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Helpdesk set up...**

polling stations and a postal ballot scheme for displaced community voters in Jammu, Udhampur, and Delhi, they said.

"A helpdesk has been established in our office and across various zones. Several employees have been deployed to ensure seamless facilitation of migrant polling." Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner Dr Arvind Karwani told PTI.

Karwani emphasised that the helpdesk is actively addressing issues faced by migrants, with the goal of enhancing voter facilities ahead of the upcoming assembly elections starting September 18.

"Kashmiri migrant voters opting to vote in person via electronic voting machines (EVMs) will have access to 24 polling stations, including 19 in Jammu, 1 in Udhampur, and 4 in Delhi," he said.

Karwani, who is monitoring the control room for the helpdesk, assured that all necessary arrangements have been made at these polling stations in accordance with EC guidelines.

The EC issued a notification on August 22 outlining the voting options for Kashmiri migrants, offering choices of both in-person voting at special polling stations and through postal ballots.

"Special polling stations have been set up in Udhampur, Delhi, and Jammu. Alternatively, Kashmiri migrants can opt for postal ballots," he added.

Karwani said the updated electoral rolls, detailing migrant electors in various zones of Jammu and Udhampur mapped to respective special polling stations, will soon be published.

"Corrections or objections will be accepted within a seven-day period", he added.

The 90 assembly constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir are scheduled to go to polls in three phases beginning September 18, with counting of votes slated for October 4.

No major change...

put out on Monday, as it has named former MLA Baldev Raj Sharma from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi seat in place of Rohit Dubey. All other names are the same for the same set of constituencies, announced yesterday before being withdrawn.

The party's latest list has 10 candidates for the second phase of polls and 19 for the third phase.

The BJP has so far not named its nominee for Nowshera, which was represented in 2014 by its current state president Ravinder Raina, and Gandhinagar, from where its another senior leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta was elected in the last polls.

The party fielded Devender Singh Rana from his strong pocket borough Nagrota and named Satish Sharma as its candidate from Billawar, which was represented by former Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh in the last assembly polls held in 2014.

Rana, who has won the 2014 elections from Nagrota on the National Conference ticket before joining the BJP three years back, is an easily amenable humble popular mass leader with a pan J&K presence and has nurtured and developed Nagrota constituency very well and is acceptable to all sections of society, a party leader said.

The BJP has reposed faith in former minister Chandra Prakash Ganga from Vijapur, former MLAs Pawan Gupta (Udhampur West), Jeevan Lal (Bani), Rajeev Sharma (Chhamb), Rajiv Jasrotia (Jasrota), Ghara Ram Bhagat (Suchetgarh -SC) and Devinder Kumar Maniyal (Ramgarh-SC).

Sunil Bhardwaj was given the ticket from Ramnagar SC replacing former MLA R S Pathania, Ashok Bhat (Habbakadal in Srinagar), Kuldeep Raj Dubey (Reasi) after dropping former MLA Ajay Nanda, Thakur Randhir Singh (Kalakote Sunderbani) who replaced former minister Abdul Gani Kohli, Vijay Kumar Sharma (Hiranagar), Darshan Singh (Basohli) and Mohammad Akram Choudhary (Gulabgarh-ST).

The BJP fielded senior leader and National Secretary Narinder Singh Raina from R S Pura-Jammu south, party Vice President Yudhvir Sethi (Jammu East) and Arvind Gupta from Jammu West, dropping former minister Sat Paul Sharma.

Former minister Sham Lal Sharma, who joined the BJP after leaving the Congress in March 2019, was fielded from Jammu North while former minister Surjit Singh Slathia, who joined the BJP in October 2021, got a ticket from Samba.

A two-time MLA and former minister Chowdhary Zulfikar Ali, who recently joined the BJP after leaving the Apni Party, will contest from Budhal (ST) constituency, former MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia, who joined the BJP in September 2022, was fielded from Chenani, former minister Syed Mushtaq Ahmad Bukhari, who joined the BJP in February this year, was fielded from his stronghold of Surankote.

