dry Fruit. Includes prices and promotional text like "NEW" and "MPP (incl. of all taxes). Conditions apply".