

Priya Sethi launches door-to-door campaign to mobilize support for Jugal Kishore

Says NDA will exceed 400-seat mark in ensuing LS polls

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Priya Sethi, National Executive Member, BJP, and former Minister, on Monday embarked on a strategic door-to-door campaign to mobilize support for Party's Candidate for Jammu Reasi Parliament constituency, Jugal Kishore Sharma in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

With unwavering commitment and fervor, he spearheads this grassroots initiative to ensure the resounding victory of Jugal Kishore, the chosen torchbearer for the aspirations of the people.

The former minister was speaking while intensifying door to door campaigns in support of B-JP Jammu Reasi Lok Sabha candidate



Former Minister, Priya Sethi leading a campaign in favour of Jugal Kishore Sharma.

Jugal Kishore in Wards No 2, 3, 6, 10, 15 and 17 of Jammu East constituency. During the campaign, senior leaders namely Parveen Kerni (East Mandal President), Anil Masoom, Nidhi Magotra and Narotam Sharma, former Councillors, Ajay Vaid Publicity incharge were present.

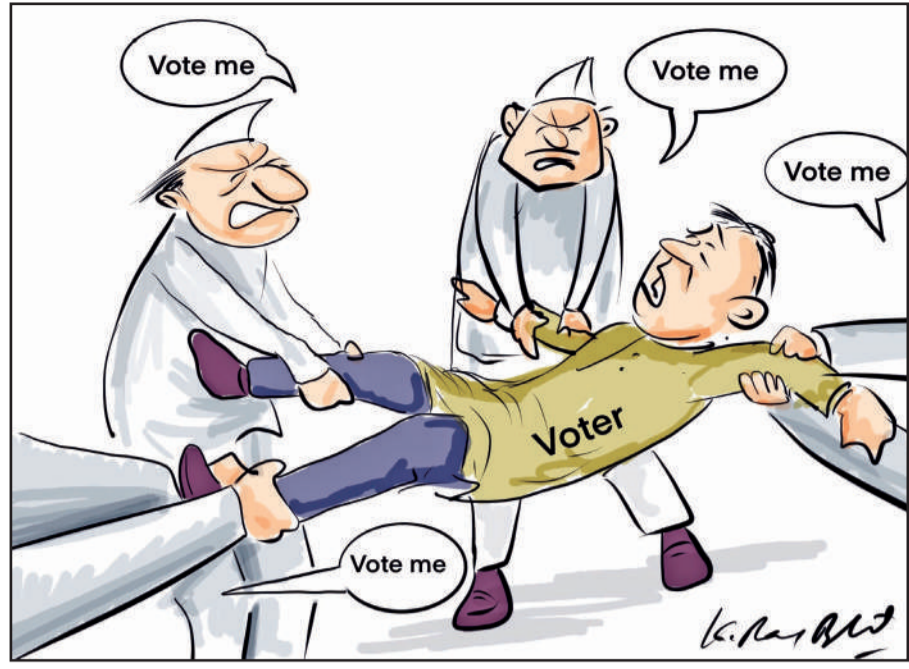
Interacting with residents of East constituency, the former minister said that the NDA Government led by visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi has transformed Jammu and Kashmir and cleared the mess created by Congress & its allies over the last 70 years.

She highlighted the BJP's track record in governance, citing initiatives such as economic reforms, infrastructure development, social welfare programs, and national security measures over the past decade, with a particular emphasis on developments in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019.

"For over 70 years, the Congress Party neglected the aspirations and development needs of the people of Jammu & Kashmir," she said, adding that generations were denied the opportunities and advancements that should have been their birthright."

Priya Sethi observed that people have made their mind to support PM Modi in ensuing Lok Sabha polls.

She expressed hope that the NDA will exceed the 400-seat mark in impending polls in the country.



Liquor traders appeal Govt to intervene, stop harassment of license holders

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: J&K Liquor Traders Association (JKLTA) on Monday appealed to the Government for its intervention in saving the license holders from harassment.

Addressing a press conference, JKLTA representatives said, the Finance Department notifies the J&K Excise Policy every year for the next Financial Year. This year on February 1, 2024, the Government announced the J&K Excise Policy for the year 2024-25 and in each policy, duties and fees are defined which are imposed on the manufacture, transport and sale of liquor. This year due to upward revision i.e. increase in the Excise Duty, Assessment Fee and other duties; price of each bottle of the liquor has increased from Rs. 15 to Rs. 50 per 750 ml of bottle of various brands.