Mohd Iqbal Malik, who is a state executive member of the party and co-incharge minority moreha after joining the BJP in July 2019, was named the party's candidate from Thanamandi, while three more new entrants into the party fold - former SSP Mohan Lal Bhagat, former MLC Murtaza Khan, Choudhary Abdul Gani - were fielded from Akhmoor-SC, Mendhar-ST and Poonch-haveli, respectively.

Meanwhile, a group of women BJP workers from the Ramnagar constituency staged a protest outside the party headquarters in Jammu, voicing their resentment against the party leadership for ignoring the women leaders while selecting the candidates.

The BJP has only fielded one woman candidate from the Kishtwar constituency. "We want a woman candidate in our constituency," said a party worker, criticising the leaders for not opening the doors to hear them.

BJP to draft...

25 and then a review of the exercise will be carried out before the launch of the second phase on October 1. It will continue till October 15, he said.

Active members, a term for party workers who can contest organisational elections after making a certain number of new members, will be enrolled between October 16-31.

Sources said there was no plan as of now to appoint a working president before a full-fledged president is elected. They, however, added that the party leadership may take a fresh call depending on organisational needs.

Tawde said party workers across the country have been trained for the drive, which relies heavily on the digital medium. The party is relying on its 10 lakh active members to carry out the exercise, he added.

All existing members of the BJP have to renew their membership every six years.

The current drive will be marked by the renewal of existing membership as well as making new members.

The BJP had earlier announced that the party aims to induct more than 10 crore members during the drive that will not cover the states going to polls in the coming months.

The party's membership strength was 18 crore after the last such exercise, and it has expressed hope that the party will cross the figure this time.

New members will be made through four methods - calling a mobile number (8800002024), scanning QR code, by NaMo app and through the BJP's website. However, in remote areas, the party will use the traditional method with papers to enrol new members.

Three terrorist associates...

and two grenades were recovered from the possession of the arrested suspects.

They were identified as Umaiq Mushtaq Zargar, Ishfaq Ahmad Dar and Shahid Ahmad Gadhanji, the official said, adding that a case has been registered against the trio under the relevant sections of law.

Cong-NC alliance...

nomination papers by the two BJP candidates, the Union minister said this is not for the first time that a coalition between the Congress and National Conference had happened and it will have no bearing on the prospects of the BJP.

"Coalitions have been there earlier as well with a different name but despite that BJP had won from here, so it (coming together of NC and Congress) will have no impact on us... We will win easily and emerge successful in forming the Government with majority without any trouble," said Singh, who is a minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

He said the BJP is a cadre-based party and always ready for any election whether it is Lok Sabha, assembly or local bodies.

"We fight together to make the Lotus (party's symbol) bloom," added Singh.

Asked about the manifesto of the National Conference (NC) promising restoration of Article 370, he said this question should be asked to the Congress which has aligned with the party to know their stand on this.

"The Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mukherjee had made our stand clear in 1952 by opposing Article 370. Congress needs to be asked where they stand on the issue," he said, adding the Congress-NC coalition is full of contradictions and will get exposed before people in the coming days.

Jay Shah elected...

Zealander decided against running for a third consecutive term of two years.

Shah, who is the son of union home minister Amit Shah, will relinquish his position in India at the BCCT's Annual General Meeting likely to be held towards the end of next month or in October.

Shah became the fifth Indian after late Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N Srinivasan and Shashank Manohar to be elected for the high-profile job.

The Ahmedabad-based administrator, who was the sole nominee for the chairmanship, emphasised his commitment to expanding the global reach and popularity of cricket, especially with its upcoming inclusion in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

"I am humbled by the nomination as the Chair of the International Cricket Council," Shah stated in an ICC release.

He also acknowledged that international cricket stands at a critical juncture and it would be important to balance the coexistence of multiple formats, promote the adoption of advanced technologies, and introduce marquee events to new global markets.

"I am committed to working closely with the ICC team and our member nations to further globalise cricket. Our goal is to make cricket more inclusive and popular than ever before," he was quoted as saying in the release.

