

Kick Off Campaign for Mizoram Polls



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Guwahati: BJP president Amit Shah is all set to kick-start his party's campaign on October 17 in Mizoram, the final frontier for the party as it targets a 'Congress Mukti' Northeast India. He is scheduled to address booth-level workers on that day to prepare them for the November 28th polls.

JV Hluna, Mizoram's BJP president, told ET, "Amit Shah will inaugurate the party office in Aizwal. He will address booth-level party workers. Around 15,000 booth level workers from across the state will attend the meeting. A gathering of 15,000 workers is considered huge in Mizoram."

BJP, which is currently ruling Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and supports coalition governments in Meghalaya and Nagaland, has decided to go it alone in the Mizoram polls and plans to contest all the 40 seats there.

The party has almost finalised all its candidates.

Meanwhile, there has been a realignment of forces with three regional parties — the People's Represent for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM), Mizoram Chhantua Pawl (MCP) and Save Mizoram Front and Operation Mizoram — forging a pre-poll electoral alliance. The opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) which is a member of the BJP-floated platform of non-Congress parties — the North East Democratic Alliance — has announced that it will not have any electoral understanding or seat-sharing arrangement with the BJP.

Hluna said, "We will go it alone in the polls. However, we are talking to some smaller parties for electoral understanding. People are yearning for change and BJP is ready to provide an alternative to the people of Mizoram. Mizoram chief minister Lalthanhawla faces anti-incumbency."

BJP is likely to field leaders from Christian-dominated Nagaland and Meghalaya to campaign for the party in the state.

Congress is ruling the state for the second consecutive term. Mizoram Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), SB Shashank, said the state has an electorate of 7,68,181, which includes 3,93,685 female voters. They will exercise their franchise in 1,164 polling stations where EVMs would be used. The last date for filing nominations is November 9, while scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on November 12. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is November 14. Counting will be held on December 11.

Ahmedabad: Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel has defended party MLA Alpesh Thakor after members of an outfit he leads were arrested in connection with the attacks on Hindi-speaking migrants in Gujarat, and alleged that the BJP government was trying to politicise the issue.

Since the rape of a 14-month-old girl in Sabarkantha district on September 28 and the arrest of a labourer from Bihar for the crime, six districts, most of them in north Gujarat, have seen sporadic incidents of

violence. Gujarat minister of State Home Pradeepsinh Jadeja, naming the Congress, has said efforts were underway to find out whether "it is a conspiracy by those who are out of power in Gujarat since the last 22 years".

While police have arrested members of the Kshatriya Sena in connection with the attacks and also mentioned the outfit in some of the FIRs, its president and Congress MLA Alpesh Thakor has alleged that youths from the community were being falsely implicated.

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