

Phoolka, who represented '84 riots victims, joins BJP

New Delhi: Senior Supreme Court advocate and former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader H S Phoolka, best known for representing 1984 anti-Sikh riots victims in their quest for justice, joined the BJP on Wednesday.

Phoolka contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections as an AAP candidate from Ludhiana in Punjab but lost to Congress' Ravneet Singh Bittu. In 2017, he won the Dhaka assembly seat in Punjab. Phoolka was leader of opposition in the Punjab assembly for about three months in 2017. He then quit the post to fight 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases in the Delhi high court.

Stalin accuses BJP of plotting violence in TN, on lines of UP

Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu): Chief minister MK Stalin on Wednesday accused the BJP of conspiring to carry out violence in Tamil Nadu, allegedly on the lines of Uttar Pradesh and Manipur and asserted that it was outmanoeuvred.

Addressing a DMK rally for the upcoming Assembly polls, Stalin, the president of the ruling DMK, listed schemes implemented in Tiruchirappalli region by his govt. He referred to initiatives including Pan-chapur bus terminus, mini-stadium, jallikattu arena, model schools and combined drinking water schemes.

Soon after his party forms govt again, a mega library named after Kamarajar, a TIDEL park and an Olympic Academy will be inaugurated in the region, and Tiruchirappalli's development is a challenge to the capital city of Chennai, he said.

During the past 5 years, for Tiruchirappalli, Rs 26,066 crore worth of projects have been completed and "that is why I have come seeking your votes," Stalin said.

Rajshree Lottery advertisement with table of numbers and prize details.

21 seats see allies clash sans DMK, AIADMK symbols in TN

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Chennai: In a closely contested election, 21 constituencies in Tamil Nadu will go to polls without the DMK's rising sun or the AIADMK's two leaves symbol on the ballot.

In these seats, candidates of alliance partners of DMK and AIADMK will contest against each other on their own symbols. The increase from 11 such seats in 2021 reflects the growing role of smaller parties

in alliance arithmetic and gives parties such as TVK and NTK an opening to improve their electoral performance. "Both parties have factored in vote transfers from smaller parties. DMK chief M K Stalin has brought over 20 parties into his alliance after assessing that partners can contribute between 5,000 and 20,000 votes in a constituency," psephologist R Chandrasekaran said.

Contest on their own symbols. "The entry of actor Vijaya's TVK has altered calculations for both DMK and AIADMK-led alliances, as victory margins are expected to be smaller compared with previous elections," he added. From perspective of TVK and NTK, these constituencies offer openings. "Any day, not having a rising sun or two leaves in the contest is a relief for third or fourth fronts. However, they have to work hard, as some of these 21 seats are strongholds of alliance partners," said V Bharathi, a political analyst who has worked in war rooms of national parties.

For instance, Thalli has been a CPI stronghold, with the party winning the seat thrice. Virudhachalam, where Vijaya's DMKD won in 2006 and 2011, sees his wife Premalatha returning after a 15-year gap. In Kattumannarkoil, a VCK bastion, leader Thol Thirumavalavan is in the fray. Nine of the 21 constituencies are currently held by Congress MLAs.

"Alliance picks are backed by local netas with an established voter base. To compete, TVK and NTK will need candidates with local presence and influence," Bharathi added.

PM Narendra Modi visited tea garden in Dibrugarh district in poll-bound Assam on Wednesday and plucked leaves.

Modi, who is on a day-long visit to the state to address two campaign rallies for BJP candidates, also interacted with women workers at Manohari Tea estate. "We are very proud of the efforts of each and every tea garden family. Their hard work and perseverance have enhanced Assam's pride," Modi posted on X.

He was also seen plucking tea leaves and placing them into a traditional basket with a group of 19 women attired in traditional white and red bordered sarees. Spending nearly half an hour with them, Modi also listened to the concerns of the tea workers and discussed key issues such as education, healthca-

re and wages. "The plucking of tea leaves was followed by the women talking about their culture and of course a selfie!" he said in another post. The PM shared some photographs, stating that these are some glimpses from a tea garden in Dibrugarh. The Prime Minister also witnessed a traditional Jhumur dance. During

the day, the PM will address two poll rallies at Gogamukh in Dhemajuli district and Behali in Biswanath. Priyanka slams Himanta, says one family looting Assam

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday slammed Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and alleged that "only one family is looting" everything in the resource-rich state, while the people "don't have anything".

