Violence, counter-allegations mar local body nominations

K Varaprasada Rao
Amaravati

THE second day of nominations for the MPTC and ZPTC elections in the state on Thursday witnessed widespread clashes, stone-pelting, allegations of nomination papers being torn up and police action in several districts, intensifying the political confrontation between the ruling NDA and the YSRCP.

While the YSRCP accused the police of siding with the TDP and preventing its candidates from filing nominations, ruling alliance leaders alleged that the opposition was instigating disturbances and subsequently portraying itself as a victim.

Incidents were reported from YSR Kadapa, Annamayya, Anantapur, Kurnool, Palnadu, Chittoor, Nellore, Prakasam and other areas. Reports included attacks on party workers, vehicles being set on fire, nomination documents being destroyed and police resorting to lathi-charges to disperse rival groups. Although nominations proceeded without major incidents in several other districts, the developments in Rayalaseema and Palnadu raised concerns about candidates' ability to participate freely.

In Annamayya district's Thamballapalle constituency, clashes between TDP and YSRCP workers in Peddamandyam and Peddadippasamudram left several people injured. TDP leaders Narayana Reddy and Anand were among those injured in Peddamandyam, where police resorted to a lathi-charge. In Peddadippasamudram, stone-pelting and the burning of two-wheelers aggravated the situation.

Police take away YSRCP MP Y S Avinash Reddy from his home in Pulivendula on Thursday

YSR Kadapa district witnessed clashes, stone-pelting and allegations of nomination papers being torn up at multiple locations.

In Gundlakunta in Jammalamadugu constituency, a motorcycle belonging to YSRCP members was reportedly set on fire. Tension also prevailed near the residence of TDP MLC Ramasubba Reddy, while YSRCP MLA Dr Sudha and other leaders were arrested in Badvel.

In Nandaluru, a factional clash within the TDP between supporters of Jaganmohan Raju and Meda Vijaya Sekhar Reddy resulted in two cars and some motorcycles being set on fire. TDP state spokesperson Balasubrahmanyam reportedly fired shots into the air.

In Palnadu, clashes were reported at Nakarikallu, Dachepalli and Edlapadu. At Nakarikallu, rival groups accused each other of destroying MPTC nomination papers, prompting police to resort to a lathi-charge. A case was registered against former Macherla MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy and other YSRCP leaders following a protest in Macherla over alleged obstruction of nominations.

Anantapur district also witnessed confrontations. Police stopped former YSRCP MLA Thopudurthi Prakash Reddy at Vaddepalli while he was travelling towards Atmakur with a candidate, citing restrictions on people from outside the local area. In Guntakal, TDP and YSRCP leaders clashed amid allegations that nomination papers belonging to YSRCP candidates were torn up. Stone-pelting was reported near the Anantapur rural MPDO office, leaving a person named Ramanjaneyulu with a head injury.

- **Stone-pelting, attacks, torn nomination papers and house arrests reported across Rayalaseema and Palnadu**
- **YSRCP alleges systematic obstruction; TDP and NDA leaders accuse opposition of instigating violence**

In Nellore district's Guduru, clashes followed allegations that TDP supporters obstructed YSRCP candidates.

At the Eluru zilla parishad office, two persons allegedly snatched and tore the nomination papers of YSRCP candidate Maddula Ratnam before being apprehended by police. In Bestavaripeta in Markapuram district, TDP leaders were accused of tearing the nomination papers of a BJP MPTC candidate, triggering a confrontation.

The YSRCP alleged that its candidates were being prevented from reaching nomination centres while several senior leaders were placed under house arrest. Those reportedly confined to their residences included MPs Gurumoorthy and Avinash Reddy, former MLAs Kethireddy Pedda Reddy, Thopudurthi Prakash Reddy and Kethireddy Venkatarami Reddy, former minister Sake Sailajanath, former Chittoor MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy and his sons, and former Pattikonda MLA Sridevi. Restrictions were also reported against YSRCP leaders in Tirupati and Nellore.

Former minister Adimulapu Suresh staged a road protest in Ponnaluru in Prakasam district, alleging that YSRCP candidates were not being allowed to enter the nomination premises.

Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav alleged that disturbances were concentrated in Pulivendula and Punganur, constituencies represented by YSRCP MLAs, while the nomination process had proceeded peacefully elsewhere. He accused YSRCP leaders of instigating conflicts and lodging complaints to mislead the Election Commission.

TDP MLA Gouthu Sirisha alleged that the YSRCP was resorting to violence out of fear of electoral defeat. She questioned why disturbances were occurring in areas associated with leaders such as Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, Avinash Reddy and Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, alleging that the strategy was being directed from Tadepalli.

Gather evidence of poll violence, Jagan tell party leaders

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Amaravati

YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy directed party leaders to systematically collect evidence of alleged irregularities and violence during local body elections and pursue legal action, saying the fight to protect democracy must continue in the courts.

At a meeting with key party leaders at party central office on Thursday, Jagan discussed the Supreme Court's intervention over alleged irregularities during the local body elections. He said the court had expressed concern over the subversion of democracy in State and taken cognisance of complaints, prompting directions to the State Election Commission (SEC).

Jagan alleged that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was orchestrating violence in a systematic and deliberate manner and claimed that the situation had not improved despite the Supreme Court's directives.

He said incidents of violence were continuing during the ongoing MPTC and ZPTC elections as well. "It is unprecedented to see those in government themselves engaging in such violence," Jagan said, accusing the government of misusing the police force to facilitate the alleged atrocities.

Emphasising the need to build a strong legal case, Jagan asked party leaders to guide workers on the ground in documenting incidents and gathering evidence.

He said the party would place substantiated material before the courts and continue its legal fight.

YSRCP stages protest at SEC office

YSRCP MLC Lella Appi Reddy along with other party leaders speaks to the media at SEC office in Vijayawada on Thursday

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YSRCP leaders staged a protest at the State Election Commission (SEC) office here on Thursday after State Election Commissioner Anil Chandra Punetha initially failed to grant them an appointment to submit their complaints over alleged obstruction of nominations for ZPTC and MPTC elections.

The leaders accused the SEC of delaying action on their complaint and demanded implementation of the Supreme Court's directions to ensure that candidates could file nominations without intimidation. It was the second consecutive day that the YSRCP delegation had approached the SEC to explain the alleged irregularities in the nomination process.

Following the protest, the leaders were eventually granted an appointment.

Speaking to the media, YSRCP MLC Lella Appi Reddy alleged that TDP activists, with the alleged complicity of the police, were preventing opposition candidates from filing nominations.

He claimed that illegal arrests and house arrests were being used to obstruct candidates and that those attempting to submit their papers were facing attacks.

"We approached the Supreme Court because candidates were being prevented from filing nominations. The Supreme Court directed that security be provided to those filing nominations. Despite its orders, our candidates are still facing attacks and are unable to file their papers," he alleged.

Reddy claimed that nomination papers already submitted to election officials were being torn up and cited an alleged incident in Chittoor in which B-forms, the party authorisation documents for municipal corporation elections, were torn.

One dead, 100 injured in Deveragattu Bunni festival clashes

Narendra Kumar Varikuntla
Kurnool

THE traditional Bunni festival at Devaragattu in Holagunda mandal of Kurnool district turned violent on Wednesday night, leaving one person dead and over 100 devotees injured. Held annually on the night following Vijayadashami, the ritual once again witnessed bloody clashes as groups of devotees fought wielding heavy sticks and flaming torches. The tragic outcome has reignited sharp concerns over the persistence of this violent tradition, despite recurring attempts by authorities to prevent casualties.

The violent confrontation erupted following the celestial wedding of Lord Mala Malleswara Swamy as the processional idols were being brought down the hill.

- **Stick fight turns bloody during midnight ritual**
- **Devotees from 11 villages clash over processional idols**
- **Despite tight security, deadly tradition claims another life**

Devotees from 11 surrounding villages, divided into opposing factions, engaged in a fierce battle to secure possession of the idols of Goddess Malamma and Lord Malleswara Swamy.