Representatives of the JKLTA further said that all shops were allotted by the Excise Department well in time before the beginning of financial year 2024-25 so that on 1 April, all shops could be made functional. The stock of liquor already available with the ex-licensee as well as from the wholesale trades was immediately transferred for operationalization of new shops on April 1, itself, which is a history in the Excise Department that soon after culmination of earlier licenses, new shops were in place without making any chance for bootlegging or malpractice in procurement of liquor through other illegal sources.

As already informed, the liquor bottles which were transferred from the existing stock of the licensee as well as procured from the wholesale vendors were having labels with old MRP; however, Government after fixing duties, revised the MRP by Rs. 15 to 50 in different brands of liquor. Since, department was collecting its duties and taxes at revised rates, therefore, on each bottle the revised MRP was fixed and the liquor is sold strictly as per revised MRP fixed by the department.

The Association regretted that some mischievous elements are trying to build wrong narrative in public that extra charges are being taken by some liquor



JKLTA representatives addressing a press conference at Jammu on Monday.

vendors. The Excise Department has increased the excise duty in new excise policy due to which MRP and printed prices have some difference because of old labels pasted on all bottles. Bottles with new label will be available in market from next month.

They further said that we have been harassed by the Police, District Administration as well as Excise Department on frivolous complaints by the blackmailers, who pose themselves as Social Workers and either demand free bottles of liquor on hafta system from the vendors and in case, the same is refused, they lodge complaint against us at various fora from LG Grievance Cell, Civil Administration, Election Cell and Excise Department. This has discouraged the rule abiding licensees who always sell liquor at MRP fixed by the department.

Recently, the Expenditure Observer visited a number of shops and despite not getting even a single bottle excess or less than the stock position indicating in the Excise Register, harassed us with fine of Rs 1 lakh. We have given more than Rs 282 crores of revenue to the Government after participating in the transparent bidding process complying with all the conditions of the license but we are being harassed by these blackmailers so that we get discouraged and the old system of perpetual licenses return and their monopoly is restored in this liquor trade.

"We were told to install IPCC cameras in shops and cameras and GPS in vehicles which are hired from the market and it has a huge financial implication on our businesses. Internet facilities are not available in remote areas so it is not possible for license holders in remote areas to install Wifi at their shops to make cameras online. Officers of the Election Commission are not well versed with the rules and regulations of State Excise Policy and Act due to which unnecessary penalties are imposed on licensees. Directions were given not to sell products more than the average sale, this is the marriage season and sale of liquor used to be comparatively higher than the normal days, however, we have been harassed, if more than one bottle of liquor is given to anyone and in some cases, our salesmen are thrashed and put behind bars for following the legitimate government directions. Regular pressure from all departments is making our day to day operations very difficult, they further added.

They further appealed to the government that if same pressure persists for more days we will be compelled to surrender our licenses.

"We request UT Govt and Election Commission to take necessary action to stop this regular harassment of License holders on the basis of complaints and press conferences held by these blackmailers", they added.

Congress will not cross 40 mark : Rana

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Asserting that the ongoing Lok Sabha elections are a significant milestone in India's democratic journey, embodying the aspirations and voices of millions of electors, Senior BJP leader, Devender Singh Rana has said that the Congress won't cross the 40 mark given its dubious role in the Indian polity and anti-people policies during the past over seven decades.

Addressing various Nukkad meetings in Amb-Ghrota and Mathwar Mandal along with DDC Chairman Bharat Bhushan, Som Nath Khajuria, Zorawar Singh Jawal, Ex-Sarpanchs, Anwar Khan, Sanjeev Singh, Anjali Sharma, Ravinder Singh (Peter), Balbir Singh, Ashwani Kumar Bhagat, Nakshatar Singh, Ex-BDC Member Sushma Sharma, Kuldeep Singh Langeh, Bhagwan Dass Sharma, Ashok Kerni, Rekha Langeh, Dayal Singh Lucky, Tejpal Singh, Kabla Singh, Arun Partap Singh, Ajay Gupta, Sanjay Gupta and others, Mr Devender Rana said the Congress has lost whatever little credibility it had decades ago due to rudderless leadership that has remained active in corruption, nepotism and promot-



Senior BJP leader, Devender Singh Rana addressing public meeting at Jammu.

ing dynastic culture at the cost of public welfare.

