

On the right path

Elections will address the yearning for substantive democracy in J&K

With the Election Commission of India (ECI) announcing the dates for elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) – in three phases between September 18 and October 1 – a major lacuna in the conduct of democracy in the province has been addressed. The absence of an elected and functioning State legislature, along with the abrogation of special status and the bifurcation of the erstwhile State, followed by J&K's diminution into a Union Territory (UT) had resulted in significant despondency and alienation among the people. The absence of a legislature to express concerns and the muzzling of dissent by arresting students, journalists, lawyers among other civil society representatives under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Public Safety Act have been recipes for furthering the alienation. In its judgment that upheld the abrogation of special status – a flawed one – the Supreme Court had also ordered that elections to the Legislative Assembly had to be held by September 30, 2024, besides expressing its opinion on the need to restore statehood as soon as possible. The ECI has done well to heed the first directive. The absence of an elected legislature has meant that the people have lacked a voice to articulate their concerns even as they have yearned for their rights of electoral participation. This is evident in the participation levels in the local body and parliamentary elections since 2019 – the numbers were much higher than in earlier elections, especially in the Valley.

In the last-held Assembly elections nearly a decade ago, the mandate was split on communal lines with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) winning nearly all of the seats that it contested in Jammu, and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the National Conference (NC) and the Congress winning most of the seats in the Valley. Much water has flowed down the Jhelum after the formation of the coalition government between the PDP and the BJP, an unnatural alliance that was doomed to fail. The NC and Congress had fought the 2024 general election as part of the INDIA bloc and there is the likelihood of an alliance between these parties and smaller ones in these elections. The need for like-minded parties, that agree on changing the status quo in the UT by bringing back statehood and promoting secular governance, to come together, is promising not only for electoral tactical purposes. It is an imperative in order to ensure that the discourse in the province, which has been beset with fresh waves of terrorism in Jammu and south Kashmir, is not communalised. An election that is contested on civic issues and rights discourses, rather than on communal lines, would help bring back peace to India's northernmost province.

J&K polls: EC issues notification for first phase

NEW DELHI

The EC on Tuesday issued a notification for the first phase of voting for the J&K election, being held after a decade. It kick starts the process of filing nominations for the 24 constituencies which will go to the polls on September 18.

Voting for 24 J&K seats on Sept 18

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 2

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday set the ball rolling on the long-awaited Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, by issuing the notification for the first phase in which 24 segments will go to polls on September 18.

Meanwhile, J&K's chief secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday held a meeting with top civil administration and police department officials here to take stock of the security arrangements being made to ensure smooth conduct of Assembly elections, an official spokesman said.

The EC had on August 16 announced to hold the Assembly polls in J&K in three phases on September 18, September 25 and October 1, with the counting of votes scheduled for October 4.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION on

Tuesday issued the notification for the first phase in which 24 segments will go to polls on September 18. Following the notification, the nomination process has started.

Various political parties welcomed the announcement, hoping it would restore democracy and help its people towards facing the long-standing challenges democratically.

However, most of them also emphasised the importance of restoring J&K's statehood at the earliest to meet the collective desire of its people.

Following the EC's issuing the notification for the first phase of the elections, the nomination process for the candidates has started. Full report ■ P4

ECI sets ball rolling on J&K polls; issues Ph 1 notification

FROM PG 1

The two nations are also preparing the ground for a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan later this year.

In other major steps in defence cooperation, the two sides also appreciated their cooperation in "unmanned ground vehicles (UGV)/robotics" and also agreed to explore cooperation in ship maintenance in India which the Japanese defence minister said would boost interoperability between the maritime forces of the two nations. They also agreed to explore the issue of cooperation in providing defence and security assistance to third countries in the Indo-Pacific region which could prove to be a game-changer in security equations. Defence minister Rajnath Singh and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar represented

Knives out in PDP over ticket distribution for J&K elections

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, AUG. 20

Several key faces in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have quit the party and threatened to take extreme step in the wake of having been denied party tickets to contest the upcoming J&K Assembly elections.

