

## EC apprises SC about tentative schedule for by-election to Maniktala assembly constituency in Bengal

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: The Election Commission (EC) on Monday placed before the Supreme Court the tentative schedule for the by-election to the Maniktala assembly constituency in West Bengal.

Senior Trinamool Congress leader Sadhan Pande had won the Maniktala seat defeating BJP candidate Kalyan Chaubey, who later challenged the poll result in the Calcutta High Court alleging violence by his rival. Pande died on February 20, 2022.

The EC had refused to hold bypoll for the seat on the ground that Chaubey's election petition remains pending before the high court.

On May 6, Chaubey had informed the apex court that he has moved an application before the high court seeking withdrawal of his petition challenging the 2021 election.

The top court was informed on May 13 that pursuant to its May 6 order the high court has dismissed the election petition as withdrawn.

The apex court had then asked the EC to submit a schedule for the by-election which shall be held at the earliest.

The EC's counsel on



Monday placed the tentative schedule before a vacation bench of Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan in a sealed cover.

The poll panel's counsel told the bench that the tentative schedule was being filed in a sealed cover as it has to be declared through a public announcement and the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will come into force the day it is announced.

"Pursuant to our order dated May 17, 2024, the EC has filed an affidavit in a sealed cover showing the tentative schedule of by-election for assembly constituency no.167 Maniktala," the bench noted.

"We have perused the papers submitted along with the affidavit. Since the EC is likely to proceed further in the matter declaring the election, there is no need to

keep this civil appeal pending any further," it said.

When the counsel for the appellants, the residents of Maniktala, urged the court to keep the matter pending until the poll panel announced the election schedule, the bench observed, "They (EC) have acted with great expedition and alacrity and we have to now give this a quietus".

While disposing of the pleas, the bench observed it cannot announce the schedule for the by-election and it was refraining from saying anything about the dates.

Some residents of Maniktala had moved the Calcutta High Court seeking early holding of by-election, saying they were unrepresented in the state assembly for a long time since the demise of the sitting MLA. As the high court decided to hear the matter after a long gap, they moved the apex court in appeal.

The top court had last month said once the high court passes the order on the application for withdrawal of the petition, the EC may take a decision under section 151(A) of the Representation of the People Act which deals with filling of casual vacancies through by-elections.

## Delhi poll body geared for D-day, over 89.21 lakh votes up for counting

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: The arrangements for the D-day for counting of over 89.21 lakh votes that will begin at 8 am across the seven constituencies of Delhi have been notched up with the authorities deploying a three-tier security arrangement at the counting centres.

The officials at the Delhi poll body said that a total of 7,000 personnel would be deployed at the seven counting centres.

"We have made all the necessary arrangements for the counting tomorrow which will start at 8 am sharp. The required security deployment has been made which includes a three-tier security arrangement at the counting centre. The manpower of counting staff is trained and ready," Delhi Chief Electoral Officer P. Krishnamurthy told PTI.

"There will be a total of 7,000 personnel and each segment will have about 1,000 personnel, which includes a lot of support staff who will assist in works such as carrying the EVMs from the strong room to counting halls and back," he added.

Digital monitors will be set up outside the counting centres to share the trends and



the poll body personnel will also make mic announcement on the candidates leading in the initial trends.

Around 21 to 28 rounds of counting will take place to count a total of 89,21,495 votes that were cast by 58.69 per cent electorates, which includes 59.03 per cent men, 58.29 per cent women and 28.01 third gender individuals.

The counting is expected to be completed sooner in the New Delhi constituency where only 8,45,285 votes were cast. The North-east Delhi constituency may take more time in the counting of votes as it recorded the highest number of voter turn out with 15,49,202 votes.

Seven returning officers will head a team of dozens of assistant officers and observers, who will oversee the counting of votes in their

respective constituencies under CCTV surveillance of about 1,000 cameras installed at every nook and corner of the counting centre. The strong rooms where the polled EVMs have been stored since May 25 will be opened around 6.30 am in the presence of the candidates in fray and party representatives.