Devotees engage in violent stick fight during the annual Bunni festival at Devaragattu in Holagunda mandal late on Wednesday night

Armed with sticks and torches, participants attacked one another, causing severe head trauma and heavy bleeding. Despite suffering painful injuries, devotees continued the fight, transforming the sacred procession into a scene of chaotic bloodshed. The deceased has been identified as Pothuraju, a resident of Alur. More than 100 injured devotees were rushed to government hospitals in Alur and Adoni for emergency medical treatment. Popularly known as the "stick fight" festival, the centuries-old ritual takes place at midnight following Vijayadashami, drawing thousands of devotees across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

Despite extensive awareness drives and heavy security deployments organised by police and the district administration, the violent clashes continue unabated. Participants typically smuggle sticks onto the temple grounds disguised as regular pilgrims before launching into attacks around midnight. The recurring loss of life and heavy injuries present a formidable challenge to law enforcement, highlighting an urgent need for more effective preventive strategies to curb the dangerous practice.

2027 Inter exams to commence on Februbary 24

Dasari Srinivasa Rao
Vijayawada

THE Board of Intermediate Education, Andhra Pradesh (BIEAP), has released the tentative timetable for the Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) for first and second-year students for February-March 2027. The theory examinations will commence on February 24 and continue until March 16.

Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) secretary P Ranjith Basha released theory and practical examination schedule here on Thursday.

The examinations will be conducted in the forenoon session from 9 am to 12 noon. First-year students will begin their examinations with language papers and elective subjects on February 24, while second-year students will take their corresponding Paper-II examinations on February 25.

Practical examinations for general courses will be held from February 1 to 10, while those for vocational courses will take place from February 1 to 15 in two sessions — 9 am to noon and 2 pm to 5 pm. The examinations will be conducted on all days, including Sundays. The Ethics and Human Values examination will be held on January 27 from 10 am to 1 pm, while the Environmental Education examination is scheduled for January 29 during the same hours. The Samagra Shiksha Vocational Trade Examination (NSQF Level-4) theory paper will be conducted on February 17 from 10 am to noon. The board clarified that the timetable is tentative and some dates may be changed depending on public holidays notified by the State government. The vocational examination timetable will be issued separately, though the dates will remain unchanged.

- **First-year exams to conclude on March 15; practicals from Feb 1**
- **BIE releases tentative timetable for first- and second-year students**

The board also stated that separate question papers will be provided for elective subjects such as Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, History, Economics, Civics and Commerce under Part-II, while common question papers will be provided for core and additional subjects, as specified in the schedule.

Ex Srikakulam TDP MLA Lakshmi Devi joins YSRCP

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Amaravati

FORMER Srikakulam MLA Gunda Lakshmi Devi, along with her key followers, joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of former Chief Minister and YSRCP President Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the party's central office in Tadepalli.

Jagan welcomed Lakshmi Devi and the leaders accompanying her into the party by presenting them with YSRCP scarves. Lakshmi Devi's family had an association of nearly four decades with the Telugu Desam Party. Her husband, late former Minister Gunda Appala Suryanarayana, was elected MLA four times and served as a Minister twice. Lakshmi Devi was elected as Srikakulam MLA on a TDP ticket in the 2014 elections.

Along with Lakshmi Devi, TDP leaders Muddada Praveen, Jallu Rajeev, Simma Narsing Rao, Palli Srinivasa Rao, Kunuku Govind, Gadu Sai Kumar, Gedela Ram Kumar, Yagati Prasad, Chinnala Muttayi Naidu, Chettu Govind, Guruvu Srinivas and Routhu Nageswara Rao joined the YSRCP. Former deputy chief minister Dharmana Krishna Das, former minister Dharmana Prasada Rao and several other YSRCP leaders participated in the programme.

Centre extends CS Sai Prasad's tenure

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Amaravati

THE Central government has extended the tenure of Andhra Pradesh chief secretary G Sai Prasad by another six months, until May 31, 2027. The department of personnel and training (DoPT), under the Union ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions, issued orders approving the extension following a proposal from the state government.

In a letter to the principal secretary of the state general administration (political) department, Rajesh Kumar Yadav, under secretary in the Union ministry of personnel, conveyed the Centre's approval to extend Sai Prasad's tenure by six months. A 1991-batch IAS officer, Sai Prasad had earlier received a six-month extension from June 1 to November 30, 2026. He was otherwise due to retire on November 30. The latest extension follows a formal request made by the state government to the Centre through a demi-official (DO) letter dated September 29.

