

## On Rahul Gandhi's 'U-turn' remark on tie-up with AAP, Kejriwal's comeback

Agency  
New Delhi April 16,

Amid the uncertainty over an alliance between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls, Rahul Gandhi tweeted on Monday that a tie-up between the two parties would rout the BJP and offered four of Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats to AAP.

The Congress boss nudged his AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal saying that he has to act quickly to seal a poll pact. "An alliance between the Congress & AAP in Delhi would mean the rout of the BJP. The Congress is willing to give up 4 Delhi seats to the

AAP to ensure this. But, Mr Kejriwal has done yet another U turn! Our doors are still open, but the clock is running out," Rahul Gandhi tweeted. Arvind Kejriwal was quick to respond to Rahul Gandhi's tweet and said there was no U-turn as talks are still on. "Your comment shows that you don't really desire an alliance," Kejriwal replied to Gandhi on Twitter. He also accused the Congress chief of helping Prime Minister Narendra Modi split anti-BJP votes in Uttar Pradesh and other states.

On Sunday, Delhi chief minister Kejriwal said his party will do anything to "save the country" from Narendra Modi

and Amit Shah. An alliance has been elusive so far and talks between the AAP and the Congress have floundered amid conflicting signals. Last week, the Congress had announced that it will contest all seven Lok Sabha seats of Delhi alone. Party in-charge for Delhi PC Chacko blamed the Aam Aadmi Party's leadership for the failure of not having an alliance against the BJP in the national capital. Earlier this month, the two parties had restarted talks to discuss the seat sharing formula for the seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital. The talks between the

two sides derailed after they failed to reach an agreement over seat-sharing in Delhi and Haryana.

The AAP has been battling for an alliance with the Congress citing the need to defeat the BJP and replace the Modi government in the national interest. An earlier attempt to seal a deal fell through after Delhi Congress chief Sheila Dikshit putting her foot down which highlighted divisions in the party. Dikshit met Gandhi over the issue twice and conveyed her message to him. The AAP is also keen on an alliance with the Congress in Haryana and Chandigarh as well.

## Supreme Court rejects Mayawati's plea against EC's ban over hate speech

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The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to consider Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati's plea against the 48-hour ban on campaigning imposed by the Election Commission.

Mayawati had moved the top court against the poll body's order on the ground that it was "taken under pressure" from the ruling dispensation. "All citizens have the rights to move about and put forth their point of

view. But here, the Election Commission has suddenly given an order which has cruelly deprived me of my rights on the basis of wrong facts. This order will be remembered in the history of Election Commission as a black day," said Mayawati on Monday reacting to the EC order.

The poll body has imposed a nation-wide ban on Mayawati restricting her from campaigning in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Election Commission had found her remarks made at a poll rally in Uttar Pradesh. Some other political leaders were banned from campaigning for their "provocative" remarks, which the EC said had the "propensity to polarise the elections".

At an election rally in Deoband last week, Mayawati had appealed to Muslim voters to vote for the grand-alliance of the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party and not for the Congress to ensure that anti-BJP votes are not divided.

The Election Commission, following a Supreme Court remark to act tough against those violating the poll code, cracked its whip against some of the top politicians. The poll panel imposed a nationwide campaign ban on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and SP candidate Azam Khan for 72 hours, and on Union Minister Maneka Gandhi and BSP chief Mayawati for 48 hours beginning Tuesday morning.

## 'What would happen if such a man gets elected': Jaya Prada on Azam Khan

Agency  
New Delhi April 16,

Actor-turned-politician Jaya Prada was introduced in Rampur in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections by senior Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan.

After 15 years, the two leaders are arch-rivals. So much so, Khan who was instrumental in Jaya Prada's first Lok Sabha victory from Rampur is now at the centre of a political storm for making a derogatory remark against her.

An FIR was lodged against Khan while the National Commission for Women (NCW) slapped a show cause notice on the nine-time MLA who is contesting his first Lok Sabha election against Jaya Prada, a two-term former MP who wants him banned from contesting polls. The Election Commission also barred Khan from campaigning for 72 hours due to poll code violation. In an

interview to Manish Chandra Pandey, Jaya Prada said Khan's statement came as a shock to her but she would not leave Rampur and would fight and win. Excerpts: How difficult is it for a woman politician to take such remarks?

I am shocked. Despite the past (previous instances when Jaya Prada and her mentor Amar Singh were expelled from the Samajwadi Party in 2010), I still said he was like my brother. But he has crossed all limits now. Imagine a remark which one can't even repeat!

