

Chengannur bypoll: Triangular contest between LDF, UDF, BJP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 6 -- Kerala, known for its decades-long bipolar politics, is witnessing a fierce triangular fight between ruling LDF, opposition UDF and BJP-led NDA in Chengannur assembly bypoll, scheduled for May 28.

Electioneering has hotted up in the constituency located in Central Kerala, as the battle is a do-or-die for all the three fronts.

The bypoll was necessitated following the death of sitting MLA K K Ramachandran Nair (CPI-M) in January this year due to illness.

Winning the seat is a matter of prestige for the CPI(M)-led LDF as the poll result would be evaluated as the performance of the two-year-old government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The focus of LDF's election campaign is on the achievements of the Vijayan government and the "negative fall out" of the

demonetisation and "flaws" in implementing GST and the alleged communal agenda of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre.

The by-election is a golden opportunity for the Congress-led UDF to wrest its traditional seat from LDF, which had won Chengannur the 2016 Assembly polls ending the years-long supremacy of the rival front.

Besides raking up the "anti-people" policies of both the Centre and the state governments, the Congress is also campaigning against the political violence allegedly unleashed by the ruling CPI(M) in the state.

The BJP-led NDA is also leaving no stone unturned for a victory as the saffron front had garnered 46 per cent of the total votes polled in the constituency last time and came third securing around 42,000 votes.

During the campaign, BJP is banking on the achievements of the

Narendra Modi government at the Centre.

While CPI(M)'s Saji Cheriyan, the party's Alappuzha district secretary, is the candidate of LDF, Congress leader D Vijayakumar is the UDF nominee.

Former BJP president P S Sreedharan Pillai, who had given a tough fight to both LDF and UDF in the 2016 election, is trying his luck again in the constituency.

However, the sore relation between BJP and Bharat Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), a key ally of the party-led NDA, has posed a problem to the saffron party in the constituency.

BDJS, the party formed by Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, an organisation of the powerful backward Ezhava community in the state, has decided to keep away from the campaign for the BJP candidate.

Led by Thushar Vellappally, son

of SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan, BDJS has complained that BJP had not fulfilled any of the promises they had made during the time of the tie-up.

All the three fronts are keeping their fingers crossed as the Kerala Congress (M)-led by former minister K M Mani, which has significant presence in the constituency, is yet to announce its election stand.

IC-M, which was a key partner in the UDF, had left the front after the 2016 assembly polls and was keeping an equidistance from all three fronts.

Chengannur, located in Alappuzha district, is one of the major transit camps of lakhs of Ayyappa devotees who visit the famed Sabarimala Temple in nearby Pathanamthitta district during the annual pilgrim season from November-March. (PTI)

J-K CM expresses grief over civilian deaths, says guns cannot resolve issues

SRINAGAR, MAY 6 -- Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti today expressed grief over the death of five civilians near an encounter site in Shopian, saying that guns, either of a militant or of security forces, cannot resolve issues. Asserting that political matters need political intervention, she said issues in Jammu and Kashmir can be resolved only through a sustained dialogue between all stakeholders. According to the police, five Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists including a top commander and a fresh recruit -- a university professor -- were killed in an encounter in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir today, even as five civilians died during clashes between protesters and law enforcing agencies near the encounter site.

"It sounds very depressing to note that our state is losing young lives to the unending cycle of violence, who could otherwise be utilised for a positive contribution to the state. Today's deaths have brought a stark fact to the fore that gun, either way of a militant or that of security forces, is no solution for resolving issues," Mufti said in a statement here. The chief

minister also appealed to all sections of civil society, media, students, parents and other stakeholders to rise to this critical occasion, play their role and help in putting an end to the "vicious cycle of killings and destruction". "I have reiterated it time and again that political issues need political interventions. I appeal the youth that their energies, youthfulness, dreams and aspirations are far more important and sacred to the society than their dead bodies or graves," she said.

The chief minister said, "The three-decades-long violence in the state is a testimony to the fact that guns from either side cannot ensure peace, but a compassion driven reconciliation process based on mutual respect surely can."

"In this regard, I appeal to the national leadership to show the element of compassion and empathy as required by the present day situation here and display the statesmanship to get J-K out of the quagmire of killings by engaging in a meaningful dialogue in the state. The sooner it happens, the more we can get our state out of the vicious cycle of killings and destruction," she said. (PTI)

Another child mauled by dogs in Sitapur

SITAPUR, MAY 6 -- A 10-year-old boy was mauled to death by a pack of dogs here while another child was injured, police said today. Six children were killed so far in the district after being attacked by dogs.