In back-to-back poll rallies, Vadra alleged that the BJP-led NDA govt is functioning by threatening the people, and attacked PM Narendra Modi and CM Sarma as "cowards".

Addressing an election rally at Nazira in support of Leader of the Opposition and party candidate, Debabrata Saikia, she launched a scathing attack on Modi and charged him with being a "slave" of the US.

PARTY ALLIES CONTESTING UNDER THEIR OWN SYMBOL

Table with columns SEAT and CONTEST. Lists constituencies like Sholinghur, Pennagaram, Mayiladuthurai, Dharmapuri, Polur, Salem (West), Virudhachalam, Kattumannarkoil, Tirupurur, Gandharvakottai, Padmanabhapuram, Udhagamandalam, Aranthangi, Vilavancode, Killiyoor, Colachel, Karaikudi, Nanguneri, Thalli, Periyakulam, Kilvelur and their respective contests.

NUMBER OF CONTESTS IN PREVIOUS POLLS > 2021: 11 > 2016: Nil (All of AIADMK's allies contested under two-leaves)

Clash breaks out at Cong HQ on candidate selection; one injured

Kolkata: Violence broke out at the West Bengal Pradesh Congress headquarters here on Wednesday during protests over candidate selection for the assembly elections, leaving at least one party worker injured, police said.

It all started after agitated party workers staged a demonstration demanding the cancellation of "outsider"

candidates, which soon escalated into clashes between rival factions. Their main grievance centred around the nomination of Rohan Mitra, son of former party president Somen Mitra, from Ballygunge assembly constituency. The protesters claimed that Zayed Hossain had earlier been assured the ticket for the seat, but was later denied.

The agitating workers also



TMC MP Saayoni Ghosh holds a roadshow ahead of the West Bengal assembly elections, in Purba Bardhaman on Wednesday

alleged that the state Congress leadership had "sold tickets" for the assembly elections, even as posters carrying the charge were put up at the party headquarters. A Congress worker sustained a head injury after being allegedly hit with a rod during the clash.

Be cautious while filing nominations: Mamata

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee alleged that officials registered appointed by the Election Commission were entrusted to reject nominations of

her party's poll candidates and urged them to be cautious while filing their nominations. Addressing three election rallies in the state, Banerjee charged the BJP with misusing central agencies and bringing in people from outside for its political benefit.

Party MP Abhishek Banerjee also criticised the Modi govt and claimed while the Mamata Banerjee administration was providing relief to people, the Narendra Modi-led Centre was "taking from them."

Meanwhile, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi alleged that the ruling TMC and other parties used Muslims of West Bengal for votes but did nothing for the community's development. Owaisi was addressing a poll rally at Naoda in Murshidabad district in support of candidates of Humayun Kabir-led Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP).

PM plucks leaves with workers at tea garden

Guwahati: Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited tea garden in Dibrugarh district in poll-bound Assam on Wednesday and plucked leaves.



PM Narendra Modi plucked tea leaves and placed them into a traditional basket with a group of 19 women attired in traditional white and red bordered sarees.

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'LDF betrayed Lord Ayyappa for gold'

Kochi: Senior BJP leader and defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday alleged that "God was not secure in Kerala", which is known as God's own country, as the ruling LDF betrayed Lord Ayyappa for a few pieces of gold—a reference to the Sabarimala gold loss cases.

Singh, speaking at a public meeting in Paravur assembly constituency, said that just like Judas betrayed Jesus Christ, the LDF betrayed Lord Ayyappa.

Nishikant apologises for CIA remark on Biju Patnaik

New Delhi: BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Wednesday tendered an apology for his post that had dubbed former

ditional apology," he said. His apology came on a day PM Narendra Modi had a word of praise for the former Odisha CM who was a leading anti-Congress voice in his

time. In a letter to incumbent CM Mohan Charan Majhi to mark the recognition of Odisha as a separate province in 1936, he said, "This is the soil that nurtured the great Biju Patnaik, whose life epitomises strength, courage and an unwavering commitment to nation-building. Biju Babu's multifaceted persona inspires us all."

BJP trying to shield rape accused son of Goa councillor: Kejrival

Panaji: AAP leader Arvind Kejrival Wednesday alleged the BJP and the entire state machinery in Goa are trying to protect the party councillor's son, who was arrested for allegedly raping several girls. He said the son of the BJP councillor in Curchorem was involved in "exploiting 30 minor girls".

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