

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## Plea in SC seeking expert panel to examine possible side effects, risk factors of Covishield vaccine

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** A plea was filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday seeking constitution of a medical expert panel under the supervision of a retired apex court judge to examine any possible side effects and risk factors of the Covishield vaccine.

It claimed that UK-headquartered pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca has said that its vaccine against COVID-19, which was made under licence in India as Covishield, could cause low platelet counts and formation of blood clots in "very rare" cases.

The application, filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari, also sought a direction to the Centre to compensate those who are severely disabled or have died because of any side effects of the vaccine administered to them during Covid.

It claimed AstraZeneca has accepted a link between the vaccine and Thrombocytopenia Syndrome, a medical condition characterised by abnormally low levels of platelets and the formation of blood clots.



"After Covid-19, there has been increase in the cases of death due to heart attack and sudden collapse of persons. There have been number of cases of heart attack even in youngsters. Now, after the document filed in UK court by the developer of Covishield, we are compelled to think upon the risk and hazardous consequences of Covishield vaccine which have been administered to the citizens at a large number," the application said.

It said the government is required to take immediate steps for the sake of safety

and health of citizens and the issue has to be looked upon by the Centre on priority so that in future, no risk may occur regarding the health and life of Indian citizens.

The application said AstraZeneca's vaccine formula was licensed to Pune-based vaccine maker Serum Institute of India (SII) and over 175 crore doses of Covishield have been administered in the country.

It said a large number of Covishield doses were administered to the citizens on the assurance of the government about its safety.

The application said in some countries like the UK, there is "vaccine damage payment system" for people who get severely disabled due to vaccination.

It has sought directions to constitute a medical expert panel comprising of experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, headed by its director and supervised by a retired judge of the top court to examine the Covishield vaccine side effects and its risk factors.

It has also sought a direction to the Centre to establish a "vaccine damage payment system" for citizens who get severely disabled as a result of a vaccination drive during Covid-19.

The application has been moved in a pending petition of 2021 filed by Tiwari seeking action against alleged fake vaccines. AstraZeneca has admitted that in "very rare cases", its Covid vaccine, which is known as Vaxzevria in Europe and Covishield in India, can cause a blood clot-related side effect but the causal link is unknown, according to court papers being quoted in the UK media.

## Nobody is scared, decision on candidates in next 24-30 hours: Cong on Amethi, Raebareli

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Amid the mounting suspense over the Amethi and Rae Bareli Lok Sabha seats, the Congress on Wednesday asserted that "nobody is scared" and a decision on the matter would be announced in the next 24-30 hours.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that party's central election committee (CEC) has empowered Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to finalise the candidates for Amethi and Raebareli.

"My expectation is that in the next 24-30 hours, the Congress president will finalise and a decision taken by him will be announced," Ramesh said in response to a question at a press conference at the AICC headquarters here.

"Till that is done all the information, all so-called office orders are fake," he said.

Asked why there is delay in taking a decision and if the Congress was "scared" in fielding Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, Ramesh



said, "There is no delay. Has the BJP not announced its candidates in Raebareli? Smriti Irani is a sitting MP. Nobody is scared, discussions are ongoing, the Congress president has been authorized."

"There is no delay, there is time till May 3," he said.

The state leadership in Uttar Pradesh has already urged the central election committee and the party leadership to field Rahul Gandhi from Amethi and Priyanka from Rae Bareli. The CEC members had

also supported the view of the Uttar Pradesh Congress during its last meeting on Saturday.

The Amethi seat has been represented by Rahul Gandhi from 2004 and he remained the member of Parliament from the constituency for three consecutive terms till 2019 when he was defeated by BJP's Smriti Irani.

Rahul Gandhi currently represents the Wayanad constituency in Kerala, from where he had contested in the 2019 Lok Sabha election

and also this time. The Amethi and Raebareli constituencies go to polls on May 20 in the fifth round of the seven-phase general elections.

Rahul Gandhi has said earlier that he will follow "whatever order" he gets from his party.

Speculation had been rife that Rahul Gandhi might contest the Lok Sabha polls from Amethi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Raebareli, a seat that was previously held by her mother Sonia Gandhi.

Both seats are considered bastions of the Gandhi family and the local units of the Congress have demanded that the two scions of the family contest from there.

The Congress has forged an alliance with the SP in Uttar Pradesh and is contesting 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

The Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases starting April 19. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

## Sexual abuse allegations: Truth will prevail, says Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna

**BENGALURU, MAY 01:** Hassan MP and Lok Sabha election candidate of the BJP-JD(S) alliance Prajwal Revanna, who is facing an inquiry over the alleged sexual abuse of several women, said the truth will prevail.

The MP, who left the country as soon as the election to his constituency ended, has also sought seven days' time to appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Karnataka government to inquire into the huge cache of about 3,000 explicit videos and photos allegedly pertaining to him, which have gone viral on social media.



"As I am not in Bangalore to attend the enquiry, I have communicated to CID Bangalore through my advocate.

Truth will prevail soon," Prajwal, grandson of former prime minister and JD(S) patriarch H D Deve Gowda, said in a Facebook post. A

case has been registered against MLA and former minister H D Revanna and his son Prajwal at Holenarasipura on a complaint lodged by their former cook and relative for allegedly sexually harassing her.