The latest incident took place in Taalgaon police station area yesterday, when Qasim (10) was attacked while he was out to graze his goats.

Another boy Irfan of Biharipur village was injured by dogs outside his village, police said.

District Magistrate Sheetal Verma said assistance has been sought from the Lucknow Municipal Corporation and Delhi. The date 30 dogs have been caught, she said.

UP Cabinet minister Rita Bahuguna Joshi, who was here yesterday, said financial aid will be provided to affected families.

Concrete measures will be adopted to counter the menace and every community health centre in the area will be equipped with adequate vaccines and medicines, she said.

On May 1, three children were mauled to death by dogs in villages of Khairabad area after which the district administration called a dog-catching team from Mathura to deal with the menace.

On May 4, two more children were mauled to death and as many injured by packs of stray dogs in the district, police said.

A four-member team from Mathura along with forest officials arrived here on Wednesday and started an operation with the help of the police and locals during which 16 dogs were tranquillised while two died, officials said. (PTI)



Security personnel behind the concertina razor wire to maintain the law and order in view of the strike called by separatists, in Srinagar on Sunday.

BSP decides to hold village meetings to expose BJP's 'anti-Dalit face'

LUCKNOW, MAY 6 -- Following controversy over the BJP's Dalit outreach programmes in Uttar Pradesh, the BSP has decided to hold 'chaupals' or village meetings across the state to expose what it calls the "anti-Dalit face" of the saffron party.

"BSP leaders including coordinators and office bearers will be moving out to villages all over the state to hold chaupals to apprise all, especially the Dalits, about the anti-people and anti-Dalit steps being taken by the BJP government," a senior BSP leader said.

"Dalits are angry over the manner in which a Modi said is being made out by the Uttar Pradesh ministers visiting villages, taking their own food and water and showing to the world that they are dining in Dalit households," he said, adding that their drama is getting exposed with every passing day.

"While one minister carries food and water with him and dines as if he

is attending a feast, the other minister claims that they are spending nights in villages braving mosquito bites... these BJP leaders are not only exposing their real minds not only towards Dalits but also towards the villagers and their lifestyles."

"On our part, we will organise chaupals and interact with the villagers at the grass-roots level and apprise them of the reality of this government," he told PTI, requesting anonymity.

"Our leaders will tell the people as to how the BJP's so called pro-Dalit stance is a farce and designed only for its petty electoral gains. BJP leaders are carrying out a drama of sharing meals with Dalits in their homes but the food that they take is brought from other places as they do not want to eat the meal prepared by a Dalit in his house," he said.

Since BSP chief Mayawati is currently busy in Karnataka polls, the

chaupal programme will take shape only next month, he said.

The BSP leadership has already alerted its office bearers and coordinators to keep a close watch on the BJP's 'sabbho' (community feast) programmes.

BSP men have also been asked to prepare a list of events where the BJP leaders have shown disrespect during their outreach programme by ordering food, crockery or water from outside or any of them making statements which hurt the sentiments of Dalits, he said.

The BSP will also take this opportunity to refresh the memory of Dalits on various cases of atrocities on them during the BJP government by recalling incidents during the Bharat bands against the dilution of SC/ST Act and lynching of Dalits among others and how the government has been lax in taking action against the culprits, he added. (PTI)

INC will become 'PPP Cong' after Karnataka polls: Modi

GADAG / MANGALURU (KARNATAKA), APRIL 6 -- Escalating his attack on the Congress over "corruption and arrogance", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today the party whose flag once fluttered "from Panchayats to Parliament" will become "Punjab, Puducherry, Parivar" Congress after its impending defeat in Karnataka.

With the D-day for the polls drawing closer, Modi upped the ante against the Siddaramaiah government, alleging it has become a "corruption tank" for the Congress with a pipeline connected to Delhi, "where the money reaches directly".

He also accused the top Congress leadership of auctioning tickets, party positions and even the chief minister's post.

"After May 15 (when poll results will be declared), Indian National Congress will be reduced to 'PPP Congress' -- P for Punjab, P for Puducherry, and P for Parivar (family)," Modi told an election rally in Gadag, where he predicted

the state's ruling party would be decimated in the elections. He accused the Congress of "auctioning" party tickets and posts, and recalled how a string of scams rocked the erstwhile UPA government.