After the counting begins, first the postal ballots will be counted and then the EVMs will be opened.

Each constituency will have one counting centre where the polled EVMs and VVPATs will be de-sealed to count the votes. These counting centres have 10 halls with about seven to 14 tables where voting of each of the assembly segments of the parliamentary constituency will be counted.

The location of these count-

ing centres are -- SKV, Bharat Nagar in Chandni Chowk; ITI, Nand Nagri in North East Delhi; Sports Complex, CWG Village in East Delhi; Atal Adarsh Balika Vidyalaya, Gole Market in New Delhi; DTU, Shahbad Daulatpur in Northwest Delhi; NSUT, Dwarka in West Delhi; and Jijabai ITI for Women, Siri Fort in South Delhi.

A total of 162 candidates were in the fray for the May 25 Lok Sabha polls in Delhi with the maximum contesting from North East Delhi constituency, according to official data.

According to data shared by the office of the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer, 17 candidates were contesting from the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat, which was the least across the seven constituencies. There were 28 candidates in fray from North East Delhi.

Delhi Police has made elaborate arrangements at each centre to avert any untoward situation during the counting process. Around 70 companies of the force will be deployed at all the seven counting centres across Delhi on Tuesday.

Every polling station has a three layered security

with two companies of the paramilitary force at the inner portion and personnel of the Delhi Armed Police (DAP) and local police at its outer layers, an officer said.

Overall 7,000 personnel have been deployed at the counting centres.

"Each counting centre will have an average of 1,000 personnel," the officer said. He further said that the counting centres have been covered with CCTV cameras and drones to keep an eye on every corner.

"Around 200 CCTV cameras have been installed at each counting centre," the officer said.

The political parties' representatives can visit the counting centres but they will not be allowed to interfere in the counting process.

A senior police officer said the local police have been directed to keep a tab in the sensitive areas.

"Directions have been issued to the district DCPs and SIOs to remain on vigil near the counting centres and their respective areas," the officer said.

The elections were a direct fight between the INDIA bloc and the BJP.

## Himachal assembly speaker accepts resignations of three Independent MLAs

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
SHIMLA: Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania on Monday accepted resignations of three Independent MLAs who had voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls.

"Resignations have been accepted and these three MLAs cease to be members of the 14th Vidhan Sabha with immediate effect," Pathania told reporters here.

Independent MLAs Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra), Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur) and K L Thakur (Nalagarh) had voted in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the February 27 Rajya Sabha elections along with six Congress rebels.

The three MLAs resigned from the assembly on March 22 but the speaker did not accept their resig-



nations, saying he had received a representation from the Congress legislative party that they had taken the decision under duress and not voluntarily.

These MLAs joined the BJP on March 23 and moved the Himachal Pradesh High Court seeking directions to the speaker to accept their resignations. However, due to divergent views on whether the court could issue direc-

tions to the speaker in this regard, the matter was referred to a third judge. It is pending in the court.

The MLAs had also staged a dharna in the Vidhan Sabha complex to press their demand.

"Another petition was filed by Congress leader Jagat Singh Negi seeking disqualification of these MLAs under the anti-defection law as they joined the BJP before acceptance of

the resignation but as I have accepted the resignations. So, the other petition would automatically become infructuous," Pathania said.

"The net result is that they cease to be members of the 14th assembly, whether you accept the resignation or disqualify. I have not passed a harsh order," he added.

Welcoming the speaker's decision, Thakur said it was a "delayed but correct decision".

"It would have been better had the speaker accepted the resignations earlier and paved the way for simultaneous elections (with the Lok Sabha polls) in these three assembly seats also," he said.

An early decision would have saved money and imposition of code of conduct again, he added.