Party vice-president and former minister Abdur Rehman is reported to have voiced his displeasure over being asked to

contest from Shangus-Anantnag East seat of South Kashmir instead of his home constituency Bijbehara, where he was elected with handsome margins four times from 1998 to 2014. The PDP has decided to field party president Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti from Bijbehara.

Several former MLAs and DDCs members have also been denied party tickets to contest in the upcoming J&K polls.

India in the talks while Japanese foreign minister Yoko Kamikawa and Mr. Kihara represented their country.

It added the CS implored upon the Transport Department to make a

prior roadmap in collaboration with the respective districts for making available the requisite number of buses, LMVs and HMVs for ferrying polling staff, security forces and other poll materials.

Activities in J&K surge after poll notification

Jailed MP Engineer Rashid May Be A Major Force

Saleem.Pandit@timesofindia.com

Srinagar: Political activities across J&K intensified following Tuesday's notification by EC for the first round of the three-phase assembly elections on Sept 18 — following a decade-long gap and the 2019 abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the region into two Union territories, including Ladakh.

This round will cover 24 of the 90 constituencies — 16 in Kashmir valley and eight in Jammu division. With the notification, the nomination process has officially begun. Candidates have until Aug 27 to submit their nominations, with scrutiny set for Aug 28. The final date for withdrawal of candidature is Aug 30.

While parties like National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Congress, and BJP remain major players, Baramulla's independent MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh, better known as Engineer Rashid, might upend the equation. Arrested in 2019 by NIA and currently imprisoned in New Delhi's Tihar jail on terrorism-funding charges,

Ram Madhav back in BJP as poll in-charge

New Delhi: In a clear sign of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) greater engagement with BJP affairs, its prominent functionary Ram Madhav on Tuesday returned to politics as the saffron party appointed him poll in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir, reports **Akhilesh Singh**. Madhav who served as a general secretary when Union home minister Amit Shah was the president, went back to RSS when JP Nadda constituted his team after taking over as party president.

Rashid defeated NC vice president Omar Abdullah and People's Conference president Sajad Gani Lone in the Lok Sabha polls.

The political momentum behind Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) has been growing lately as several politicians have defected to his side. AIP plans to field multiple candidates in both north and south Kashmir and could potentially secure several seats, positioning itself as a key player in the

Kharge, Rahul to head for J&K today

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi will start a two-day tour of J&K on Wednesday to take stock of the party's preparations for the upcoming assembly elections. They will visit Jammu and Srinagar, and hold meetings with party workers and office bearers. The new J&K Congress president, Tariq Hameed Karra, has said that National Conference has approached the Congress for an alliance, and even PDP has spoken at "some level" for a tie-up. **TNN**

formation of the new govt.

Key constituencies voting on Sept 18 include Pampore, Tral, Pulwama, Shopian, Anantnag East and West, and Pahalgam, predominantly in south Kashmir. In Jammu region, seats such as Inderwal, Kishtwar, Doda, and Ramban will be contested.

After the 2023 delimitation, the new J&K assembly will have 47 legislators from Kashmir division and 43 from Jammu.

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ROUND UP

J&K first phase poll notification out, candidates vie for 24 segments

SRINAGAR: The Election Commission on Tuesday issued notification for the first phase of the three-phased assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir in which 24 segments will go to polls on September 18. With the issuance of the notification, the nomination process for the candidates has started. The last date for making nominations for the first phase is August 27, while the scrutiny of the nominations will take place on August 28. The last date for the withdrawal of candidature is August 30 and the date of poll, if necessitated, is September 18. In the first phase, 16 assembly segments in the valley that are in south Kashmir and eight in Jammu region will go to polls. The seats are Pampore, Tral, Pulwama, Rajpora, Zainapora, Shopian, D H Pora, Kulgam, Devsar, Dooru, Kokernag (ST), Anantnag West, Anantnag, Srigufwara-Bijbehara, Shangus-Anantnag East, and Pahalgam in the Kashmir valley. Inderwal, Kishtwar, Padder-Nagseni, Bhadarwah, Doda, Doda West, Ramban, and Banihal will go to polls in Jammu region.