Modi said despite a string of electoral losses in Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Tripura the Congress was not as worried as it is now when defeat stares it in the face. "I tell you why... Because their ministers and leaders in Karnataka have built a tank here. A part of money looted from people is taken home and the rest is put in that tank."

The tank is linked to Delhi through a pipeline which carries the money directly to Delhi.

Modi, who addressed four back to back rallies at Gadag, Tumakuru, Shivamogga and Mangaluru, said it was because of Congress's arrogance that the party, which ruled almost the entire country, was losing ground. "The

party whose flag fluttered across the country... from Panchayat to Parliament... which had 400 MPs... its fortresses are falling, one after the other. Without power, it is like a fish without water. Congress's arrogance did it in. Democracy does not brook arrogance," he told a rally in Mangaluru.

Taking a swipe at the Congress for its oft repeated accusation that the Centre and BJP got EVMs manipulated for winning elections, Modi said the rival party found nothing wrong with the voting machines after a win but blamed it for losses.

Earlier addressing an election rally in Tumakuru, Modi alleged that the Congress and JD(S) have entered into a "secret" pact for the Karnataka polls. "If anyone is protecting the Congress, it is the JD(S)... Congress and JD(S) have a secret understanding... an understanding behind the curtains," he said.

Modi said the Congress, which ruled the country for decades, with "one family" in power for most part,

neglected the poor and farmers.

"Garibi, garibi, garibi (poverty, poverty, poverty) was their constant refrain. But once the son of a poor mother became the prime minister, they claimed up... now they don't talk about poverty," he said, and asked voters to "punish" the Congress for Karnataka's better future.

In Mangaluru, the prime minister said opposing him was the Congress's only agenda. "They even opposed my Clean India campaign. They mock all institutions... the RBI, Indian Army, Parliament... It is yet to recover from the shock of demonetisation as bundles of ill-gotten currency notes of its leaders were seized... their anger does not go away," he said.

"When the World Bank praises my government, Congress says I bought it off. I am not into buying and selling, I work for the nation. For the Congress, one family is every day. For me, 1.25 crore people of India are my family," he said. (PTI)

TN student writes NEET in Kerala *Dad accompanying him dies of heart attack

CHENNAI, MAY 6 -- A 46-year-old man from Tamil Nadu, who accompanied his son to Kerala for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) died of a heart attack today as the aspiring doctor wrote the examination. Chief Minister K Palaniswami conveyed his condolence to the kin of the deceased and announced a solatium of Rs 3 lakh from the CM's Public Relief Fund.

Krishnasamy had travelled with his son Kasturi Mahalingam to Ernakulam in Kerala, where the student was allotted a centre to write the NEET 2018.

The father suffered a heart attack this morning when he was in a lodge after seeing off his son at the exam centre. Expressing anguish over the incident, Palaniswami said a team of officials has been rushed to the neighbouring state to bring back the body. In an official release, he said the deceased was a resident of Vilangudi village in the delta district of Tiruvavur.

Krishnasamy, who suffered cardiac arrest was admitted to a hospital where he died, Palaniswami said. As Krishnasamy breathed his last, his son wrote the exam unaware of his father's fate. "I have sent a team of Tamil Nadu officials to Ernakulam to assist Kasturi Mahalingam to take his father's body home after he completes writing NEET exam," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister said Chief Secretary Girija Vaidyanathan has spoken to her Kerala counterpart seeking assistance to bring Krishnasamy's body to back Tamil Nadu. Ernakulam District Collector Safrullah is taking swift steps to send Krishnasamy's body to his native village in Tamil Nadu, Palaniswami said.

The death comes against the backdrop of the Centre facing flak from opposition parties for not allowing centres for all the Tamil Nadu students within the State.

Wife's allegation of infidelity is cruelty, says HC; grants divorce to husband

NEW DELHI, MAY 6 -- The Delhi High Court has granted divorce to a man hailing from his estranged wife's false allegation of illicit relation between him and his widowed sister-in-law amounted to cruelty. Holding that the allegations of illicit relations were not true, Justice J R Midha granted divorce to the man while setting aside a trial court's order of judicial separation of the couple who were married in 1978 and were residing in London. A decree of judicial separation does not dissolve a marriage and gives the couple time to introspect about their relationship and decide if they want to get back together, unlike a divorce which marks an end to marriage. Both the man and woman had challenged the trial court decision by separate appeals.

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