Earlier, the speaker had disqualified six Congress

rebels for defying a party whip to be present in the assembly and vote in favour of the government during the cut motions and budget.

The six seats held by these MLAs were declared vacant, bringing down the effective strength of the House from 68 to 62.

With the speaker accepting the resignations of the three Independent MLAs, the strength has come down further to 59. While the Congress has 34 MLAs, the BJP has 25.

The bypolls to the six assembly seats of Dharamshala, Sujjanpur, Barsar, Gagret, Kutlehar, and Lahaul and Spiti that were vacated following the disqualification of the Congress rebels were held on June 1.

The BJP had fielded all the six turncoats from the seats they held as Congress members.

## 20 people die due to sunstroke in Odisha in 3 days

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
BHUBANESWAR: Twenty people died due to sunstroke in Odisha over the last three days as the state was reeling under intense heatwave conditions, an official statement said.

Since Friday, a total of 99 suspected sunstroke deaths were reported by different districts. After post-mortem and inquiry, 20 were confirmed as sunstroke deaths, while two deaths happened due to other causes, said the statement issued by the state's Special Relief Commission.

An investigation is underway in the rest of the cases, it added.

Prior to this, 42 suspected sunstroke deaths were reported, and of them six cases were confirmed, and it was found that another six deaths happened due to other causes, the statement said.

The deaths were mostly



reported from Bolangir, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Sonepur, Sundergarh and Balasore districts, officials said.

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and Special Relief Commissioner Satyabrata Sahu reviewed the situation with the district collectors on Sunday.

They instructed the district administrations to implement the advisory on heatwave, and take precautionary measures.

The districts were also

asked to ensure post-mortem examination of every suspected sunstroke death for sanction of ex-gratia.

Also, a joint inquiry by the local revenue officer and the local medical officer needs to be conducted to ascertain the exact cause of each death, officials said.

Issuing an 'orange' alert, the IMD said heatwave conditions are very likely to prevail in Bargarh and Bolangir till Tuesday morning. It also issued a 'yellow' alert for Kalahandi, Nuapada and Sonepur districts.

Apart from this, the IMD said that the hot and humid weather conditions are likely in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati.

The coastal districts of the state received heavy rains on Monday night, brining down the mercury in the region.

## Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya fled India as probe agencies did not arrest them at proper time: Court



**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUMBAI: Businessmen involved in multi-million dollar scams, such as Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya, were able to flee the country because probe agencies failed to arrest them at the proper time, a special court here said recently.

Special judge M G Deshpande made the remark while hearing a plea of an accused booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) seeking modification in his bail condition.

The court on May 29 accepted the plea of Vyomesh Shah, an accused in a money laundering case, to drop the bail condition of getting the court's prior permission to travel abroad.

The detailed order was made available recently.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had argued that allowing Shah's application would give rise to situations like Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya and Mehul Choksi.

Rejecting the probe agency's contention, the judge said, "I thoughtfully

examined this argument and felt it necessary to note that all these persons fled because of the failure of the investigating agencies concerned in not arresting them at the proper time."

On the contrary, Shah had appeared before the court responding to the summons, secured bail, and applied many times to travel abroad, he said.

Shah's case cannot be equated with the cases of Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya, Mehul Choksi etc, the court held.

Diamantaire Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi are prime accused in the multi-crore PNB scam.

Modi is currently serving a prison sentence in the UK, while his uncle lives in Antigua.

Mallya, currently in the UK, is accused in the over 900-crore alleged loan fraud case, being probed by the ED and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

## LS polls vote count: Rival Senas & NCPs, BJP and Cong battle for political supremacy in Maharashtra

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUMBAI: The counting of votes will be held on Tuesday in 48 Lok Sabha seats of Maharashtra where the rival Shiv Sena and NCP factions, as well as the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress are jockeying for political supremacy.

