

WINDOWS

AIADMK to contest Madurantakam, Dharapuram bypolls

CHENNAI: The AIADMK will contest the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly by-polls in the Madurantakam and Dharapuram reserved constituencies, party sources said on Wednesday.

AIADMK senior leaders Agri SS Krishnamurthy, KP Munusamy, OS Manian, C Sreenivasan and other party leaders visited the Tamil Nadu BJP headquarters, Kamalayam here on Tuesday to seek support from the safe-fron party.

The leaders met BJP state chief Nainar Nagendran. The senior leaders also convened a crucial meeting at the residence of AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami in Chennai to chart out electoral strategy for both constituencies.

Party sources on Wednesday said that the discussions focused on candidate selection, grassroots campaign mobilization, and allocation of election duties across the two constituencies to ensure a synchronised campaign effort ahead of the October 6 election. A senior party functionary from the AIADMK, seeking anonymity, said that the party would contest in both the constituencies with the support of its alliance. The bypolls were necessitated following the resignation of AIADMK legislators Maragatham Kumaravel (Madurantakam) and P Sathiyabama (Dharapuram) who later joined the ruling Tamil-laga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK).

As per the EC schedule, the filing of nominations will take place from September 9 to 16, scrutiny of the papers on September 17, and the last date for withdrawal is September 19. Following bypolls on October 6, votes will be counted on October 9.

DMK names candidates for Assembly by-polls

CHENNAI: The DMK on Wednesday announced its candidates for the upcoming Tamil Nadu assembly by-polls in the Madurantakam and Dharapuram reserved constituencies. An official release from the DMK headquarters here said I Paranthaman, joint secretary of the party legal wing and former Egmore MLA, would contest from Madurantakam (reserved). Similarly, S Suganya has been fielded from Dharapuram (reserved).

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued the notification for the by-polls, bringing the Model Code of Conduct into force in Madurantakam and Dharapuram constituencies.

Anbumani seeks strict enforcement of public smoking ban

CHENNAI: Expressing deep concern over a massive surge in fatalities linked to second hand smoke, PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss on Wednesday urged central and state governments to strictly enforce the ban on smoking in public places.

Citing a recent global medical study published in "The Lancet Public Health", Anbumani highlighted that passive smoking claimed 3,25,600 lives in India in 2023 alone and that represents a 49.56 per cent increase compared to 1990, when 2,17,700 deaths were recorded.

According to the study, mortality rates due to secondhand smoke rose by 61.74 per cent among men and 38.35 per cent among women. While the population exposed to passive smoking grew by only 18.40 per cent from 37.50 crore to 44.40 crore, the nearly 50 per cent jump in fatalities underscores the severity of the hazard.

"The primary reason for this alarming trend is the failure to curb public smoking. Innocent non-smokers, particularly women and children, suffer severe health consequences due to the irresponsible actions of others," Anbumani said in a statement.

Rajnath Singh's Lanka visit to resolve fishermen issue: BJP

First visit by an Indian Defence Minister to the island-nation in 38 years

CHENNAI

TAMIL Nadu BJP President Nainar Nagenthran on Wednesday said Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's official visit to Sri Lanka would strengthen regional maritime security and pave the way for a permanent solution to the issues faced by Tamil Nadu fishermen.

Highlighting the significance of the trip, Nagenthran said this was the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to the island nation in 38 years, since K C Pant travelled to Sri Lanka in 1988.

Visits by Indian Defence ministers have been avoided due to sensitivities surrounding India's past military involvement

during Sri Lanka's civil war, even as administrative and diplomatic exchanges continued.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Colombo on Tuesday for a three-day official visit, he said in a statement.

The TN BJP leader said that the visit holds strategic importance given Sri Lanka's key position along

major international sea routes in the Indian Ocean.

