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Rajya Sabha
Election

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Rajya Sabha polls on March 26, equations not to change

Opposition plans to bring in heavyweights to Upper House

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With the Election Commission on Tuesday announcing elections on March 26 to 55 Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant in 17 States in April, the Opposition expects to bring in a qualitative change by nominating many of its heavyweights to the Upper House.

The political arithmetic will largely remain unchanged though.

Gain for Congress

With its improved situation in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, the Congress is set to gain four seats from the three States.

In Rajasthan, three seats, all held by the BJP, are up for grabs. Here the Congress is expected to get two seats. In Gujarat, the party will gain an additional seat. Of the four seats to be filled, the BJP holds three and the Congress one. The Congress will add another seat to its tally from Chhattisgarh. Of the two seats falling vacant in April from the State, the Congress and the BJP holds one each. The Congress is expected to win both.

Of the three seats in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress holds one and the BJP two. Party sources said the Congress would try to wrest an



Mallikarjun Kharge is among leaders who is expected to go to the Rajya Sabha.

additional seat here. The Congress will, however, lose seats from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh. "On the balance, we may not increase our tally," a senior Congress MP said.

Out of seven seats of Maharashtra, *status quo* is expected, with no change in the balance between the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance and the BJP. The Sena is expected to send Priyanka Chaturvedi, former Congress spokesperson who joined the party last year.

The Congress leaders expected to be seen in the Upper House include Randeep Singh Surjewala, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Mallikarjun Kharge, R.P.N. Singh and Jitin Prasada.

In West Bengal, elections

will be held for five seats. Of these, the Trinamool Congress will retain four. However, the fate of the fifth seat depends on the CPI(M) Polit Bureau's decision. The West Bengal unit of the CPI(M) is backing the renomination of party general secretary Sitaram Yechury. But the Left will need the Congress's support to elect him.

6 seats in T.N.

In Tamil Nadu, where six seats are up for grabs, *status quo* will continue. Both the DMK and the AIADMK will be in a position to send three members each. Sources said the BJP has been putting pressure on the AIADMK to send a BJP leader on its quota. The CPI, meanwhile, is hoping that the DMK would cede one seat to it. If the DMK does agree, CPI general secretary D. Raja could return to the Rajya Sabha.

Poll schedule

According to the schedule, the notification would be issued on March 6, the last date for filing of nominations would be March 13 and polling would be held on March 26, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The votes would be counted at 5 p.m. the same day.

(With inputs from Damini Nath)