Four Bhavani devotees killed in road accident at Kathipudi

Deekshitula Subrahmanyam
Kakinada

FOUR Bhavani devotees from Denkada in Vizianagaram district died in a tragic road accident near Kathipudi in Prathipadu constituency of Kakinada district on Thursday morning. The accident occurred when a Scorpio vehicle hit devotees who had got down from a private bus to have tea while travelling to Vijayawada for darshan of Goddess Kanaka Durga.

According to preliminary information, around 40 Bhavani devotees were travelling in the private bus from Denkada to Vijayawada when the vehicle developed a technical snag near Kathipudi. The driver pulled over to the roadside to carry out repairs. Some of the devotees got down and were walking towards a nearby shop to have tea when a Scorpio coming from the Etcherla area of Srikakulam district hit them. The impact was severe, leaving three devotees dead at the spot. Another devotee sustained serious injuries and died while being shifted to a local hospital. The deceased were identified as Chirigidi Yarraiah (38), Lingala Seetharam (45), Bonela Ramana Sattibabu (40), and Tatipudi Sivaprasad (40). They all residents of Denkada. Reports also indicated that some occupants of the Scorpio sustained minor injuries. Peddapuram DSP A B G Tilak and other police personnel reached the accident spot and inspected the scene. Police initiated an inquiry into the circumstances leading to the accident.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expressed shock over the incident. Pawan spoke to officials and assured the families that the government would stand by them. Minister Nara Lokesh also expressed deep condolences over the deaths and sympathised with the bereaved families.

27.5 lakh kids screened, 27,000 health issues detected

Hans News Service
Vijayawada

AS many as 27.54 lakh children have undergone health check-ups in the last three months under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) in Andhra Pradesh, with 27,039 children found with health issues now receiving follow-up treatment and 541 children undergoing surgeries.

Under RBSK, free health screening is being provided to children below 18 years in Anganwadi centres and government and aided schools across the state. The government has set a target to screen 53,66,466 children. The programme was rolled out in July through field health teams.

Of the 27.54 lakh children screened so far - about 51.32 per cent of the target - 9,32,352 were re-examined by medical officers for confirmation. Finally, 27,039 children were identified with treatable defects and are being treated in major hospitals.

Reviewing the implementation on Thursday, health secretary G Veerapandian, along with health and family welfare commissioner K V N Chakradhar Babu and other senior officials, directed that the screening be completed by December.

- **27.54 lakh children screened under RBSK in three months.**
- **27,039 children identified with health issues and under treatment**
- **541 children underwent surgeries; screening to be completed by Dec**

Under the programme, 38 types of conditions are being screened - 10 birth defects, 5 diseases, 11 nutritional deficiencies and 12 developmental delays and disabilities.

Among birth defects, officials recorded 455 cases of neural tube defects, 243 of Down syndrome, 153 cleft lip and palate, 142 clubfoot, 102 hip joint disorders, 126 congenital heart diseases, 83 cataract, 62 hearing impairment, 33 retinopathy of prematurity, and 8 congenital kidney and urinary tract anomalies.

On the nutritional and disease front, 3,673 cases of Vitamin-A deficiency, 1,847 Vitamin-D deficiency, 715 severe malnutrition, 650 anaemia and 338 goitre were detected. Other cases include 5,122 skin problems, 5,320 rheumatic heart disease, 1,494 respiratory issues, 1,141 dental problems, 1,037 epilepsy, 568 diabetes, 311 hypertension, 31 kidney diseases, 69 ear infections, 12 tuberculosis and 9 leprosy.

Developmental issues recorded include 236 vision defects, 413 hearing defects, 246 neuromotor impairments, 181 motor delays, 61 cognitive delays, 45 language delays, 27 behavioural problems, 19 anxiety disorders, 8 ADHD cases, 4 sleep disorders and 35 neurodevelopmental disorders. Besides, 15 autism, 20 learning disorders, 2 severe developmental delays, 24 congenital hypothyroidism and 157 adolescent health issues were also identified.