Additionally, he said, the visit is expected to boost joint military exercises, including SLINEX and Mitra Shakti, enhance security at the Trincomalee oil tank farm, and increase training slots for Sri Lankan armed forces personnel at Indian defense institutions.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a meeting with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Hariri Amarasingura in Colombo on Wednesday

AIADMK chief flays TVK govt for negligence in paddy procurement

CHENNAI

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Wednesday strongly condemned the C Joseph Vijay-led TVK government for its negligence in paddy procurement, which resulted in crop damage and financial losses following sudden rains across Tamil Nadu.

In a statement, the former chief minister accused the four-month-old administration of deceiving all sections of the public. He stated there is a vast difference between the state government's words and actions.

"Thousands of paddy bags brought by farmers to direct procurement centres in various parts of the state, including Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Erode, and Gobichettipalayam, have been left unprocured and piled up on roadsides," Palaniswami noted.

Due to the sudden rains, these bags have been completely soaked and ruined, causing financial losses to the hard-working farmers, he said. He recalled that despite



raising the issue of delayed procurement and sprouting of the harvested paddy grains during the previous Assembly session, the ministers concerned merely offered pacifying replies. They failed to take concrete administrative steps to protect the produce, he charged.

Highlighting the extent of agrarian distress, Palaniswami pointed out that recent sudden downpours in core Delta districts such as Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam have severely submerged agricultural crops cultivated on approximately 2,000 acres.

Citing specific regional damages, the statement outlined the following losses: In Mayiladuthurai district, areas including Nallathukudi, Valuvur, and Kolangudi, around 20,000 paddy bags were damaged. In Cuddalore district, areas like Virudhachalam and Rajendrapa-

tnam, about 10,000 paddy bags suffered damage. In Kanchipuram district near Salavakkam and Melperumanallur, approximately 20,000 paddy bags were ruined. In Chengalpattu district, at the Achirupakkam and Thozhuppedu open procurement centres, around 50,000 metric tonne of paddy were soaked in the rain.

The AIADMK chief also heavily slammed the state government for its failure to release Cauvery water on time for Kuruvai cultivation. This inaction prevented farmers from completing agricultural cycles, thereby breaking the promise to fully procure cultivated crops.

Taking a broader dig at the TVK administration, Palaniswami claimed the state's law and order situation is rapidly deteriorating. He accused the inexperienced government of being paralysed and clueless about operating the administrative machinery. "People have begun to realise that this fake government neither has the intellect to listen to others nor its own intellect to function," he said.

TVK-led meet names alliance as 'Secular Social Justice Victory Front'

CHENNAI

A meeting of the post-poll allies of Tamil Nadu's ruling TVK on Wednesday named the front led by it as the "Secular Social Justice Victory" alliance and unanimously elected Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay as the leader of the alliance.

The meeting led by Vijay also deliberated fielding candidates in the bypolls to be held on October 6 in the state for two constituencies, which will be the first acid test for the ruling TVK.

TVK senior leader and Public Works Minister Aadhav Arjuna, briefing reporters after the meeting, said that the alliance under the leadership of his party has been formed up and it is not for pills alone. It is an ideology-based alliance for the sake of people which upholds the ideals of reformist icons Periyar EV Ramasamy, Dr BR Ambedkar and Dravidian stalwart C N Annadurai, he said.

"Wherever secularism and social justice are there, vic-



From left Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader K.M. Kader Mohideen, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) general secretary Vaiko, Tamil Nadu CM and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Vijay, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president Manickam Tagore and Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) president Thol Thirumavalavan pose during a meeting of the ruling government alliance in Chennai on Wednesday

tory is always there and it is for the people," Arujna said. On the Left parties not signing up for the alliance, he said: "We have a lot of respect for the Left parties." Further, he expressed confidence that "hearts of the Left parties would continue to stay with the alliance," and they

would continue to support the TVK-led government.