Being a powerful decision-maker in the richest cricket board of the world, which contributes more than 75 per cent of the revenue for the global body, Shah's election was never in doubt once he threw his hat in the ring.

It is understood that one among the powerful SENA cricket boards (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) was Shah's proposer and another one of these countries seconded the nomination. And he remained the lone contender on the last day of nominations.

As per the ICC constitution, there are 17 votes -- 12 full Test playing nations, chairman, deputy chairman, two associate member nominees and one independent female director.

That he is a likely choice was evident when he was appointed the head of ICC's most powerful sub-committee -- the Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) in 2022.

The timing couldn't have been better for Shah, who would have had to go on a mandatory cooling off period in 2025 for a period of three years till 2028.

The BCCI constitution allows office-bearers to stay in office for a cumulative period of 18 years -- nine in national board and nine in state units.

But at a stretch, a person can remain office-bearer for a period of only six years after which a three-years cooling off period is necessary.

Shah, if all goes well, can have two terms in the ICC and come back to complete his remaining four years in BCCI in 2028 albeit as president of the board.

The immediate task facing Shah will be the conduct of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

It must be noted that Shah, as chairman of Asian Cricket Council (ACC), was a big supporter of the Hybrid Model where Pakistan and Sri Lanka co-hosted the Asia Cup ODI event in 2023.

How ICC chairman Shah handles the matter remains to be seen considering that the Indian government might not allow the team to travel to Pakistan.

It is believed that the 'Hybrid Model' could again be the solution with Pakistan playing its matches at home and against India in Dubai.

The long term challenge would be to protect the future of Test cricket by having dedicated funds for the formats, keep ODIs sustainable and protect countries from losing core talent to freelancing in T20 leagues across the world.

Maintaining a calendar that is effective and allows players some breathing space along with means to earn well would also be high on his agenda.

Another important challenge is promotion of cricket in Olympics as it would make its debut at Los Angeles in 2028.

"While we will build on the valuable lessons learned, we must also embrace fresh thinking and innovation to elevate the love for cricket worldwide," Shah stated.

"The inclusion of our sport in the Olympics at LA 2028 represents a significant inflection point for the growth of cricket, and I am confident that it will drive the sport forward in unprecedented ways," he added.

ACB registers disproportionate...

of his close relatives on whose names benami property has been raised by the suspect. During the search, official said, incriminating material including Revenue papers and financial/bank documents were recovered and seized as evidence in the instant case. Further investigation of the case is going on, official said.

am not ready to accept or may be suggesting that I look down upon? It has put a pressure on me and I do not want to give a wrong signal to the people," he said.

On alliance, Omar Abdullah said the seat-sharing arrangement with the Congress was done with the aim of taking on the BJP as a consolidated front, and form a government which will try to address problems of the people.

"In a coalition, one has to bear several things. You have to leave some (seats) to gain some (seats). We believe that the final decision taken by the coalition was a very good one. God willing, the coalition will be successful and will form the government here which will try to address the problems faced by the people," he told reporters in Awantipora area of Pulwama district.

"If our objectives are good, we will succeed," the senior Abdullah, who was accompanying National Conference candidate for Pampore seat, former Lok Sabha member Justice (retired) Hasnain Masoodi, for filing the nomination papers, said.

Speaking to reporters at Bijbehara in Anantnag district, Omar said, "The seat-sharing agreement with the Congress has been done. The effort was to raise a consolidated front against the BJP and its supporting parties and contest elections against them and to increase the chances of success further". Referring to the seat-sharing agreement, Omar said he is aware that some of the leaders, who had worked hard over the past five to 10 years and wanted to contest the polls, were not given the mandate.

Omar Abdullah to...

