

*JPNN/New Delhi/ Feb 21, 2015/ Decks have been cleared for a PDP-BJP government in Jammu and Kashmir possibly within a week with both sides agreeing on a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) which*

*is understood to have addressed controversial issues like Article 370 and AFSPA. Sources privy to the development said PDP patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, who is likely to be the Chief Minister for the entire six year term, will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi early next week when the announcement on government formation is expected to be made. Ahead of the Mufti-Modi meeting, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti will fly in here tomorrow and meet senior BJP leaders, the sources said. The leaders of the PDP, which has 28 MLAs and BJP with 25 MLAs in the 87-member Assembly, chose to keep under wraps details of the CMP as also how the two sides thrashed out contentious issues including Article 370, the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and rehabilitation of nearly 25,000 West Pakistan Refugees over which they were sharply divided. The CMP needs to be read in totality and not in bits and pieces, leaders from both the political parties, who preferred anonymity, stressed. Both the parties have agreed to put the CMP in public domain ahead of the swearing-in of the new government, which will see BJP MLAs sitting on the ruling benches for the first time in the state Assembly. The sources said the state could see a new government "within a week".*

*PDP and BJP have been in talks ever since the election results on December 23 last gave a fractured verdict. The state is under Governor's Rule for over a month. The two sides are understood to have agreed on formation of a Committee which will go into the AFSPA issue and suggest areas from where it could be revoked. On Article 370, while BJP has given no written assurance as demanded by the PDP, the CMP is expected to say that both parties will respect the aspirations of the people of the state within the Constitution, the sources indicated.*

*The proposed CMP may also touch upon the issue of more than 25,000 families of West Pakistan refugees by terming it as a humanitarian issue. According to the sources, the portfolios have also been finalised with the PDP likely to walk away with Home and while BJP is expected to get Tourism and Water Resources, Public Health Engineering and Planning. BJP's Nirmal Singh is likely to be nominated Deputy Chief Minister and also take charge of Planning, the sources said. BJP general secretary Ram Madhav, who has been negotiating for government formation with state leaders, denied any compromise on the crucial issues. If "compromise" was to have been made by either side, then a solution to the differences would have been found long ago. "Both the parties are trying sincerely to arrive at an understanding on CMP of governance. There are a couple of political issues on which traditionally we have held different views. We are trying hard to find a common ground," he said. In Jammu, BJP MP and incharge of Jammu and Kashmir Avinash Rai Khanna refused to give any details but said that the talks*

*for government formation in the state was in its "final stage" and the state would get a "stable government" in the "shortest possible time."*

*"I can only say that the dialogue between PDP and BJP that has been going for quite some time is in its final stage," Khanna told PTI. When asked how long it would take for both the parties to make a formal announcement on the formation of a coalition government in the state he said, "We want it to happen by tomorrow, but I am hopeful that the formal announcement would be made very soon, in the shortest possible time". President of the state unit of BJP and MP from Jammu, Jugal Kishore Sharma said, "We want to discuss and reach a consensus on all the issues before we make a formal announcement (on government formation). We don't want problems to crop up after we form the government in the state," he said. The PDP too said that the dialogue with the BJP has "progressed a lot" and there were positive outcomes of the dialogue process. "The dialogue has progressed a lot, but unless it's not done, it's not done" Chief PDP spokesman Naeem Akhtar said in Jammu. Later in the day, Ram Madhav met party President Amit Shah. Their meeting took place at the party headquarters where both leaders deliberated on the emerging situation in the state, the sources said. Agency*