This was the second meeting of the post-poll allies of the TVK and it went on for about an hour and a half. The Left parties that did not take part in the first coordination meeting as well held in July. Congress, VCK and IUML

are part of the government. Left parties support the government from the outside. The MDMK is also a post-poll ally. In the 234-member-strong Assembly, TVK won 108 seats -- short of a simple majority -- and formed the government with the support of post-poll allies.

The name of the alliance -- Secular Social Justice Victory Front -- itself speaks volumes about the ideals and agenda of the combine and all parties that fight for the rights of the state are part of the alliance, Tagore said, adding the TVK-led front will function from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. "The alliance will be robust and candidates will be announced for the bypolls tomorrow and we will work for the victory of the alliance candidates," Tagore said.

IUML top leader Kader Mohideen said a "new history" has been created as this is the first time, a coalition government is in place in Tamil Nadu. In all the polls to be held, the constituents of the TVK-led alliance will work together for victory, he said.

Family refuses to accept body, alleges 'honour killing' in student's death

The protesters demanded that the police thoroughly examine all available evidence, including CCTV footage, mobile phone call records, letters recovered during the investigation, the video recording of the post-mortem and forensic medical reports, to determine the circumstances of his death and whether it involved an honour-killing angle



cident, the girl's father had reportedly confronted and warned him against speaking to her and asked where he lived. Based on these circumstances, the family suspected foul play and alleged that it could be a case of honour killing.

Agitated over the death, the student's family initially staged a demonstration outside the government hospital mortuary, refusing to accept the body and alleging contradictions in statements given by persons identified through CCTV footage.

The agitation intensified as members of the joint action forum, "Tamizhselvan Neethikkaana Kootu Iyakam", along with the family, staged a protest near the Thiruvalluvar statue in Madurai.

MADURAI

THE family and relatives of a Class 11 student whose body was found with injuries near a sewage pumping station in Anaiyur protested on Wednesday, refusing to accept his mortal remains. They demanded a comprehensive probe into the suspected murder, including the possible "honour killing" angle.

The victim, Tamizhselvan, a student at a government-aided school in Arapalayam, Madurai, had gone missing on Sunday morning after informing his mother that he was going to play cricket.

When he did not return by evening, his mother Yogalakshmi and relatives searched for him before lodging a missing person complaint at the Koodal Pudur police station. On Monday, the boy's body was recovered from a puddle amid thorny bushes at an isolated spot near a sewage pumping station on Abdul Kalam Street in Anaiyur. The Koodal Pudur police initially registered a case of suspicious death and launched an investigation, collecting forensic evidence and examining CCTV footage from the locality. According to family members, Tamizhselvan was friendly with a schoolgirl from another community in the neighbourhood.

A few days before the in-

Hooch tragedy: TNCC chief seeks action against negligent officials

CHENNAI

EXPRESSING serious concern over the findings of the Justice P Gokuldas Commission report on the 2024 Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, TNCC president Manickam Tagore, on Wednesday urged Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay to take stern action against negligent officials and investigate whether the illicit liquor business had any political patronage.

In a statement, the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief highlighted the findings of the inquiry commission, which investigated the deaths of 70 people after they consumed illicit liquor in Kallakurichi between June 17 and June 20, 2024.

He said the commission's report, recently tabled in the



Legislative Assembly, concluded that the tragedy was primarily caused by the failure of officials to discharge their duties properly.

According to the report, which was prepared after the commission examined 433 people in connection with the illicit liquor trade, the failure of successive governments to effectively implement the prohibition policy since 1971 had contributed to widespread alcohol addiction, he said.

"The substantial price difference between legal TAS-

MAC liquor and illicit brew forced poor and vulnerable sections to turn to cheap bootleg alcohol, resulting in the loss of many lives," he claimed. On the commission's welfare recommendations, Tagore noted that while the previous government had provided Rs 10 lakh in compensation to the families of the victims, the state government must now extend humanitarian assistance to children who lost their fathers.