Party (JKNPP), the allies announced at a joint press conference at NC president Farooq Abdullah's residence in Srinagar after day-long negotiations. They also said there will be a "friendly contest" on five seats of the Union territory. Hours after the announcement, the Congress put out a list of nine candidates for the polls, fielding Mir from Dooru and Wani from Banihal. The party also fielded Surinder Singh Channi from the Tral seat, Amanullah Mantoo from Devsar, Peerzada Mohammad Syed from Anantnag, Shaikh Zafarullah from Inderwal, Nadeem Sharief from Bhadarwah, Sheikh Riyaz from Doda and Pradeep Kumar Bhagat from Doda West. The first phase of the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be held on September 18, the second on September 25 and the third on October 1. The counting of votes will be undertaken on October 4.

J&K polls: Congress...

village and carried out searches following the incident but there was no trace of the suspected persons. The search operation was extended to adjoining villages this morning and was continuing when last reports were received, the officials said.

Police recover old grenade in Jammu city

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Police on Tuesday recovered an old rusted grenade in Jammu city and later defused it safely, officials said.

The recovery was made from Resham Ghar colony when a police party was patrolling the area, they said.

A bomb disposal squad was immediately called to the spot and the grenade was removed safely and later destroyed in the outskirts of Jammu, they said.

Bodies of two cloudburst victims recovered in Ramban, search on for 5 missing persons

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
RAMBAN/JAMMU: Two bodies, including that of a 12-year-old boy, were recovered on Tuesday as rescue operation continued in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district to trace five other missing people following a cloudburst, officials said.

The cloudburst occurred in Panchayats Kumate, Dhraman and Halla in Rajgarh tehsil late Monday afternoon, causing flash floods in Tanger and Dadi streams, they said.

Seven people of three different families were reported missing in the flash

floods, Tehsildar Rajgarh Major Singh told PTI.

Despite the inclement weather, the rescue team has so far managed to retrieve bodies of two persons -- Yasir Ahmad (20) of Gadgram and Khalid Ahmed Parihar (12) of Suli-Kumate, Singh, who is supervising the rescue operation, said.

He said efforts are underway to locate the remaining five missing people -- Ahmad's mother Naseema Begum (42) and sister Shazia Banoo (6), Parihar's mother Gulshan Begum (42) and sister Seerat Banoo (8), and six-year-old

Qazia Banoo of Dungan Dandllah.

The rescue team includes personnel from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), local police and volunteers. Singh said that continuous rain has slowed down the rescue operation, as the rivulets are in spate. It took nearly three hours for the rescuers to reach the affected villages on foot, he added. At least two government schools at Gadgram and Sonsua, and a couple of other structures also suffered damages, while three parked private vehicles were washed away by the flash floods, the officials said.

Modi speaks to Putin on his Ukraine visit, also discusses measures to further strengthen ties

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin as he shared his "insights" from his recent visit to Ukraine and reiterated India's firm commitment to supporting an early, abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict with Ukraine.

In a post on X, Modi said the two leaders also discussed measures to further strengthen special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries.

He said, "Exchanged perspectives on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and my insights from the recent visit to Ukraine. Reiterated India's firm commitment to support an early, abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict."

The prime minister had on Monday briefed US President Joe Biden on his visit to Ukraine and conveyed India's full support for early return of peace to the region through dialogue and diplomacy.

The Ministry of External Affairs in a statement later said Modi during his telephone conversation with Putin recalled his "successful visit to Russia" last month to participate

in the 22nd India-Russia Bilateral Summit.

"The two leaders exchanged views on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Prime Minister shared insights from his recent visit to Ukraine. He underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as well as sincere and practical engagement between all stakeholders to achieve an abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict," the MEA said.

The two leaders "reviewed progress" on a number of bilateral issues and discussed measures to further strengthen the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia, it said.

"They also exchanged views on a range of regional and global issues of mutual interest," the statement said, adding, the two leaders agreed to remain in touch.

On August 23, Modi paid a nearly nine-hour visit to Kyiv in the first-ever trip to Ukraine by an Indian prime minister since it became independent over three decades ago and held wide-ranging talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He also invited Zelenskyy to visit India and the Ukrainian leader said he would be happy to travel to the "great" country.

Several former members of banned JeI file nomination papers for Assembly polls

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: Several former members of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday filed nomination papers to contest the Assembly polls in the Union Territory as independent candidates.