She also alleged that Prajwal made video calls to her daughter and spoke in an objectionable manner, which forced her to block him. The MP who is seeking re-election from Hassan on a JD(S) ticket, shared a letter by his lawyer Arun G to the Deputy Superintendent of Police of the SIT, in which he has sought seven days' time to appear before the official because he is abroad.

## Mamata raises concern over voter turnout increase, questions EVM credibility

**FARAKKA (WEST BENGAL), MAU 01:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday criticised the Election Commission for the "delay" in releasing the final voter turnout figures for the initial two phases of the Lok Sabha polls.

She also expressed concern over the sudden increase in polling percentages during those phases.

The commission made public the voter turnout of the first two phases of polling, which were held on April 19 and April 26, on Tuesday evening.

According to the EC, a voter turnout of 66.14 per cent was recorded in the first



and 66.71 per cent in the second phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

"The sudden jump in final voter turnout by nearly 5.75 per cent from what the Elec-

tion Commission had released earlier is worrying. There are apprehensions of manipulation of results by the BJP as several EVMs were missing for a long pe-

riod," she said while addressing a rally at Farakka in Murshidabad district.

The TMC supremo stated that the sudden increase in poll percentage is not just "disturbing" but also raises "serious apprehensions about the credibility of EVMs".

"The details of EVM makers should be made public by the Election Commission as the BJP can stoop to any level to win elections," she said.

Voting for the general elections is being held in seven phases, with the remaining phases scheduled for May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25, and June 1.

The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

## Actor Rupali Ganguly joins BJP

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Actor Rupali Ganguly joined the Bharatiya Janata Party here on Wednesday ahead of the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

BJP national general secretary Vinod Tawde welcomed Ganguly into the party fold and used the opportunity to attack the opposition parties over Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Maria Alam's appeal for "vote jihad".

Alam, while seeking votes for the INDIA bloc's candidate from Farrukhabad Lok Sabha seat, called for a "vote jihad," saying it was necessary in the current situation for the minority community to dislodge the BJP from power.

Responding to the SP leader's remarks, Tawde said, "The Opposition, which



has been spreading lies, has now started a 'vote jihad' campaign. This shows they are rattled."

He added, "On the one hand they are giving OBC reservation to Muslims, on the other they are talking

about 'vote jihad' during elections."

Tawde asked Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi if the "campaign" was started on the instruction of the party high

command.

Ganguly joined the BJP here at the party headquarters in the presence of several other party leaders, including its national media department in-charge Anil Baluni.

## Plunderers of Maharashtra will see pride and courage of state in LS polls: Uddhav

**MUMBAI, MAY 01:** Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday targeted the BJP's central leadership, saying that in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the "plunderers of Maharashtra" will be shown the pride and courage of the state.

Thackeray was talking to reporters at the Hutatma Chowk in south Mumbai, where he paid tributes to 105 people who laid down their lives for the 'Samyukta Maharashtra' movement. May 1 is celebrated as Maharashtra Day to mark the formation of the state. "We will not allow Maharashtra to be anyone's



slave. We will not allow plunder-

ing of Maharashtra and trampling of its pride. In the

Lok Sabha elections, we will show the looters of Maharashtra what its pride and courage is," Thackeray said. As per the seat-sharing agreement, the Sena (UBT) is contesting 21 out of the total 48 seats in Maharashtra, the Congress 17 and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) 10.

The three parties earlier shared power in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, which collapsed in June 2022 following a split in the Shiv Sena. Elections will be held in three more phases in the state - on May 7, 13 and 20. Voting was held earlier in two phases.

## Is being part of Modi's 'political family' 'guarantee of protection' for criminals: Rahul

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Is being part of Modi's 'political family' 'guarantee of protection' for criminals: Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the sexual abuse allegations against JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna, asking whether being part of "Modi's political family" a "guarantee of protection for criminals".

Police on Sunday booked Prajwal Revanna and his father H D Revanna on charges of sexual harassment and criminal intimidation based on a complaint from a woman, who worked



in their household.

Prajwal is the grandson of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda and nephew of former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy.

Faced with the unrelenting attack from the Congress and other political parties, the JD

(S), an ally of the BJP, suspended Prajwal.

In a post in Hindi, Gandhi said, "As always, Narendra Modi has maintained shameful silence on the gruesome crimes committed against women in Karnataka."

"The Prime Minister will have to answer: Despite knowing everything, why did he campaign for the devil who exploited hundreds of daughters, just for votes? After all, how did such a big criminal escape from the country with such ease?" the former Congress chief said.

From Kaiserganj to Karnataka and from Unnao to Uttarakhnd, the prime minister's "silent support" to the criminals of daughters is emboldening the criminals across the country, Gandhi said.

"Is being part of Modi's 'political family' a 'guarantee of protection' for criminals?" he said.

## Bomb threat appears to be hoax; no need to panic: MHA

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday termed the bomb threat to schools in the city and adjoining areas as a "hoax", and asked people not to panic.

Police and security agencies are taking necessary steps as per protocol, the ministry said.

"There is no need to panic. Mails appears to be hoax. Delhi Police and security agencies are taking necessary steps as per protocol," a home ministry official said.

Panic gripped schools in the national capital and adjoining Noida after 80 of them received bomb threats through emails in the morning.

All schools have been evacuated after local police was informed about the emails.