But were you actually surprised considering the fact that Azam Khan has in the past referred to you with comments like 'nachne wali' (dansu)? See, it's not new to me. He is a victim of his habits. But even by his own low standards, he has crossed all the limits. I shudder to think what would happen if such a man gets elected. Who would guarantee safety and security

of girls and women? I am happy that an FIR has been lodged against him and I hope that the law will take its own course.

You have been getting emotional in your rallies, saying some people wanted to force you out of Rampur. Let me tell you that I am not going anywhere. Jaya Prada isn't weak and Azam Khan would know this soon. I will defeat him. I am confident about it.

Absolutely. See there has to be a limit to everything. What will happen to women with these people around? Tell me what do these people expect? Should I (be left alone) to die? I guess time has come to teach such people a befitting lesson. Don't they have women in their family that they subject other women to such humiliation? How is the campaign going? I have been a hard-working politician. The love I have got from the people is amazing. It overwhelms me.

## Accessibility Observer Visits Bpr



IT News  
Bishnupur, April 15,

Accessibility Observer, J.C. Ramthanga, Principal Secretary visited Bishnupur district and assessed the poll preparedness of the district with respect to persons with disability. In a meeting held at Conference Hall with members of District Monitoring Committee on Accessible Election for Persons with Disability (PwD) Voters, the observer urged the committee to ensure that the PwDs are given opportunity to vote in the coming election. "The polling booths should be disabled friendly", he stated IT

may be mentioned that the district has arranged stretchers, wheelchairs, vehicles and boats in the 6 ACs based on the need of the PwDs. The DEO and Chairman of the committee Pawan Yadav stated that all the polling stations have established all basic facilities for the persons to access polling booths. He further stated that volunteers will set up 'voter assistance cell' in each booth to facilitate voters to cast their vote without any difficulty. The district has a total of 868 PwD voters.

## Senior BJP leader, Home Minister Rajnath Singh to file his nomination today

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In Uttar Pradesh, senior BJP leader and Home Minister Rajnath Singh will file his nomination today. He will file his nomination in Lucknow today afternoon after a brief road from party head office to collectorate.

Many BJP leaders including Yogi Adityanath, Keshav Maurya, Dinesh Sharma, Kalraj Mishra and Ramesh Pokhriyal along with many party workers are expected to present in the road show.

Former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Bajpai was elected five times from Lucknow parliamentary seat from 1991 to 2004 and after his retirement Lalji tandan carried the legacy in 2009.

In 2014 Rajnath Singh shifted from Ghaziabad to Lucknow and won the seat by a margin of around 3 lakh votes. Meanwhile nominations for the six phase of general elections will start today in which 14 seats of the state will go for poll.

## BJP candidate says will be difficult to retain Moradabad

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New Delhi April 16,

It is going to be difficult to retain Moradabad Lok Sabha constituency for BJP, which is in a direct contest with Congress due to consolidation of Muslim votes ahead of the April 23 election, saffron party candidate Kunwar Sarvesh Kumar has said. Kumar, a Thakur, is pitted against Congress's Imran Pratapgarhi, a poet who has often questioned the BJP government through his provocative compositions and fiery speeches.

As the campaigning heats up, SP-BSP-RLD coalition's S T Hasan, a doctor by profession, is also trying to win over the Muslim votes, about 47 per cent of the total 19,41 lakh voters in the constituency. Only the community members have not yet disclosed who they will back this time. Political observers say Muslim voters often decide their support during last three days of campaigning.

Though Kumar, a political strongman, is well-known in the area, he is unsure about his re-election. "The election is going to be difficult," Kumar told PTI on the phone as he is busy campaigning in interior areas of the

constituency. "The fragmentation of Muslim votes has not happened. The election has become Congress versus BJP," he added.

Kumar had been a Member of Legislative Assembly five times from Thakurdwara before he was elected MP from Moradabad in 2014. His son is now an MLA from Barhapur, one of the five assembly segments in the parliamentary constituency. Other than Muslims, Jatavs, who have traditionally supported the BSP, constitute 9 per cent of the total voters. "We follow wishes of Behan Mayawati ji. Now that an alliance is in place, BSP voters (Jatavs) will give full support to it as is wished by Behenjji," Ranvijay, a BSP supporter, said.