Counting will begin at 8 am across the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

The exercise would be held at 289 counting halls and 4,309 counting tables by 14,507 personnel. Adequate police security was in place at all the counting centres, as per a statement from the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

The performance in Maharashtra is crucial for both the ruling Mahayuti and opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) as the western state sends 48 members to the Lok Sabha, the second highest after Uttar Pradesh, which elects 80 MPs.

The Mahayuti comprises the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, BJP and the NCP headed by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

The MVA constituents include the Uddhav Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP).

Elections were held in Maharashtra in five phases from April 19 to May 20 at 98,140 polling stations.

The state logged a voter turnout of 61.33 per cent in the five phases.

Among the 1,121 candidates in the fray include



prominent figures such as Union ministers Nitin Gadkari (from Nagpur seat), Piyush Goyal (Mumbai North), Narayan Rane (Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg), Raosaheb Danve (Jalna), Bharti Pawar (Dindori) and Kapil Patil (Bhiwandi).

They were pitted against rivals from the Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT).

The most riveting contest was in Baramati constituency where Sharad Pawar's daughter and sitting NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule was pitted against her sister-in-law Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar, who last year engineered a split in the Nationalist Congress Party founded by his uncle.

State ministers Sudhir Mungantiwar and Sandipan Bhumre contested against their rivals from the Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) in Chandrapur and Aurangabad seats, respectively.

The BJP-led NDA has set the bar high this time with a target to win 45 plus con-

stituencies in the state. In 2019, the BJP won 23 seats while its then ally Shiv Sena (undivided) bagged 18. The then undivided NCP bagged four constituencies, whereas the Congress could win just one seat.

The elections in 2024 were fought in a changed political landscape after splits in the Shiv Sena and NCP following rebellion by Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, respectively.

The other key battles were between BJP leader Pankaja Munde and Bajrang Sonawane of the NCP (SP) in Beed and between Congress MLA Praniti Shinde, daughter of ex-Union Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde, and Ram Satpute of the BJP in Solapur.

Shahu Chhatrapati, a royal from Kolhapur, and Udayanraje Bhosale, a direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, contested from Kolhapur and Satara seats on Congress and BJP tickets, respectively.

In Mumbai, the Shiv Sena led by CM Shinde and the Uddhav Thackeray faction are locked in a straight fight in three of six seats—Mumbai South, Mumbai North West, and Mumbai South Central, while in the three other seats, the BJP is squaring off against Congress.

Prominent lawyer and debutant politician Ujjwal Nikam of the BJP contested against Mumbai Congress president Varsha Gaikwad from Mumbai North Central seat.

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Eknath Shinde's son and sitting MP Shrikant Shinde is seeking a third term from Kalyan.

In CM Shinde's stronghold Thane, the Sena led by him and the Shiv Sena (UBT) are locked in a fight.

Among the opposition MVA allies, the Shiv Sena (UBT) contested the maximum 21 seats, followed by Congress 17 and NCP (SP) 10.

In the ruling Mahayuti,

the BJP fielded 28 candidates, followed by Shinde-led Sena which contested 15 seats, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP 4 and ally RSP 1.

Out of the 15 seats, the Shinde Sena is locked in a straight fight against the Uddhav faction in 13. The rival NCP camps are facing off each other in Baramati and Shirur constituencies.

As many 5,70,06,778 persons out of 9,29,43,890 electors had exercised their franchise.

At 71.88 per cent, polling in the Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency was the highest, while Mumbai South registered the lowest turnout at 50.06 per cent.

The BJP's campaign was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who doubled down on the development plank and mainly targeted Sharad Pawar in his rallies. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior BJP leaders also hit the hustings.

The MVA's campaign was based on the "threat to the Constitution" narrative which was led by Sharad Pawar who addressed a string of rallies.

Uddhav Thackeray played the sympathy tune citing "gaddari" (treachery) by MLAs from the Shinde camp.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also addressed rallies with the theme of social justice and assurance to conduct a caste census if voted to power.