

Polling in five states in April-May

NEW DELHI, March 4 (IANS): Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will be held in April and May, Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi announced on Friday.

The Model Code of Conduct comes into effect immediately from now onwards.

While Assam will have a two-phase election on April 4 and 11, West Bengal will see balloting on seven dates: April 4, 11, 17, 21, 25 and 30 and May 5.

In contrast, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry will see polling on a single day: May 16. Votes polled in all five states will be counted on May 19, Zaidi told media persons here.

"The Model Code of Conduct comes into existence with immediate effect in all the poll-bound states," he said.

The none of the above (NOTA) option will now have a symbol on the electronic voting machines (EVMs) for the upcoming assembly elections.

"For the first time, the commission has provided a new symbol, designed by National Institute of Design (NID), for the NOTA option. This new symbol will facilitate the voters in casting their vote," he said.

In order to facilitate the electors in identifying the candidates, the commission has prescribed an additional measure by way of adding provision for printing the photograph of candidate also on the ballot to be displayed on the EVM and on postal ballot papers.

"This will also take care of likely confusion among candidates with same or similar names contest from the same constituency. For this purpose, the candidates are required to submit to the returning officer, their recent stamp-size photograph as per specifications laid down by the commission," Zaidi said.

Many of the poll-bound states will be using the photograph of the candidates on the ballot papers for the first time.

The commission has also taken various measures to ensure free and fair elections by creating an atmosphere in which each elector is able to access the polling station, without being obstructed or being unduly influenced or intimidated by anybody.

"Based on the assessment of the ground situation, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and State Armed Police (SAP) drawn from other States will be deployed during these elections," he said.

State is seeking 40 Assembly seats for providing LT reservation: CM

O.P. CHETTRI

JORETHANG, March 4: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Friday said the SDF government wants the Sikkim Legislative Assembly to be expanded to 40 seats for resolving the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue.

"In these few months, people are confused that whether our government will advocate seat reservation for the Limboo-Tamang communities from within the existing 32 Assembly seats or after increasing the Assembly seats to 40. Our government has never lied to the people and it has been clearly mentioned in our party's election manifesto and also in Burman Commission report that the State government will advocate seats for the Limboo-Tamang communities with increase of 40 seats in the Assembly," said the Chief Minister.

Chamling was addressing the 24th SDF foundation day function at Jorethang organized for the constituencies of south and west districts.

The ruling SDF legislator party has already adopted a resolution seeking expansion of the Assembly to 40 seats based on the Burman Commission report so five seats can be accommodated for Limboo and Tamang communities.

The reiteration of this stand by the Chief Minister comes despite various Limboo and Tamang groups demanding that the two communities are given reservation from the existing 32 seats. They are seeking five seats from the 17 general seats of the 32-seater Assembly.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by his wife Tika Maya Chamling, cabinet ministers and senior party leaders at the Jorethang function attended by a large number of SDF workers.

In his address, Chamling mentioned that the present impasse on Limboo-Tamang seats would have never come since Sikkim could have become a tribal State in 1976 itself. However, the past governments committed a historical mistake that time, he said.



Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, accompanied by his wife Tika Maya Chamling, cuts the celebratory cake during the 24th SDF foundation day programme at Jorethang. Also seen in the picture is Speaker K.N. Rai. SE Pic

"It is our government that brought tribal status to the Limboo-Tamang communities

and we will always stand for their rights. Seat reservation is their constitutional right but it

is a Central matter," said Chamling. He informed about the high powered committee

constituted by the State government on the tribal seat matter.

The committee will make a report and bring it to the

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DARJEELING DISTRICT TMC CANDIDATES



Darjeeling: Sardha Subba Kurseong; Shanta Chettri Kalimpong; Harka Bahadur Chettri Siliguri; Bhaichung Bhutia Matigara-Naxalbari; Amar Sinha Phansidewa; Carolus Lakra

POLLING DAY: APRIL 21

Bhaichung Bhutia is TMC candidate from Siliguri

Former Indian football captain Bhaichung Bhutia (in SE file picture) was announced as the TMC candidate from Siliguri constituency for the West Bengal Assembly elections 2016.

TMC president and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday released the party candidates for the 294 seats of the West Bengal Assembly within an hour of the election schedule being declared by the Election Commission of India.

Former GNLF leader Shanta Chettri is the TMC candidate from Kurseong constituency while JAP president and incumbent MLA Harka Bahadur Chettri will contest from Kalimpong seat on a TMC ticket.

The Darjeeling TMC candidate is Sardha Subba. The West Bengal Assembly elections will be held in six

phases—April 4, 11, 17, 21, 25 and 30 and May 5. Though it is a six-phase election, polling will take place on seven dates.

There are 294 seats in the West Bengal Assembly. The counting will be taken up on May 19.

Bhaichung was also the TMC candidate from Darjeeling parliamentary constituency for the Lok Sabha elections 2014. He lost to GJM-backed BJP candidate S.S. Ahluwalia by a huge margin.

Political experts observed that Bhaichung will face a tough challenge to win from Siliguri considering that he lost the Lok Sabha polls and that the TMC also lost the Siliguri Municipal Corporation elections.

Meanwhile, local TMC leaders are confident of winning all the three Assembly seats from Siliguri due to developmental works done by the TMC government.

JAP president announced as TMC candidate from Kalimpong

This proves that Harka and JAP are fronts for TMC: GJM

Our Correspondent

DARJEELING, March 4: The announcement of Harka Bahadur Chettri as the TMC candidate from Kalimpong on Friday has stumped supporters of his fledgling Jan Andolan Party (JAP) while giving an opportunity to the GJM to claim high moral ground in hills politics.