The BJP is on the defensive as its voters from the Scheduled Caste community — the Balmikis — are also angry with their local MP, Kumar. They say they will either support the BSP-SP-RLD alliance or not cast their vote. "We have traditionally voted for the Congress and then we supported the BJP. Our support resulted in the victory of Kumar (in 2014). But in the last five years he has not visited us," said Harkesh, a resident of Daulat Bagh

Balmiki colony. He said whenever the community sought Kumar's presence, he sent his representatives. "We will not vote for him this time." Several other people from the community shared the sentiment.

Hasan, 55, meanwhile, has provided treatment to the poor and thinks it will work for him. In 17 elections since 1952, Muslim candidates have won the seat 11 times, fighting on tickets from every major political party except the BJP. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh had won the seat twice and the BJP had its first victory in 2014, when a division of Muslim votes between Hasan and Haji Mohammad Yaqoob helped Kumar win the seat.

He had managed 4.85 lakh votes against Hasan (3.97 lakh) and Yaqoob (1.60 lakh). If SP and BSP's votes for 2014 were to be combined, they would have defeated the BJP by a margin of over 75,000 votes. However, the distribution of Muslim votes among the parties has not been consistent. A lot depends on the candidate. In 2009, cricketer Mohammad Azharuddin fought as a Congress candidate and managed over three lakh votes, ending a 25-year drought for the party in this

constituency. This time when Congress gave ticket to Raj Babbar from the seat initially, there was an overwhelming feeling in the local unit the party will comfortably win the seat with support from both Hindus and Muslims.

But Babbar distanced himself from the race, bringing Pratapgarhi, the poet who has questioned the government on incidents of lynching and over the missing JNU student Najeeb.

"There had been minor differences over Imran Pratapgarhi's nomination but now we have assuaged everyone and we are working as a team to ensure his win. Muslim votes are fully intact and they will go with the person whom they think is a better candidate. There will be no division of Muslim votes," District Congress Committee chief APSingh told PTI.

Even supporters of the BJP candidate, Kumar, concede that young Muslim men and women find Pratapgarhi's oratory appealing and are getting swayed by him. Unlike BJP's Kumar, Pratapgarhi and Hasan have been focussing on subtle messaging through community meetings. The BJP, on the other hand, has organised big campaign rallies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah and UP

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Moradabad. There was a buzz that Qureshis, the second influential caste in Muslim community after Ansaris in Moradabad, may switch to Pratapgarhi, after the SP-BSP coalition cut the ticket of meat businessman Haji Nasir Qureshi, a former BSP member, replacing him with Hasan.

"No. Muslims will not divide their vote. Qureshi had contested on BSP ticket in assembly election. He was new to SP. Local leaders supported Hasan who was the runner-up in local elections. They will vote either of the two candidates," Ranvijay, the BSP supporter, said. The support of Jatavs to the alliance is a major factor convincing Muslims to also vote for it, he said.

"They are seeing this poll as between Prime Minister Modi and Rahul Gandhi. They wanted to support Congress when Raj Babbar was given ticket. But with change in candidate they are realigning their strategy as Jatavs will be supporting the alliance," Azam Ansari, a Congress office-bearer, claimed.

It will not be the 45-per cent Muslim vote but the 9-per cent Jatav vote that will be the key, Syed Ganim Mian, who runs a Ganim for brass artisans, said.

## Polling in Tamil Nadu's Vellore may be scrapped after cash haul



Agency  
New Delhi April 16,

The Election Commission is likely to cancel the Lok Sabha poll in Tamil Nadu's Vellore after about Rs 11 crore in cash was seized from a building linked to a Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) candidate, a person aware of the developments said on Monday.

Income Tax officials last week seized the cash from a godown that allegedly belonged to DMK leader Poonjoi Srinivasan, a close aide of party treasurer Durai Murugan. The officials are investigating the source of the money.

Based on a report from the chief electoral officer of Tamil Nadu, the election watchdog will on Tuesday take a call on whether the election in Vellore needs to be countermanded, the person quoted above said on

condition of anonymity. The EC will take a call on whether the election atmosphere has been vitiated, the person added.

DMK chief MK Stalin said the IT raid was politically motivated. "It is meant to threaten us," he said shortly after the cash was seized in Vellore.

If the election in Vellore is cancelled, this will not be the first instance of polls being countermanded on bribery charges in the state in the recent past. In 2016, the commission had cancelled polling in Thanjavur and Aravakurichi assembly constituencies after AIADMK and DMK were alleged to have been bribing voters.

The by-elections in the RK Nagar seat, held by former chief minister Jayalalitha, was cancelled in 2017 after bribery charges.