Sugra Barkati, daughter of jailed separatist worker Sarjan Barkati, also filed nomination papers on behalf of her father.

While Jamaat cannot take part in the elections due to the ban imposed on it by the Union home ministry, it had shown interest in participating in the polls during the Lok Sabha elections if the ban were removed.

Jamaat has not taken part in any elections after 1987 and had been a part of separatist amalgam Hurriyat Conference, which advocated for poll boycotts, from 1993 to 2003.

Talat Majeed, former ameer (chief) of Jamaat, filed his nomination papers from Pulwama constituency as an independent candidate.

Majeed said that after pondering over the changing geo-political scenario since 2008, he felt the need to shun some of the past "rigidities".

"In view of the prevalent geo-political scenario, I felt that time had come for us to take part in the political process. I have been expressing my views since 2014 very openly and I am taking that agenda forward even today," he said.

Majeed said organisations like Jamaat and Hurriyat Conference have a role to play in the current political scenario.

"We cannot ignore the situation globally when we talk about the situation in

'Better late than never': Omar on JeI leaders contesting polls

SRINAGAR: National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said it is "better late than never" for the banned Jamaat Islami leaders to participate in the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir elections.

"We were told that elections are haram (forbidden) but now the elections have become halal (permissible). It is better late than never," Abdullah told reporters at Pahalgam in Anantnag district.

The former chief minister said he has been saying for a long time that democracy is the only way forward.

"For 35 years, Jamaat Islami followed a particular political ideology which has changed now. It is good.

"We wanted that the ban on Jamaat be lifted and they contest on their own symbol but didn't happen. It is still good that they are contesting as independents," he said.

In response to a question, Abdullah said it is for the voters to decide which party Jamaat is supporting if it extends support to the People's Conference (PC).

"People's Conference's ties with the BJP are out there in the public. If Jamaat supports PC, then the voter will know which side they are supporting.

"We don't know of any relations between AIP (led by Baramulla Lok Sabha MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid) and Delhi. If Jamaat is supporting PC and AIP, it would raise questions on AIP as well," he said.

Kashmir. As Kashmiris, we should live in the present and look towards a (better) future," he added.

Sayar Ahmad Reshi, another former Jamaat leader, is also contesting the elections from the Kulgam Assembly seat.

Reshi appealed to the people to vote according to their conscience.

"It is up to Allah to bless or disgrace a person... but I will appeal to people to vote as per their conscience," he said, adding "we will launch a historic movement for reforms".

Reshi, while admitting that the youth have been weaned away from violence by introducing them to sports, said the youngsters need jobs.

"There is no doubt that the youth have been given bats but it will not fill their stomach. There is unemployment and killings are going on. Elderly people have to run from pillar to post just for a meagre old age pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000. We will work for social justice," he added.

Sarjan Barkati, who shot to prominence during the turmoil which erupted following the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in 2016, will be contesting from the Shopian district.

His daughter -- Sugra Barkati -- filed the nomination papers on behalf of her father, who is in jail on terror charges.

Assembly polls are being held in Jammu and Kashmir for the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The polls -- "the first in 10 years --" will be held in three phases with the first phase of polling on September 18, followed by September 25 and October 1. The counting of votes will be done on October 4.

PDP's Iltija Mufti jumps into electoral fray, files nomination from Bijbehara

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: Iltija Mufti, daughter of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, on Tuesday became the third generation politician from the Mufti family to jump into electoral fray as she filed her nomination from party's stronghold Bijbehara assembly seat in Jammu and Kashmir.

Accompanied by her mother Mehbooba Mufti and hundreds of supporters, Iltija Mufti filed her papers before the returning officer for Bijbehara assembly seat which has been represented by family loyalist Abdul Rehman Veeri for the past four consecutive terms.

Talking to reporters after filing her nomination, Iltija Mufti said she will raise "injustice and harassment meted out to people of Kashmir" in the assembly.

"I have always stood by truth and will continue to do it," she added.