

## Race for Jammu and Kashmir top bureaucrat's post hots up

With decks being cleared for the induction of B.R. Kundal, the outgoing Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary, into the ministry here Friday, the race to fill the top bureaucrat's post has begun.

Sadanand Bave, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1973 batch and the state's resident commissioner in Delhi, Satinder Singh Sahni, IAS of 1974 batch and state's financial commissioner co-ordination, and S.S. Kapoor, an IAS officer of 1974 batch and financial commissioner home, are at the top of the seniority list for the coveted assignment.

Bave and Sahni are senior to Kapoor. But after Kundal submitted his papers for voluntary retirement last week, Kapoor was reportedly sounded by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad for the top job.

Sources within the ruling coalition here indicated that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) wants the issue of the new chief secretary to be debated in the cabinet meeting scheduled here Friday evening.

'The PDP favours a son of the soil for the chief secretary's post,' said a party source.

The name of S.L. Bhat, an IAS officer of 1976 batch, is doing the rounds as the PDP's choice. He belongs to the Kashmiri Pandit community and is presently on deputation with the central government.

Even as administrative speculation continues about the chief secretary's choice, the matter has to be decided by this evening since Kundal's oath-taking ceremony as minister is scheduled for 5 p.m. Friday.

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