He urged the government to provide these children with food, housing, educational assistance and government jobs. Tagore emphasised that long-term social relief for the people of Tamil Nadu could be achieved only by swiftly freeing the state from the grip of alcohol addiction.

Vijay to make first official foreign visit, travel to London via Dubai

CHENNAI

CHIEF Minister C Joseph Vijay will embark on his first official foreign visit, travelling to London via Dubai on a week-long tour, sources said. According to preliminary information, the CM will depart from Chennai International Airport at 10 pm on Thursday aboard Emirates commercial flight EK 547 to Dubai, from where he will continue to London.

A high-level delegation comprising state government officials, departmental secretaries and personal aides will accompany the CM during the tour. An advance security team and personal assistants have already left for Dubai to coordinate arrangements.

The visit has been organised by the state's

Industries Department. As it is an official state mission, the entire expenditure for the overseas trip will be borne by the Tamil Nadu government through the Industries department.

Notably, while Vijay has conventionally used chartered flights for his tours within India, he will travel on a scheduled commercial flight for the overseas visit. Ahead of his departure, a multi-agency security and protocol review meeting was held at 11 am on Wednesday at the Chennai Airport reception complex.

Senior officials from various departments and security agencies attended the meeting, which reviewed security arrangements and other logistics for the CM's departure.

PMK chief opposes Pattinapakkam site for new Secretariat

CHENNAI

PMK President Anbumani Ramadoss on Wednesday urged the Tamil Nadu government to abandon plans to build a new Secretariat complex at Pattinapakkam in the state capital.

Instead, he demanded the creation of an integrated administrative city spanning 500 to 1,000 acres outside the state capital to meet governance needs for the next century.

Reacting to media reports suggesting that the proposed Rs 1,200 crore, 20-lakh square feet Secretariat and Legislative Assembly complex announced by Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay would come up on a 26.36-acre parcel of land in Pattinapakkam, Anbumani, in a statement, termed the move "shortsighted."

"While the need for a modern Secretariat in

Demands satellite administrative city



Tamil Nadu is beyond dispute, establishing it at Pattinapakkam will cause more harm than good," PMK leader said. He cited severe traffic congestion along Santhome Highway Road and Greenways Road, which are already heavily strained despite the construction of a loop road. Adding a massive government complex near densely populated hubs,

major schools, and the Santhome Church would choke traffic in the area, he warned. The former union minister further pointed out that 26.36 acres would be grossly inadequate once mandatory FSI compliance, green space allocation, fire stations, emergency medical units, parking facilities, and public transit links are accounted for.

"Building it on a re-

stricted plot will inevitably replicate the current space constraints within a few years," he noted. Highlighting Vijay's stated vision that the new complex should serve the state's needs for the next 100 years, the PMK chief argued that global and historical precedents favor relocating administrative hubs to dedicated greenfield locations. Anbumani urged the government to acquire at least 500 to 1,000 acres outside Chennai to build a self-contained administrative city. The proposed township, he suggested, should house the Secretariat, Legislative Assembly, departmental headquarters, residences for the Chief Minister, Ministers, and civil servants, as well as Metro connectivity, helipads, schools, colleges, sports arenas, and commercial complexes.

Financial mismgt cost state PSUs Rs 3,299 crore: CAG

CHENNAI: WIDESPREAD financial mismanagement, tender irregularities and governance deficits across Tamil Nadu's State Public Sector Enterprises resulted in compliance-related financial implications of Rs 3,298.75 crore, a CAG report has revealed.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, in its Compliance Audit Report on Commercial Enterprises for the year ended March 31, 2023, noted that 22 public sector undertakings had suffered complete erosion of capital. The report was tabled in the State Legislative Assembly on September 8.

The report primarily covers the accounts of SPSEs for the financial year 2022-23. It also includes observations relating to earlier years that could not be reported previously.

According to the report, the combined net worth of the 22 enterprises was negative at Rs 1,93,132.98 crore against an equity capital of Rs 33,263.46 crore.