Harka, the incumbent Kalimpong MLA, had floated JAP in January after revolting against his former party GJM. The announcement of Harka as the TMC candidate from Kalimpong proves that the JAP is functioning under the TMC.

We have always been saying that JAP was the 'Team B' of TMC and today's announcement proves it," said Tamang today.

The TMC candidate for Darjeeling is Sardha Subba while former GNLF MLA Shanta Chettri is contesting

from Kurseong under the TMC banner.

Polls for the 294 seats of West Bengal Assembly will take place in six phases starting from April 4 to May 5. The three hill subdivision will have voting conducted on April 21.

"People should understand that JAP is against the demand of Gorkhland and will work against the community," Tamang added. Harka could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

When contacted, JAP Bureau member Anmol Prasad said, "We would not like to comment on our party president being declared as

the TMC candidate from Kalimpong as the whole thing is not very clear now and we have to understand it first. As for our party, it was clear from the beginning that Harka would be our candidate from Kalimpong for the upcoming Assembly elections."

Regarding the GJM's comments, Prasad said, "They should first understand and comment. We have our own political party which has its own agendas."

Meanwhile, Sardha Subba said she would give her best as the TMC candidate from Darjeeling. She is presently the president of the TMC



GJM assistant secretary Binay Tamang speaking to media. SE Pic

"The announcement of Harka as the TMC candidate from Kalimpong proves that the JAP is functioning under the TMC. We have always been saying that JAP was the 'Team B' of TMC and today's announcement proves it,"

- Binay Tamang

(Hills) women's unit.

Similarly, Shanta Chettri expressed her happiness on being declared as the TMC candidate from Kurseong. She, a former MLA from Kurseong, is the working president of TMC (Hills).

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Sikkim mourns demise of P.A. Sangma

SE Report

GANGTOK, February 4: Sikkim Governor Shrinivas Patil and Chief Minister Pawan Chamling have expressed their deep sadness on the sudden demise of former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma.

Sangma passed away on Friday morning at New Delhi following a heart attack. He was 68.

Sangma presided over the 11th Lok Sabha as Speaker from 1996 to 1998. He also remained Chief Minister of Meghalaya from 1988 to 1990.

In his condolence message, the Governor expressed his sadness on the sudden demise of Sangma.

"Late Sangma was a seasoned parliamentarian with impeccable reputation as a grassroots leader. With his sudden demise, the country and Northeast in particular has lost a political stalwart and a statesman who always held interest of the Northeast region as paramount throughout his political career. Northeast will always cherish his idea of India which spilled over his home State of Meghalaya and reverberated across the country," said the Governor.

"At this time of bereavement, I join the people of Sikkim and the entire North East fraternity to offer my deepest condolence. I pray to the almighty for bestowing strength to the family members to cope with

this great loss," said Patil.

Similarly, Chamling expressed his sadness on the untimely demise of the former Lok Sabha Speaker and hailed Sangma as one of the greatest leaders from the Northeast in national politics.

The Chief Minister said Sangma always stood for the Northeast region and fought for the causes of the region.

"His concern for the underprivileged, his tireless efforts to eradicate poverty and remove socio-economic inequalities endeared him to the masses. Indeed, he was a man of the masses with an international standing. And it was the human side of him which brought him a large number of friends and well-wishers," said Chamling.

The Chief Minister said the passing away of Sangma is an irreparable loss to the nation, particularly to the Northeast region.

"My thoughts go to the bereaved family members and I offer my heartfelt condolences to them. May God give them strength and forbearance to bear this great loss. I pray for eternal peace of the departed soul," said Chamling in his condolence message.

Former Lok Sabha speaker P.A. Sangma passes away

NEW DELHI, March 4

(IANS): Former Lok Sabha speaker P.A. Sangma died following a heart attack here on Friday morning. He was 68. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his tenure as Lok Sabha speaker would remain unforgettable.

Sangma presided over the 11th Lok Sabha as speaker from 1996 to 1998. He also remained chief minister of Meghalaya from 1988 to 1990.

Sangma was elected to the 16th Lok Sabha from Tura constituency on the National Peoples Party ticket, the political outfit he launched in



2013.

Lok Sabha speaker Sumitra Mahajan read out an obituary and the house observed two minutes' silence before it was adjourned for the day.

President Pranab Mukherjee condoled Sangma's death and said: "In passing away of Shri Sangma, the nation has lost an eminent public figure and multi-faceted personality."

Modi said in a statement that Sangma was a self-made leader whose contribution to the development of the northeast was monumental.

"Sangma's tenure as Lok Sabha Speaker is unforgettable. His down to earth personality and affable nature endeared him to many," he added.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi said "the nation has lost a tall leader and the northeast has lost an important voice".

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted: "Saddened by the sudden demise of former loksabha speaker PA Sangma, My condolences to the bereaved family. May his soul rest in peace."

Sangma was born on September 1, 1947 in village Chapahati in Meghalaya. After completing his graduation from St Anthony's College, at Shillong, he went to Dibrugarh University in Assam for his Master's degree in International Relations. Subsequently, he also received a degree in Law.

He leaves behind his wife, a daughter and two sons.

Budget impact: Car prices goes up

CHENNAI, March 4 (IANS) Promptly passing on the "infrastructure cess" proposed in the union budget 2016-17 to car buyers, several manufacturers have hiked the prices of their models effective March 1.

Honda Cars India Ltd on Friday said it has revised the prices of its various models effective from March 1 onwards after the levy of infrastructure cess.

The price hike by Honda Cars ranges from Rs.4,000-6,000 on its Brio model to Rs.66,500-79,000 on its CR-V model.

The price hike on Jazz model ranges between

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