He came down heavily on the appeasement policy of the Congress and said that the grand old party has been exploiting its vote bank, which is being remembered during the times of elections.

Rana said the chronic misrule and the negative politics is going to reduce the Congress tally in the new Lok Sabha below 40, an all time low since independence. The Congress, he said, has sensed the mood of the people, which is overwhelmingly supportive for the BJP for its track record on governance, especially the initiatives like economic reforms, infrastructure development, social welfare programs, and national security measures during the past one decade.

Exuding Confidence about the NDA crossing 400 mark, with the BJP exclusively getting 370 seats, Devender Rana said this will give new direction to the developmental trajectory of the nation. The BJP is committed to upholding the principles of inclusivity and good governance, saying this will lead to India becoming Vishwa Guru under Prime Minister Modi. He referred to India ranking as fifth economy, saying the country is destined to be the third economy in the next five years and Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Rana said the BJP's vision for a strong, prosperous, and inclusive Bharat resonates deeply with the aspirations of millions of Indians across the country. From vibrant global reputation, robust economic

reforms to decisive actions on national security, the BJP's agenda reflects its unflinching commitment to serve every segment of Indian society. While the past decade has been India's tryst with development and economic resurgence, the next term under Prime Minister Modi will witness the nation growing as a world leader, he added.

Earlier Rana paid obeisance at Baba Bhagtan Saad Ji Ashram at Keran, Bantalab and sought blessings of Baba Manmohan Dass. Later, Rana also visited Looni Mohalla, a locality of West Pakistan Refugees in Lower Jandyal Panchayat of Mathwar Block. He referred to the initiatives taken by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for empowering them politically and economically.

People's power is bigger than anything in democracy: Bhalla

Time come to show power of poor people, bring change: Lal Singh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SUNDERBANI/KALAKOTE: JKPC President Vikar Rasool Wani has said that BJP was claiming to get seat of Anantnag- Rajouri but failed to find & field candidate, fearing defeat.

Addressing massive rally at Sunderbani and later Kalakote on Monday Vikar Rasool Wani said Ch Lal Singh has won the seat and Raman Bhalla will also win with huge margin.

INC candidate Raman Bhalla said that people's power is bigger than anything in a democracy but today fight is to save democracy & Constitution. People should change the regime



Senior Congress leaders addressing a gathering.

otherwise BJP would change the system and snatch the power of vote from people, he added.

Ch Lal Singh said that time has come to show power of poor people and bring about change.

He said we shall get back our state and fight back and

asked people to teach BJP a lesson. Senior Vice President & Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma, Shabir Ahmed Khan, DDC NC leader Rameshwar Singh, Sain Abdul Rasheed, Neeraj Kundan, Yashvardhan Singh, Mumtaz Akhtar (DDC), NC Sharma,

Rajinder Prashad, Vijay Suri Iftikhaar ahmed, Shakeel Mir, Prof Vikar, Adv Zunaid, Sajad Tariq, Nirmal Sin Yog Raj Muzaffer Ram, Nisar, Master Parshotam, Muzaffer Baji spoke. Later PCC President Vikar Rasool Wani and Ch Lal Singh addressed a series of meetings in Reason district and campaigned for Raman Bhalla. They addressed meetings at Ramsoo, Sanglikote, Bathoie, Bakal, Talwara, Panassa, Thakrakote, Narkote. Those present on the occasion include District President Reasi Bopinder Singh Jamwal, Sarpanch Gopal and others Sr leaders Congress.

Former Minister and veteran politician, Pt. Govind Ram Sharma passes away at 95

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Former Minister and veteran politician, Pt. Govind Ram Sharma has passed away today. He was 95. He breathed his last at 5 pm at his residence at Roop Nagar here. His health was normal but facing some old age issues for the past some days.

His cremation will take place at ChandianGhaatAkhnoor on Tuesday at 3.00 pm. His



mortal remains will be taken to his native village MairaMandrian, Akhnoor

where the people will pay homage to his leader. People will also pay homage to the late leader at BJP office Akhnoor from 12.00 to 2.00 pm.

The political journey of Pt. Govind Ram Sharma started in 1951 as a Panchayat Member. Throughout his life, he fought for the cause of the needy and down trodden people. He was elected as MLA from Akhnoor Assembly constituency twice in the year

1987 and 1996. He remained Minister for Health and PHE from 1996 to 2002 in the Farooq Abdullah led Government. He remained in the active politics for about 8 decades and served the people till his last breath. During his stints as Minister and MLAs he ensured exemplary development of Akhnoor constituency. His demise has been widely mourned in political and social circles.

State Engineering Gazetted cadres are under multi pronged administrative, professional, financial stresses

Due to poor HR Management some retired I/C CEs got pension even in AEE grade for Ten Years Why even "Top Grade" Engineers from IITs rush for IAS stream & not even IES as first preference? J&K Gazetted Engineering Services not provided even Non-Functional (M) Grade Promotions

■ DAYA SAGAR

Under SRO-403 dated 14th September, 2018 issued under Court orders the pay scale of Superintending Engineer was changed / upgraded from Rs. 3150-4500 to Rs. 4500-5700 (old grade which after VII Pay Commission is Grade Level- 13 i.e 1,23,100-2,15,900) notionally w.e.f. 01-04-1987 and monetarily w.e.f. 01-04-1990). That way the pay scale of Superintending Engineer became equal to the pay scale of Chief Engineer . It was expected that before issuing SRO 403 in 2018 the GAD & Administrative Departments of Engg Department handling human resource affairs would have taken notice of the correction required in the grade of SE and its effect on the grade / level of CE without waiting for petitions/ representations from Chief Engineers but that

did not happen. Er. Sheikh Mohammad Hussain and Ors, filed SWP No. 2134/2020 before the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu & Kashmir at Srinagar with the prayer that the cascading effect of the revision of Pay Scale of Superintending Engineers in terms of SRO 403 of 2018 in the higher post of Chief Engineer and Development Commissioner has not been mentioned in the said SRO but the said writ petition was transferred to the Hon'ble Central Administrative Tribunal, Jammu Bench for adjudication where the Hon'ble CAT on 22.03.2021 disposed of the aforesaid case bearing TA No. 3749/2021 with the directions: <"We, therefore, dispose of the T.A., directing the competent authority, i.e. respondent Nos. 1 and 2, to pass appropriate orders on the representa-



tions submitted by the applicants on 03.09.2018 and subsequent thereto, within three months from the date of the receipt of a copy of this order. We, however, make it clear that we did not express any view on the merits of the matter. Any benefit, which may result on account of such revision, shall be prospective in nature." The CAT order was challenged before the Hon'ble High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh through the medium of WP(C) 1722/2021 and the Hon'ble High Court on 09.09.2021 passed the order:<" Meanwhile, respondents shall consider

the representations of the petitioners submitted on 03.09.2018 and subsequent thereto, within three months from the date copy of this order is received for the benefit sought and the portion of the order impugned to the extent of rider is stayed and shall not come in the way of the respondents" > But so strangely Government under Government Order No. 319 -F of 2021 Dated:-06-12-2021 issued by Finance Department ordered that representation was found devoid of any merits and the same is accordingly rejected. Trying to make the order a speaking order the finance department had based the decision on the pleas (i) that as per recruitment rules notified vide SRO-297 dated 14.09.2006 governing the Jammu & Kashmir Engineering (Gazetted) services the Pay Scale of the post of Chief Engineer is Rs 14,300-

400-18,300 revised to Pay Band PB-4 Rs 37,400 67,000+G. P 8,700 (as per 5th Pay Commission) which has been further revised to Pay Level-13 Rs 1,23,100-2,15,900 (as per 7th Pay Commission) and (ii) the post of Chief Engineer is a Head of Departments Level Post, which is equivalent to that of Special Scale of KAS, and other Head of Department Level posts so in case the post of Chief Engineer is placed in a higher scale than that of any of the Head of Departments similar claims will pour from other departments which is bound to generate resentment/criticism besides litigations. The reasons do not stand to logic , question is of reasonable justice and disposal by government Finance department does not stand to the fact that one who enters Gazetted Engg Service through PSC enters at Level

SA of higher grade and has to be an Engineering degree Holder where as one who enters the KAS service through PSC can be any Graduate Degree holder and enters at Level 8 of lower grade only so how a Engineer could be restricted to Level 13 only when KAS can move to Level 14 and even Level 15 after induction in IAS (ofcourse Engineers too can be considered for induction in IAS as per service rules of IAS but that has not been done J&K for many years). More so it as an Administrative matter and should have been examined by GAD

The J&K Engineering Gazetted Service Engineers are under multi pronged administrative, professional, financial and social stresses To be continued..

(The writer is a Sr Journalist and Social Activist)